



GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA'S PRIVATE SECTOR

A Gender Gap Assessment of the 30 Most Capitalized Companies Listed on the Nigerian Exchange

SEPTEMBER 2021

About IFC

IFC—a member of the World Bank Group—is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets. We work in more than 100 countries, using our capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in developing countries. In fiscal year 2021, IFC committed a record \$31.5 billion to private companies and financial institutions in developing countries, leveraging the power of the private sector to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity as economies grapple with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

About NGX

Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX Group) formerly known as the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE), is a leading listing and trading venue in Africa with its history dating back to 1960. It is an open, professional, and vibrant exchange, connecting Nigeria, Africa, and the world. NGX is a multi-asset exchange providing a home to the best of African enterprises listed on the Premium, Main, and Growth Boards; diverse fixed income securities; exchange traded products (ETPs); and mutual and other investment funds.

About Equileap

Equileap is the leading organization providing data and insights on gender equality in the corporate sector, allowing investors to align their investments with their values. Equileap researches and ranks over 3,700 public companies around the world using a unique and comprehensive methodology. Equileap's proprietary Gender Equality Scorecard™ assesses companies across 19 criteria, including the gender balance of the board of directors, senior management, and workforce, where it looks for balanced numbers of men and women (between 40 and 60 percent of either gender), as well as pay gap and policies relating to parental leave and sexual harassment. Equileap conducted this study in partnership with IFC.

About this Research and the [Nigeria2Equal Program](#)

Gender equality is not only a social and moral imperative, but also an economic necessity. The World Bank estimates that, globally, countries are losing \$172 trillion in wealth because of differences in lifetime earnings between women and men. To support Nigerian companies to address gender gaps across employment and entrepreneurship, and to improve gender equality performance, in 2020 IFC launched [Nigeria2Equal](#) in partnership with NGX. IFC is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for both men and women by addressing persistent gender gaps and increasing women's participation as leaders, employees, and entrepreneurs in the corporate value chain. This is key to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.

[Nigeria2Equal](#) is a two-and-a-half-year program implemented by IFC in partnership with NGX that aims to reduce gender gaps across employment and entrepreneurship in the private sector. The program seeks to reduce gender gaps in the private sector through research and best practice case studies, a peer learning platform, and firm-level advisory support to help companies implement gender action plans.

About the Sustainable Stock Exchange Initiative and NGX

In 2009, the United Nations launched the Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) initiative, which recognizes the important role that stock exchanges can play to promote gender equality in their markets. Since then, the initiative has tracked gender equality on the boards of directors of the top 100 issuers (by market capitalization) on each of the G-20's major stock exchanges. Collecting such data helps the exchanges in their efforts to promote gender equality and allows for benchmarks to be established.

NGX joined the SSE in 2013, and NGX works together with investors, regulators, and companies to enhance corporate transparency and performance on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues. NGX is actively involved in advancing gender equality, conducting training on the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles, and it is joining forces with IFC to accelerate change in Nigeria. The gender gap assessment of members listed on the exchanges is part of a wider effort by IFC and the SSE to advance women's leadership in capital markets.

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Acronyms

ASX	Australian Securities Exchange	NGX	Nigerian Exchange Limited
CSR	Corporate social responsibility	NSBP	Nigerian Sustainable Banking Principles
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria	NYSE	New York Stock Exchange
D&I	Diversity and inclusion	SSE	Sustainable Stock Exchanges
EBIT	Earnings before interest and taxes	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
ESG	Environmental, social, and governance	UN	United Nations
FRC	Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria	WEPS	Women's Empowerment Principles
IFC	International Finance Corporation	WMSME	Women-owned micro, small, and medium enterprise
ILO	International Labour Organization	WEF	World Economic Forum
IMF	International Monetary Fund		
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange		
LSE	London Stock Exchange		



Foreword

There is strong evidence that gender-equal businesses perform better. For instance, when women are in decision-making positions, some African companies reported profit increases of up to 15 percent (ILO 2019). Yet, countries around the world are losing \$172 trillion in wealth because of differences in the lifetime earnings of women and men—and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this gender gap (World Bank 2020).

Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa—with a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$448 billion (2019), a population of 206 million (2020), and it is projected to have the fifth largest population in the world by 2026. If Nigeria could reduce gender inequality, GDP could grow by 23 percent by 2025, which is a compelling social and economic case for closing the gender gap in the private sector (IMF 2018). The gender gap is particularly acute in Nigeria, and three market failures stand out: (1) a persistent gender gap at the company leadership level, (2) lack of access to finance for women who want to start a business, and (3) women's limited access to markets through supply chains and procurement opportunities.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) have joined forces to rally some of the largest Nigerian companies to increase women's participation in private sector development. Through the Nigeria2Equal initiative, we are working with the chief executive officers (CEOs) of companies listed on NGX that are committed to implementing gender-smart solutions to reduce gender gaps across leadership, employment, and entrepreneurship. By conducting market research and publishing studies such as this report, we are establishing the business case for the private sector to invest in women in Nigeria, and we are helping companies to identify gaps and constraints, and invest in reducing those gaps.

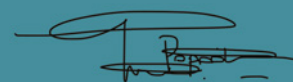
The findings in the study, which are summarized in this report, are encouraging as Nigerian companies are performing on par with global averages on the 19 gender equality indicators of the Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™ (see Annex B). The findings also reveal the need to do more to narrow the gender gap, and address market failures such as inadequate workplace policies that promote gender equality in formal employment, and limit women's ability to access high-quality jobs and leadership positions. In leadership, for instance, this study found that of the 30 most capitalized companies listed on NGX, while women represented nearly one-quarter of board members, they comprised only 7 percent of CEOs. So, what can be changed to achieve gender balance at all four corporate levels—the board of directors, executive, senior management, and the workforce?

This report found that more can be done to strengthen living wage commitments, close the gender pay gap, and improve family-friendly workplace policies. Companies can also offer proactive supplier-diversity programs to encourage access to supply chain and procurement opportunities. In addition, companies can sign the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles, and undertake a gender diagnostic by a recognized external certifier such as the Economic Dividend for Gender Equality (EDGE), or the Gender Equality European and International Standard (GEEIS) Label by Arborus, as well as continuously monitor progress against targets.

We invite companies to join us to accelerate progress toward increasing women's participation in the private sector, and thereby strengthen the competitiveness of African companies.



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Regional Director, Southern Africa and Nigeria, IFC



Temí Popoola, CFA
CEO, Nigerian Exchange Limited



Executive Summary

More women have made it to the top of Nigerian companies as chief executive officers (CEOs) and board chairpersons than in some G20¹ countries (SSE 2021). However, there are persistent gender gaps at the company leadership level, in the workforce, and in supply chains, and these have an impact on women's ability to earn an income, secure leadership positions, obtain finance, and gain market access.

To address these issues and improve gender equality performance, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) established the [Nigeria2Equal Program](#), in partnership with Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX),² to reduce gender gaps across the workforce, in corporate leadership, and in entrepreneurship. This 24-month program, which began in 2020, has three components: research, a peer learning platform, and firm-level support for individual companies. Through these components, [Nigeria2Equal](#) is supporting companies in implementing gender-smart business strategies that promote gender equality and help to improve business performance.

As part of [Nigeria2Equal](#), Equileap, the leading provider of data on gender equality, reviewed publicly available documents for the 30 most capitalized companies listed on NGX to assess their gender equality indicators in four categories:

- **Category A: Gender Balance in Leadership and the Workforce**
- **Category B: Equal Compensation and Work-Life Balance**
- **Category C: Policies Promoting Gender Equality**
- **Category D: Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability**

Equileap's key findings under these four categories and 19 gender equality indicators, which are used in Equileap's Gender Equality Scorecard™, are discussed in this report. For details on each Equileap indicator, see Annex B. As this study shows, with regard to board chair positions, Nigerian companies outperformed their global peers in 23 developed

markets,³ and they had the strongest results in Category C. The five top-performing companies in all four categories were Sterling Bank, Access Bank, Lafarge Africa, Guinness Nigeria, and Ecobank Transnational Incorporated.

Category A: Gender Balance in Leadership in Nigeria

Category A assessed the representation of women at all levels of the company, from the boardroom to the workforce. Of the 30 Nigerian companies assessed by Equileap, women held nearly three times as many board chair positions (17 percent) than the average (6 percent) in Equileap's 2021 global report, and thereby significantly outperformed global peers (Figure E.1).

In Nigeria, women's representation at the highest leadership levels (the board of directors, executive team, and senior management), ranged from 20 to 27 percent, and this was largely in line with global trends of between 17 and 25 percent. However, at the workforce level, although Nigerian women made up one-third of the workforce, they lagged behind their global peers by 5 percent. Also, there were 6 percent more women at the workforce level than in senior management, indicating that there are barriers for women to advance to higher levels of leadership, which suggests a need for strategies that feed the talent pipeline.⁴

Equileap defines gender balance as between 40 to 60 percent of either gender at each level—the board, executive,⁵ senior management, and workforce.⁶ Two Nigerian companies achieved gender balance at more than one level. However, no Nigerian company achieved gender balance at all four levels. Since the number of women in positions of influence remains low—both in Nigeria and globally—to achieve gender balance, companies should aim to increase the gender balance to a range of between 40 to 60 percent across all four levels.

¹ The G20 is an intergovernmental forum comprising the European Union and 19 middle- and upper-income countries that meets several times a year to address major issues related to the global economy, such as financial stability, climate change, and sustainable development.

² NGX was previously the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

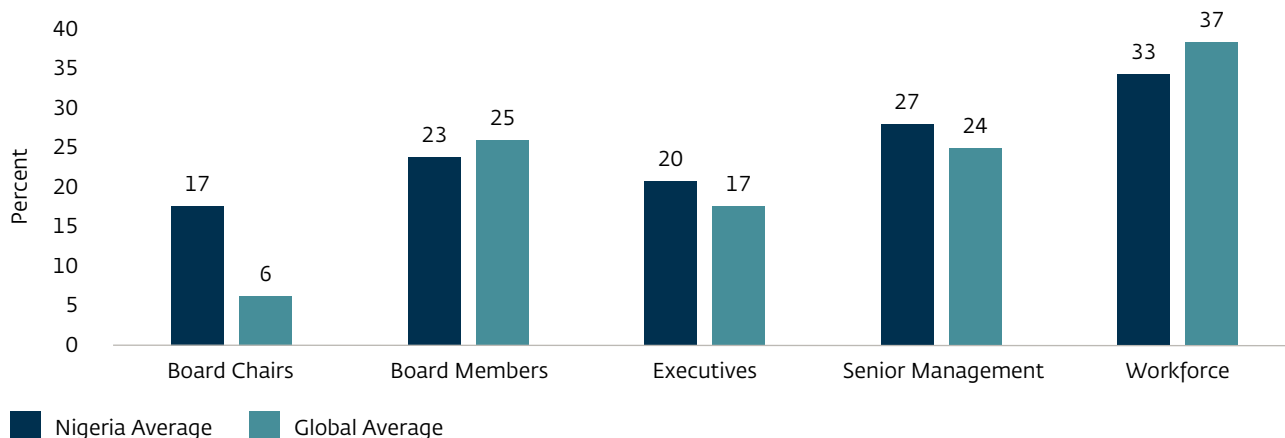
³ The global averages and findings referenced in this report are sourced from Equileap's 2020 global dataset, which gathered data on gender equality from over 3,700 public companies in 23 developed markets that have a market capitalization of \$2 billion or more (Equileap 2021).

⁴ Organizations can develop their leadership talent pipelines by identifying employees that show high potential and are good performers. Women candidates can be groomed by supporting them with strategies such as training, certifications, stretch assignments, job sharing, job shadowing, mentoring, and coaching to prepare them for the next stage. Talent pools should be large enough at entry to supply the upper ranks so that a leadership pipeline remains robust, notwithstanding regular turnover.

⁵ "Executive" applies to those individuals that form the company C-suite, Executive Committee/Board, Management Committee/Board, or the equivalent.

⁶ The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines gender balance as 40 to 60 per cent of either gender in the general workforce or among senior managers. ILO found that when the overall workforce is gender balanced, women are likely to be better represented in middle, senior, and top management positions (ILO 2019).

Figure E.1: Category A: Corporate Gender Balance in Nigeria and Globally



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information.

Category B: Equal Compensation and Work-Life Balance

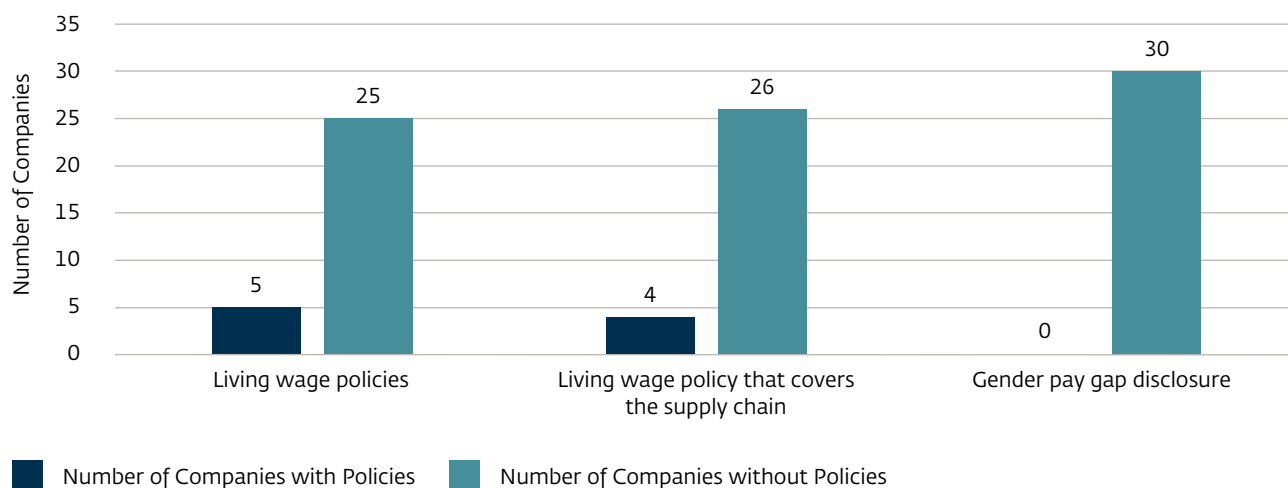
Category B assesses company compensation, parental leave, and work-life balance policies. A living wage is defined as a level of pay that is sufficient to meet a person's basic needs (food, housing, and clothing). The provision of a living wage by employers is key to ensuring that employees in low-paid positions can cover their basic needs. In Nigeria, as is the case, globally, women are more likely than men to occupy low-paid jobs, such as those in agriculture; women outnumber men in informal jobs; and women are disproportionately affected by poverty (Johansson de Silva 2016, BFA Global 2020).

Five of the assessed Nigerian companies (17 percent) had a living wage policy, and four companies (13 percent) had a living wage policy that covers their supply chain

(Figure E.2). No company has published any information about closing the gender pay gap to address the difference between the average salary of all women and all men in a company.

Paying a living wage is critical in a rapidly growing country where more than 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and the average Nigerian woman's income is 58 percent of that of a man (Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics 2020, WEF 2021). This inequality results in reduced incomes, which leads to reduced spending and investment by women. Earning a living wage is a foundational need for employees. While companies may have living wage policies in place, they can go further by publishing information about how their compensation frameworks are addressing the gender pay gap. This additional transparency will help accelerate progress in achieving equal pay for equal work.

Figure E.2: Category B: Pay Policies



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based on publicly available information only.

The provision of parental leave is a key issue that disproportionately affects working women, and there is a strong business case for family-friendly workplace policies that include parental leave. An ILO study shows that family-friendly policies result in better employee performance and commitment, which ultimately improves business results (ILO 2014).

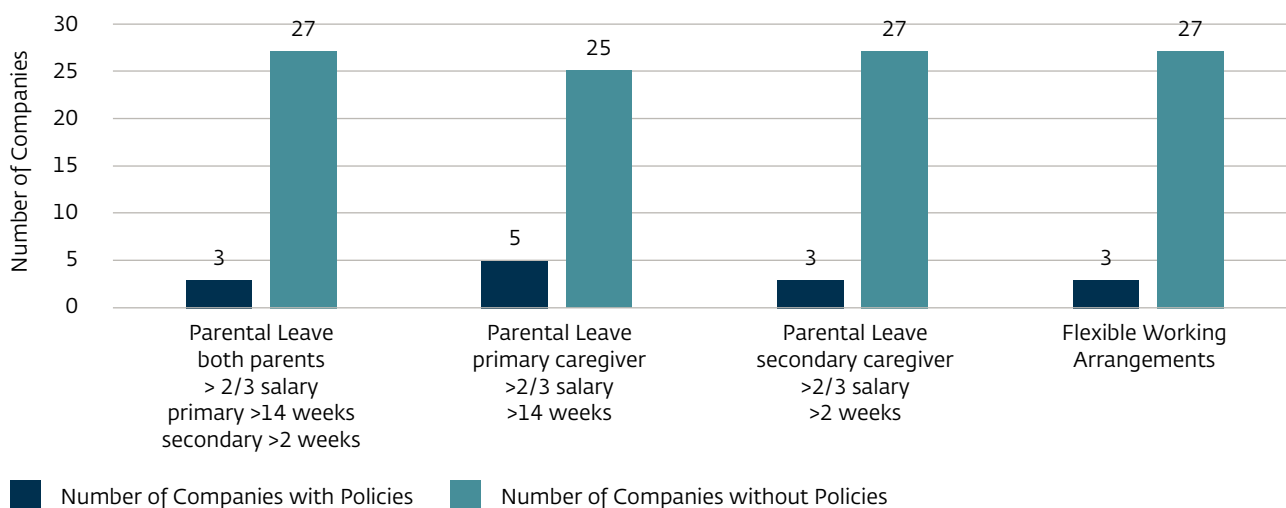
As part of assessing gender equality performance, Equileap looked for a parental leave policy that pays at least two-thirds of an employees' regular salary for 14 weeks for the primary caregiver, and two weeks for the secondary caregiver (for more details, see the Equileap Scorecard™ in Annex B). These metrics correspond to No. 183 of the ILO's Maternity Protection Convention (2000), and the European Commission's (EC's) recommendation for paternity leave.

In Nigeria, the minimum statutory maternity leave requirement is 12 weeks (6 weeks pre-delivery, and 6 weeks post-delivery) at 50 percent of normal pay. However, there is no mandatory leave for secondary caregivers.

Of the 30 companies reviewed, only three had a parental leave policy that exceeded Nigerian legal requirements, and that met or exceeded international (ILO and EC) standards for both primary carer, and secondary carer leave (Figure E.3). Five companies offered 14 weeks or more of parental leave for the primary carer at a rate of two-thirds of their full salary. Three companies offered two weeks of parental leave for the secondary carer at a rate of two-thirds of their full salary. Some parent companies, such as Guinness and Unilever, are raising the bar for parental leave in Nigeria.

The possibility to alter workday start and finish times, and work locations other than the company's site, contribute to work-life balance, particularly for women who typically have greater care-giving responsibilities than men. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for flexible work policies. Three companies (10 percent) offered both flexible hours and locations as a regular, non-COVID-19 policy (Figure E.3), however, some companies that IFC interviewed are considering making their emergency COVID-19 flexible work measures a permanent policy.

Figure E.3: Category B: Work-Life Balance



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based on publicly available information only.

Category C: Policies Promoting Gender Equality

The 30 companies had the strongest performance in Category C, which assessed workplace policies that promote gender equality. In this category, Nigerian companies outperformed global companies on almost all indicators. Twelve companies (40 percent) published information on seven out of the eight assessed policies on recruitment; training and career development; freedom from violence, abuse, and sexual harassment; safety at work; human rights; social supply chain;⁷ supplier diversity; and employee protection (see Figure E.4 and Annex B). However, no company published policies for all eight categories.

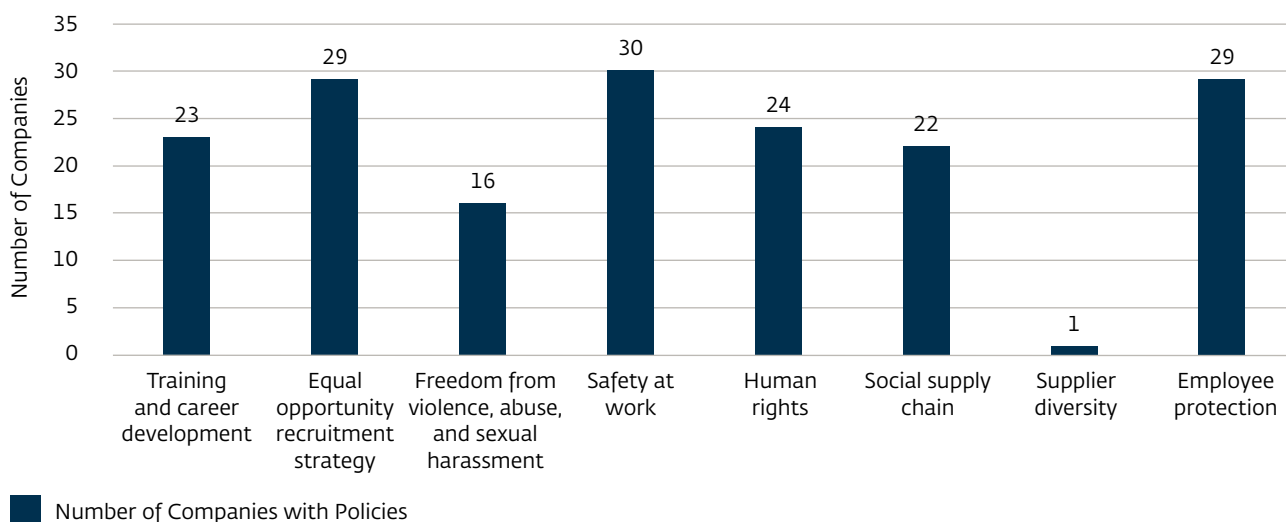
Two types of policies in this category—those concerning sexual harassment, and supplier diversity—stand out as

needing additional transparency and work. Regarding sexual harassment, 16 companies (53 percent) had a written policy that explicitly condemned sexual harassment and gender-based violence (Figure E.4). This was the second-lowest ranked indicator in the dataset, although Nigerian companies performed somewhat better than the global average of 49 percent; however, the global average is also low. The countries leading the way on this indicator are Spain (75 percent), France (63 percent), Italy (62 percent), and Canada (62 percent).

Regarding supplier diversity programs, only one company published a policy on proactively including women-owned businesses in its supply chain. To champion supplier diversity, companies should develop concrete programs to include women-owned businesses, and ensure that these are carried out.

⁷ A social supply chain policy is a commitment to reduce social risks in the company's supply chain such as forbidding business-related activities that condone, support, or otherwise participate in human trafficking, forced and child labor, or labor rights abuses.

Figure E.4: Category C: Policies Promoting Gender Equality



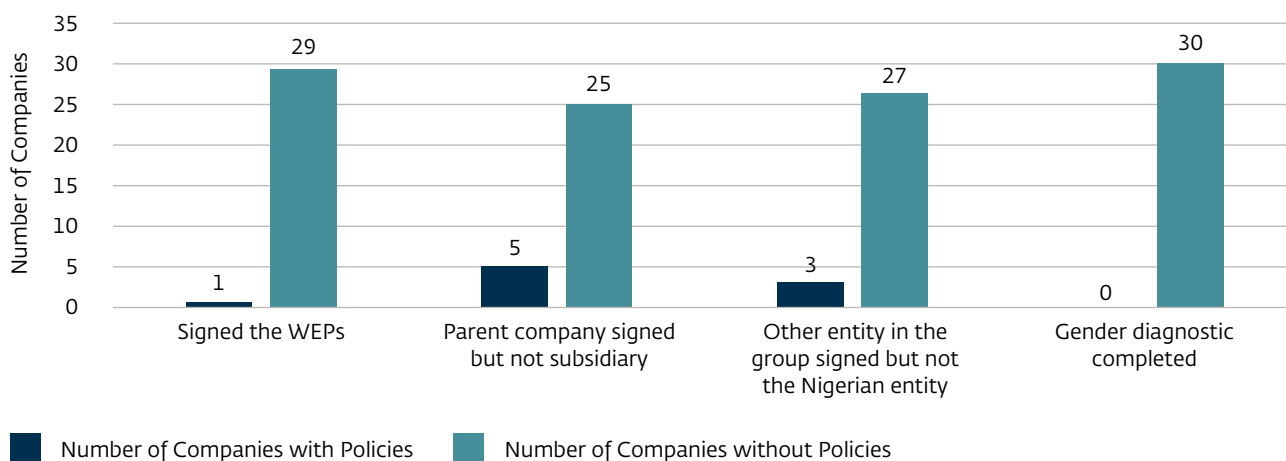
Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based on publicly available information only.

Category D: Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability

A company may have transparent gender policies, actions, and data, but it may not have signed the United Nation’s Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), which would make a strong, public, and important statement about the company’s commitment to gender equality. In this category, only one Nigerian company has signed the WEPs

(Figure E.5). Although, at the parent company level, five companies had signed the WEPs, the Nigerian subsidiaries had not signed. In the case of three other companies, although other entities in their corporate group had signed the WEPs, the assessed Nigerian company had not signed. Further, none of the 30 assessed companies had undertaken an Equileap-recognized gender diagnostic such as the EDGE Certification or the GEEIS Label by Arborus.

Figure E.5: Category D: Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability



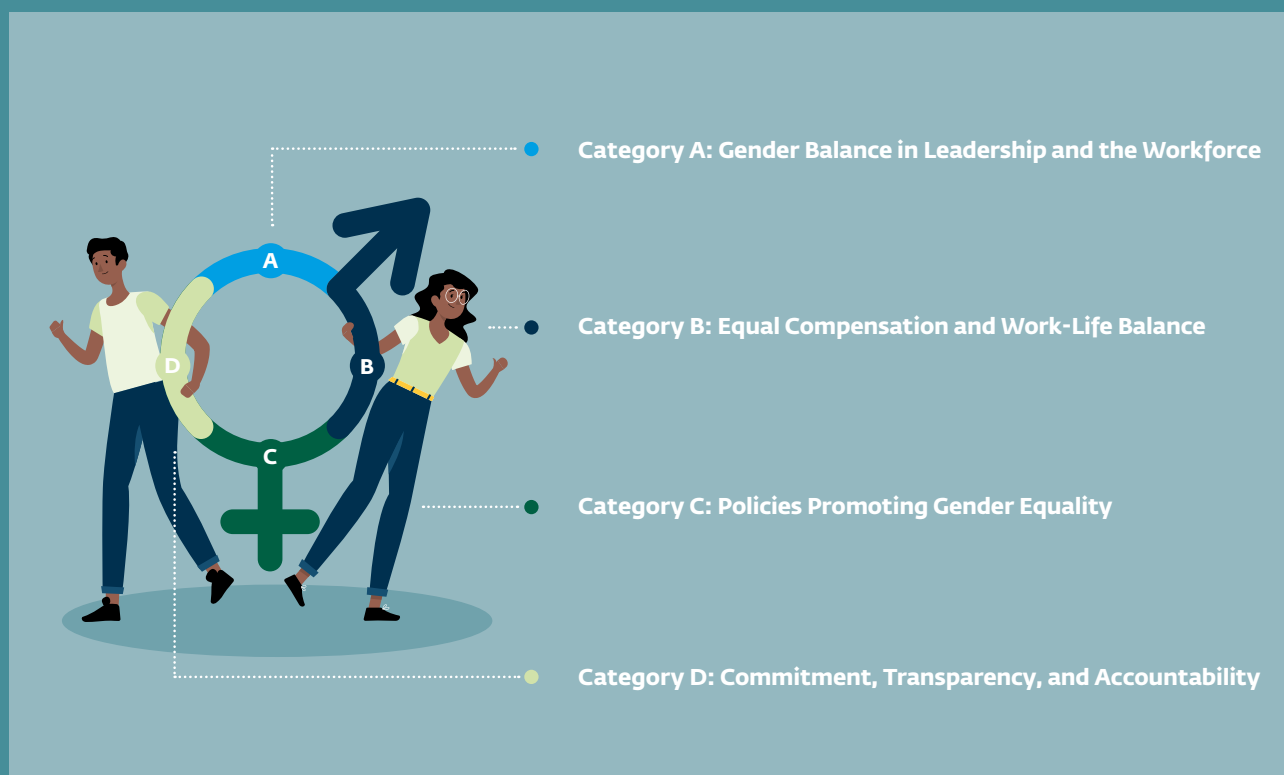
Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based on publicly available information only.

Recommendations

There is strong evidence showing that gender-diverse companies perform better. In 2019, the ILO conducted a worldwide survey of 13,000 enterprises on the impact of their gender diversity initiatives. In that study, the ILO found that approximately 90 percent of the surveyed companies tracked the quantitative impact of their gender diversity initiatives, with regard to promoting women in management. Of these companies, nearly 74 percent saw an increase in profits of between 5 and

20 percent (ILO 2019). Looking at African companies only, the ILO's study showed that the gains in profitability were even higher, with 30 percent of the companies that track gender diversity reporting a profit increase of between 10 and 15 percent (ILO 2019).

To help Nigerian companies reap further business benefits, this report makes a set of recommendations on how companies can reduce gender gaps in their business. The recommendations that follow are based on the gaps identified in this study, and the insights gathered from conversations with the top five Nigerian companies.



Category A: Gender Balance in Leadership and the Workforce

- *Leadership championing:* The board, CEO, and senior management can effectively set the tone, and champion gender equality issues by creating a company culture that embraces gender equality and is backed by measurable targets. To achieve this mandate, gender equality initiatives need to dedicate a budget and staff, prioritize a strategy and action plans, and use a data-driven approach for measuring progress.
- *Targets:* Set time-bound, achievable targets to increase the representation of women at all company levels—in the boardroom, executive, senior management, and workforce. Aim to achieve a company-wide gender balance of between 40 to 60 percent over a specific period of time and promote accountability by publishing the results.
 - Revise corporate board renewal and succession planning policies to include specific and measurable diversity targets. A well-balanced board will comprise a mix of male and female

directors who have a range of skills, experience, perspectives, and knowledge. Also, institute term limits for directors, combined with diversity targets, which will enable progress toward diversity.

- Promote more women into core business functions as these positions will help prepare them for C-suite⁸ and management positions.
- *Promote diversity proactively:* Address barriers to women's boardroom and C-suite appointments by: prioritizing diversity, equality, and inclusion throughout the organization; providing professional development opportunities for women; conducting training for all employees to help develop their emotional intelligence and recognition of unconscious gender bias; setting key gender performance indicators, monitoring these, and publicly disclosing the results; and holding managers accountable for progress toward achieving gender diversity goals.

Category B: Equal Compensation and Work-Life Balance

- *Equal compensation:* Put in place a policy and strategy to close the gender pay gap, and increase transparency by publishing information on living wage commitments and sex-disaggregated pay.
- *Family-friendly workplace policies:* Develop and implement more robust parental leave policies for both parents that meet or exceed international standards for the length of leave and rate of pay. Offer flexible work policies covering both hours and location, and especially offer these as long as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Invest in company-sponsored childcare programs (IFC 2019, IFC 2020).

Category C: Policies Promoting Gender Equality

- *Proactive talent management:* Support women's career progression from recruitment to ensuring retention. This includes strategies that feed the talent pipeline, career development assignments, mentoring, formal education opportunities, leadership programs, and promotions.

- *Diversity and inclusion (D&I) Council:* Establish a D&I Council that promotes and monitors gender equality performance. Make targets public and report on D&I progress in an annual report.
- *Safe workplaces for women and men:* Deploy strong anti-sexual harassment policies, coupled with frequent training and communications campaigns. Publish information about safe workplace policies, including those on sexual harassment. Support employees affected by domestic violence (EBRD, IFC, and CDC 2020).
- *Supplier diversity:* Implement supplier diversity programs that include women-owned businesses. These programs should increase market opportunities for women-owned suppliers through procurement contracts, and build the capacity of women-owned business suppliers through training and mentoring (IFC n.d.)

Category D: Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability

- *Endorsements:* To emphasize the importance of gender equality in the company, sign voluntary principles such as the UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). Through such programs companies can access information on the latest women's empowerment trends and strategies, as well as best practices to address the gender gap.
- *Gender diagnostics:* Conduct gender diagnostics such as the [EDGE Certification](#) or the [GEEIS Label by Arborus](#) to identify gaps, priorities for action, and areas where investment is needed to make improvements.
- *Visibility:* To give greater visibility to the company's high-level commitment to gender equality, promote these high-level endorsements inside and outside the company. This will send a strong message to employees across the organization, as well as to the wider business community, and both can help to accelerate progress.

⁸ The C-suite comprises the highest-ranking executives in an organization. The "C" stands for the word "chief" in the top corporate titles—for example, chief executive officer, chief operations officer, and chief financial officer.

If Nigeria reduced gender inequality in the labor market, in economic participation, and in political representation, the economy could grow by \$229 billion by 2025.



1. Introduction

The Business Case: There is a strong business case for reducing gender gaps in Nigeria. For a nation with a population of 206 million in 2020, and a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$448 billion in 2019, the opportunity to build a stronger, inclusive economy is significant (World Bank Databases n.d.). If Nigeria reduced gender inequality in the labor market, and improved women's economic participation, and political representation, GDP per capita could grow by as much as 1.25 percent annually (IMF 2018), and GDP could grow by 23 percent, or \$229 billion, by 2025 (Council on Foreign Relations 2019).

Companies play an important role in stimulating GDP growth. Ample evidence from various sources demonstrates that companies that have gender-diverse leadership achieve better financial performance. A 2019 ILO study found that the 30 percent of companies in Africa that promote women into management roles achieved profit increases of 10 to 15 percent (ILO 2019).

Women can help companies enhance performance in other key business areas too. IFC found that having women on company boards improves environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices, as well as risk management, returns on invested capital and equity, and board dynamics (IFC 2018). Companies are finding that ESG is essential for their economic growth and their long-term sustainability.

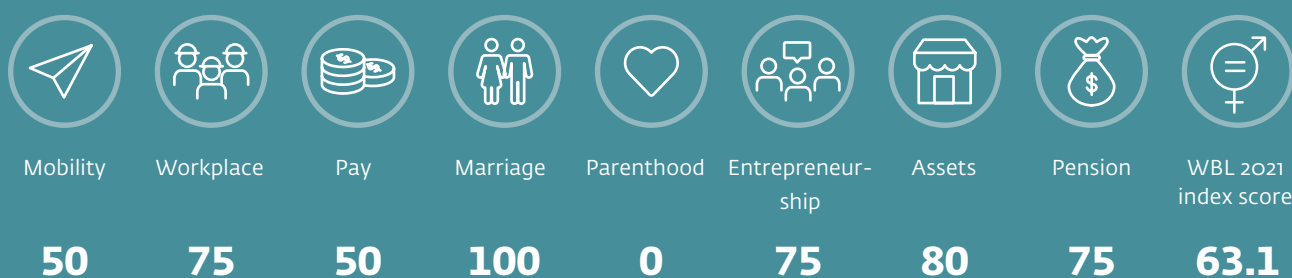
Gender diversity has also been shown to help companies secure investment from impact-minded financiers, and attract new employees, improve employee retention, and foster more collaboration and innovation (WEF 2016).

Challenges: Despite the significant economic potential that women can bring to the corporate table, they must first overcome unique challenges. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), "gender inequality in Nigeria is high and widespread across areas of economic opportunities." The challenges in key areas are as follows:

- **Inadequate policies and practices that promote women's participation in the workforce:** Forty-three percent of Nigerian women are in the labor force, and this figure has declined 2 percent since 1990 (World Bank Databank n.d.). When women are employed, they are more often in lower-productivity and more informal jobs, and they are constrained by lack of access to productive resources (IMF 2018). A quarter of women are in waged and salaried jobs, but they earn almost 17 percent less than men for performing similar jobs (WEF 2018).
- **Weak legal rights and enforcement:** Gender unequal laws affect women individually, as well as at the societal level. According to the World Bank's 2021 report, Women, Business, and the Law, which assessed the individual rights of women, Nigeria scored 63 percent out of 100, or below the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 71 (World Bank 2021) (Figure 1.1).

On workplace issues, women can get a job the same way as men. While anti-discrimination legislation is positively associated with women's employment and earnings, there is no law in Nigeria that prohibits discrimination in employment based on gender. The 2004 Labour Act allows women to work at night in most sectors, except for agriculture and industrial jobs that are deemed dangerous (Policy and Legal Advocacy Center 2004), but women cannot work in the same way as men in jobs in the mining, construction, and energy sectors (World Bank 2021).

Figure 1.1: Nigeria's Rankings in Women Business and the Law 2021



Source: World Bank, 2021.

Concerning pay, Nigerian law does not mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value, but there is legislation on sexual harassment in employment, which can negatively influence a woman's career trajectory. While Nigerian law provides criminal penalties for sexual harassment, it does not provide civil remedies.

With regard to entrepreneurship, there are no legal limitations on a woman's ability to sign a contract, register a business, and open a bank account in the same way as a man; however, the law does not prohibit gender discrimination in access to credit (World Bank 2021).

Regarding parenthood, the Nigerian Labour Act provides 12 weeks of maternity leave, of which six weeks are intended to be taken pre-delivery, and six weeks post-delivery. However, there is no statutory requirement to offer fathers paid leave (World Bank 2021). The ILO's Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) provides for 14 weeks of paid maternity leave, at a rate of pay that is at least at two-thirds of the employee's regular salary. This standard was used by Equileap when conducting this study. Contrary to the ILO convention, in Nigeria, pregnant workers are not protected from dismissal (World Bank 2021, LawNigeria 2018).

In terms of assets, the laws in Lagos State (Nigeria's most populous state) establish that women have equal ownership rights to immovable property (World Bank 2021) (LawNigeria 1882). Sons and daughters have equal rights to inherit assets from their parents, and both female and male surviving spouses have equal rights to inherit assets from their partner (World Bank 2021, LawNigeria 2018). Spouses have equal administrative authority over assets during the marriage (World Bank 2021, LawNigeria 2018). However, "under customary law, women rarely inherit land and typically cannot obtain land rights on their own" (Campbell 2019). "Customary law to land and property ownership is more likely to be enforced and respected than law promulgated by federal and state governments" (Campbell 2019). Further, in northern Nigeria, a woman is conditioned to willingly "relinquish any land she has inherited to her brothers as a gesture of familial allegiance" (Campbell 2019, BBC 2021). As a result, "only 10 percent of landowners in Nigeria are women" (Campbell 2019).

Looking at gender matters through a corporate lens, in Nigeria, there is little regulation. Existing regulation comprises the Security Exchange Commission Code of

Corporate Governance for Listed Companies, May 12, 2014, which recommends that publicly listed companies consider gender when selecting board members, but it does not have any specific gender-based rule or regulation (PwC 2020). The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) of Nigeria, which oversees the Code of Corporate Governance, encourages corporate boards to set diversity goals, and to be mindful of them when filling vacancies (PwC 2020). In contrast, in the Nigerian Sustainable Banking Principles (NSBP), the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) establishes that Nigerian commercial banks should have a minimum of 40 percent of female representation on boards and in management; however, there is no enforcement, and only about 30 percent of banks adhere to this instruction (Central Bank of Nigeria 2012, PwC 2020).

- **Barriers in access to critical assets such as financial services, technology, and insurance (IMF 2018):** Access to finance remains one of the biggest challenges for women entrepreneurs who want to start and grow a business. Twenty-seven percent of women have a bank account, compared to 51 percent of men, and 25 percent of women have Internet access compared to 41 percent of men (World Bank Databank n.d., and International Telecommunications Union 2020). Women-owned micro, small, and medium enterprises (WMSMEs) in Nigeria face a \$21 billion credit gap (SME Finance Forum n.d.). The Nigerian financial sector is recognizing this opportunity and some institutions are creating financial products to address the specific needs of women clients. It is worth noting that the findings from this study show that the financial sector is investing in integrating women in their businesses, but progress here is still slow.
- **Unequal access to education:** Lack of access to education is a significant barrier. The World Economic Forum's (WEF's) Global Gender Gap Report 2021 found that in comparison to other countries, Nigerian women and girls lag significantly behind men and boys in formal education, and this has led to gender gaps of between 17 to 30 percent from primary school to university. The transition to higher education is substantially lower for women, with only 8 percent of women attending university. Fifty-eight percent of girls attend primary school, and 47 percent attend secondary school (WEF 2021). Harmful

practices, such as forced child marriage, are prevalent in Nigeria, with 43 percent of girls married before the age of 18. This results in adolescent pregnancies and plays a significant role in keeping girls out of school (UN Nigeria 2020, UNICEF 2015).

- **High prevalence of gender-based violence:** In Nigeria, gender-based violence (GBV), which includes sexual harassment, physical violence, harmful traditional practices, emotional and psychological violence, socio-economic violence, and violence against non-combatant women in conflict situations, is “almost accepted as a fact of life in some cultures that perceive women as the property of their husbands” (UN n.d). As a result, a UN study found that 28 percent of Nigerian women between the ages of 25 and 29 had experienced some form of physical violence since the age of 15 (UN n.d.). This has negative economic consequences because GBV hinders women’s productivity while they cope with the adverse physical and psychological ramifications. This translates into an estimated loss of 2 percent of Nigeria’s annual GDP of \$440 billion (UN Nigeria 2020).

These issues and inequalities have led to substantial macroeconomic losses in terms of growth, income equality, and economic diversification (IMF 2018). While in 2020, Nigeria made the list of the most improved countries in the WEF’s Global Gender Gap Report 2020, however, in 2021, the country’s ranking dropped by 11 points to 139 out of 155 countries. This was largely a result of other countries improving their performance (WEF 2021). The urgency to address gender gaps takes on an additional dimension, given Nigeria’s rapid population growth, which puts the country on track to have the fifth largest population in the world by 2026. Slow action on gender equality issues could exacerbate poverty because of rapid population growth.

Opportunities: Notwithstanding the significant challenges, Nigeria is making strides toward reducing the gender gap (McKinsey 2019). Female participation in leadership in the workforce has been improving, but progress has been slow. In terms of occupations, the WEF found that Nigerian women comprise 65 percent of skilled professionals, but only 30 percent of senior corporate leaders (WEF 2020). Nigeria ranked first on the WEF’s professional and technical workers’ sub-index, having more women than men—a ratio of 1.83 to 1 (PwC 2020).

The Central Bank of Nigeria establishes in its Sustainable Banking Principles that women should comprise a minimum of 40 percent of Nigerian commercial banks’ boards and management. Although there is no enforcement of these principles, this study found that the financial sector is leading the way on gender equality in Nigeria.

Ranking the World’s Stock Exchanges Based on the Gender Balance of the Issuer’s Boards

In 2009, the [United Nations launched the Sustainable Stock Exchanges \(SSE\) Initiative](#), which recognizes the important role that stock exchanges can play in promoting gender equality in their markets. Since then, the initiative has tracked gender equality on the boards of the top 100 issuers (by market capitalization) in each of the G20’s major stock exchanges. Collecting such data helps the exchanges in their efforts to promote gender equality, and allows for benchmarking and comparisons.

More women have made it to the top of Nigerian companies as board chairs and CEOs than in some G20 countries (SSE 2021). Looking at women’s participation on boards, globally, the percentage of women serving as the chair remains low. As Figure 2.1 shows, the G20 average was 5.5 percent (SSE 2021). In 2019, [The Boardroom Africa](#), researched 166 listed companies in Nigeria and found that women held 6 percent of board chair positions. However, Equileap’s 2021 review of the 30 most capitalized Nigerian companies found that this figure was much higher, at 17 percent, and Nigeria significantly outperformed the 2021 G20 average of 5.5 percent, as well as the London Stock Exchange (LSE) (5 percent), the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) (9 percent) and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) (11 percent).

As far as board positions, the G20 average was 20 percent in 2021. While The Boardroom Africa found that women comprised 18 percent of board members in surveyed Nigerian companies in 2019, Equileap found that women comprised 23 percent of board members in 2021—again outperforming the G20 average.

Figure 1.2: Ranking the World's Stock Exchanges Based on the Gender Balance of Issuers' Boards

Ranking the World's Stock Exchanges Based on Gender Balance of Issuers' Boards

An analysis of the gender balance of the top 100 issuers by market capitalization from each of the 22 exchanges in the G20

	Stock Exchange (top 100 issuers by market capitalization)	% of Women on Board	Mandatory Minimum Rule for Women on Boards			% of Women Chair	% of Women Rule CEO
			Rule	% Women	Number Women		
1	Euronext Paris	44.3	Yes	40		2	5
2	Borsa Italiana	37.5	Yes	33		13	5
3	London Stock Exchange (LSE)	36.2	No			5	5
4	Deutsche Börse (DB)	32.5	Yes	30		4	2
5	Australian Securities Exchange (ASX)	32.3	No			14	8
6	New York Stock Exchange (NYSE)	30.4	No			9	8
7	Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX)	30.2	No	—		9	4
8	Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE)	28.5	No			11	2
9	NASDAQ	27.8	Yes		1	3	5
G20 Average		20.2				5.5	3.5

Source: UN Sustainable Stock Exchanges, 2021.

Regarding women heading companies in Nigeria, in 2019, The Boardroom Africa found that 8 percent of CEOs were women, while in 2021, Equileap found a similar percentage of women leaders (7 percent). Both of these findings surpassed the global average of 3.5 percent (Figure 1.2) and put Nigeria on par with the best performers in the G20—the NYSE and the Australian Securities Exchange, where women comprised 8 percent of CEOs.

Notwithstanding the important strides made by women in Nigeria, there is a persistent gender gap at the corporate leadership level, in the workforce, and in corporate supply chains. Addressing the underlying issues, as discussed in the next chapter, is critical to ensure that women can participate equally with men, and that this will, in turn, influence the number of women that advance into leadership positions.

Methodology

Recognizing that IFC can play an important role in assisting companies to implement gender-smart business strategies that promote gender equality, and help improve business performance, in 2020 IFC launched the [Nigeria2Equal](#)

Program, in partnership with NGX. To improve gender equality performance, the program addresses gender gaps across the workforce and entrepreneurship.

[Nigeria2Equal](#) comprises three components—research, a peer-learning platform, and firm-level support to companies. As part of the research component, IFC commissioned Equileap to conduct a gender gap assessment of the 30 most capitalized companies listed on NGX, and the results are presented in this report.

This study had two broad objectives: (1) to investigate the extent of gender gaps in the private sector, and (2) to provide a basis for companies participating in the program to identify top priority areas to which they can commit during implementation of the [Nigeria2Equal](#) program.

Using the [Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™](#), this study assessed the performance of the 30 selected companies across 19 criteria that are described in detail in Annex B.⁹ These included gender balance across the workforce; pay and benefits; corporate policies, such as paid parental leave and the prevention of sexual harassment; and corporate commitments to gender equality.

⁹ The Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™ has been used to evaluate over 3,700 publicly traded companies in 23 developed markets annually.

Figure 1.3: Equileap's Gender Equality Scorecard™: Four Categories and 19 Indicators



Category A: Gender Balance in Leadership and Workforce

1. Board of Directors
2. Executives
3. Senior Management
4. Workforce
5. Promotion and Career Development



Category B: Equal Compensation and Work-Life Balance

6. Living Wage
7. Gender Pay Gap
8. Parental Leave
9. Flexible Work Options



Category C: Policies promoting Gender Equality

10. Training and Career Development
11. Recruitment Strategy
12. Freedom from Violence, Abuse and Sexual Harassment
13. Safety at Work
14. Human Rights
15. Social Supply Chain
16. Supplier Diversity
17. Employee Protection



Category D: Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability

18. Commitment to Women's Empowerment
19. Gender Diagnostic

Source: Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™, see Annex B.

To conduct the assessment, Equileap used company documents that were publicly available on websites, in annual reports, and in corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports. Equileap and IFC's research concluded in May 2021. For additional information on the methodology, see Annex A.

Research limitations: Since the methodology was dependent on publicly available information published by the companies themselves, and there was limited transparency with regard to what companies published, this may have influenced the results.

While a company may have a policy, if information on this was not publicly available, this reduced the company's score. In some instances, companies may have taken internal action on certain gender equality indicators; however, they did not receive credit in this assessment because the scores were based solely on publicly available and verifiable information. Thus, it is imperative that companies publish information about their policies and practices—not only so that they receive credit for their efforts, but also to showcase progress, and encourage other companies to do the same.

In Nigeria, Equileap encountered a challenge with regard to the availability of data on certain gender metrics. Hence, the average score of Nigerian companies is comparatively low. For instance, in Nigeria, 60 percent of companies did not disclose the gender composition of their senior management team, nearly half of the companies did not publish their sexual harassment policy, and no company disclosed gender-disaggregated pay information. As a result, policies and practices in the assessed companies may be better than what the publicly verifiable data show. Nevertheless, several top-performing companies are leading the way in terms of promoting gender equality.

To gather additional information, with the support of NGX, companies were informed of the research and invited to submit their most recent published information. Also, a survey questionnaire was sent to all 30 listed companies and seven companies responded.¹⁰ To complement this research, IFC conducted follow-up interviews with the top five companies to obtain additional insights on their gender practices, and in Chapter 2 of this report, IFC has featured the companies with best practices in short case studies.

The findings in this report enable comparative analysis between companies and sectors in Nigeria against Equileap's global dataset in 23 developed markets, which comprises over 3,700 public companies with a market capitalization of \$2 billion or more. The findings in this report also highlight areas where greater transparency is needed, such as women in senior management, the gender pay gap, and anti-sexual harassment policies. Additionally, the report provides insights that can help companies to reduce their gender gap, as well as advise policymakers, civil society organizations, and investors that want to add a gender lens to their investment processes.

¹⁰ Access Bank, Flour Mills of Nigeria, Lafarge Africa, Presco, Sterling Bank, Union Bank of Nigeria, and Zenith Bank.



2. Research Findings

Nigeria's Overall Performance

IFC partnered with NGX to assess the workplace gender equality policies of the 30 most capitalized companies listed on the exchange. These 30 companies represented a range of sectors—1 in communications, 10 in consumer staples, 3 in energy, 12 in financials, 3 in materials, and 1 in utilities.

This assessment was carried out by Equileap, which used its Gender Equality Scorecard™ to conduct a gap analysis of the companies' performance. For more information on the Scorecard, which evaluates four main categories and 19 gender equality indicators, see Annex B. For this study, Nigerian companies' performance was compared to Equileap's global dataset for 2020, which was published in 2021.¹¹

Overall, Nigerian companies scored an average of 32 percent, and this compares favorably to Equileap's global average score of 34 percent (Figure 2.1).

In Category A, *Gender Balance in Leadership and the Workforce*, Nigeria performed comparably or better than the global average with regard to representation of women on company boards of directors, the executive, and in the workforce, but performance was weaker with regard to

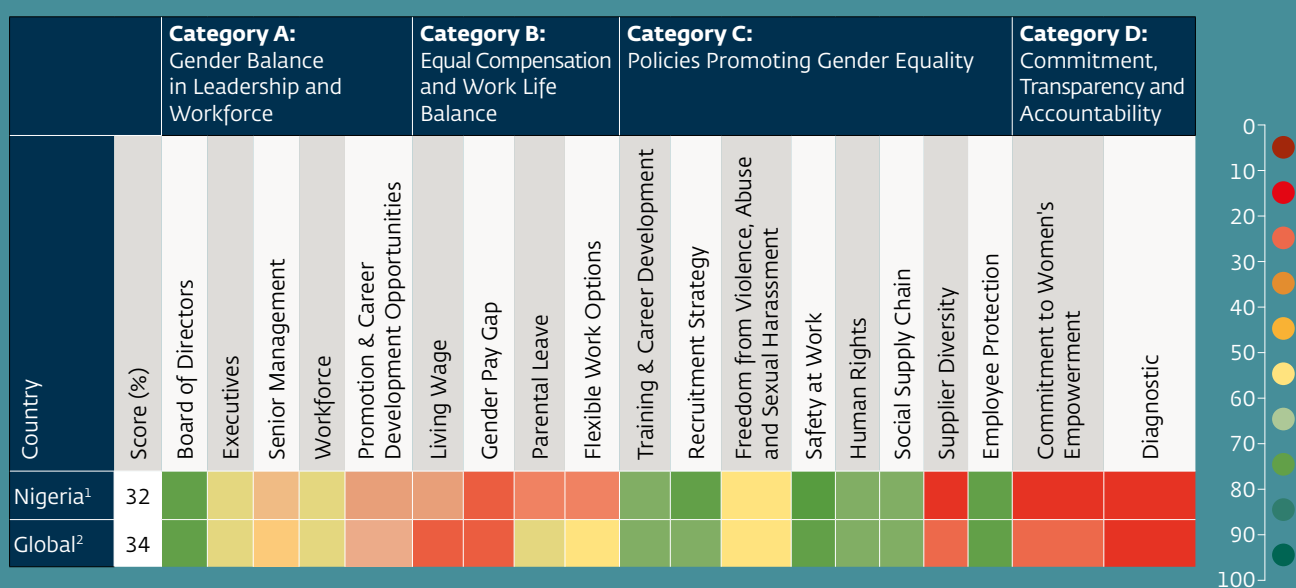
representation in senior management, promotion, and career development opportunities.

In Category B, *Equal Compensation and Work-Life Balance*, regarding the living wage category, five Nigerian companies (17 percent) published their living wage policy, compared to the global average of 6 percent. Equileap noted in its 2021 global report that disclosure is particularly low for information on the gender pay gap. Regarding the parental leave indicator, the average score of Nigerian companies was 13 percent, and this was significantly weaker than the global average of 46 percent. Although three companies scored 100 percent, and two scored 50 percent, the low score was a result of 25 companies scoring zero.

Category C, *Policies Promoting Gender Equality*, had the strongest performance, with Nigerian companies outperforming global companies on almost all indicators, except for supplier diversity.

In Category D, *Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability*, results were consistently low across the board, both in Nigeria and globally, indicating substantial room for improvement for both.

Figure 2.1: Countries Ranked on 19 Gender Equality Criteria



Sources: ¹Equileap 2021. ²Equileap Gender Equality Global Report and Ranking, 2021.

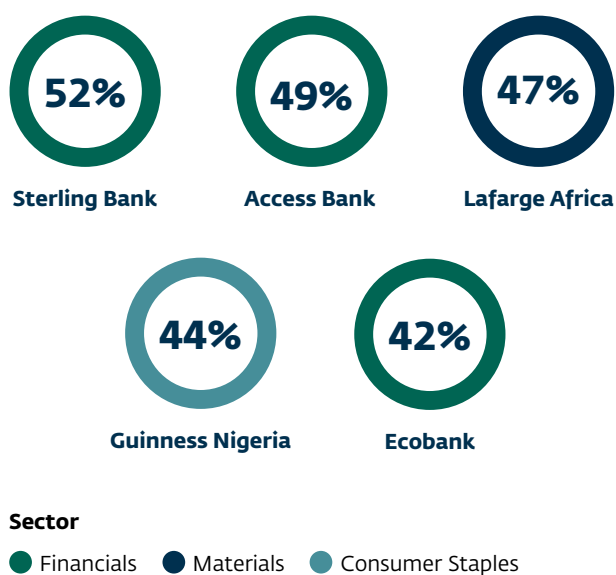
Note: results are based on publicly available information only.

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, all references to global data in this report apply to the dataset in Equileap's 2021 "Gender Equality Global Report and Ranking."

Key Findings

Individual Nigerian company scores ranged from 7.5 percent to 52.3 percent, and the top five performing companies, which scored 42 percent or above were Sterling Bank, Access Bank, Lafarge Africa, Guinness Nigeria, and Ecobank (Figure 2.2). Globally, the top 50 companies obtained a score of 63 percent or above. In Nigeria, the financial services sector was the top-performing sector, with an average score of 38 percent. This was also the most represented sector in the dataset. Out of the 12 financial services companies reviewed, 7 were among the top 10 companies.

Figure 2.2: Top Five Performing Companies in Nigeria



Best Company Overall: Sterling Bank—Leading the Way in Investing in Women as Employees and Entrepreneurs

Sterling Bank is the best performing company in Nigeria, with an overall score of 52 percent.

The company has achieved a gender-balanced workforce (42 percent women), but can improve its gender balance at the senior management level (32 percent), and at the board, and executive levels (25 percent each). In Category B, Sterling Bank publicizes that it offers employees both flexible work hours and locations. On its website, the bank states “We have adopted the “Flexi-plan and Flexi-place” initiatives for staff to enable them to achieve a desirable work-life balance. This means staff can work from any location and can have flexible work hours. This has been especially beneficial for women who make up a significant part of our workforce.”

In Category C, Sterling has seven out of the eight policies promoting gender equality, and it was the only company in the study that had a supplier diversity program that includes women-owned businesses.

In an interview with IFC, Temi Dalley, Sterling Bank’s Chief Human Resources Officer, explained that “There is a commitment from the organization’s board of directors and executive management to make gender equality a top strategic priority, and this is reflected in our people strategy and practices. Our people policies and practices are gender friendly, and we have a measurable framework that ensures adoption and alignment at all levels. We also have many employee resource groups, including the newly introduced Sterling Women Development Program that specifically equips and accelerates our women into top leadership positions, as well as the Bloom network, which is a structured mentoring, advocacy, and sponsorship community for women in our workplace.”

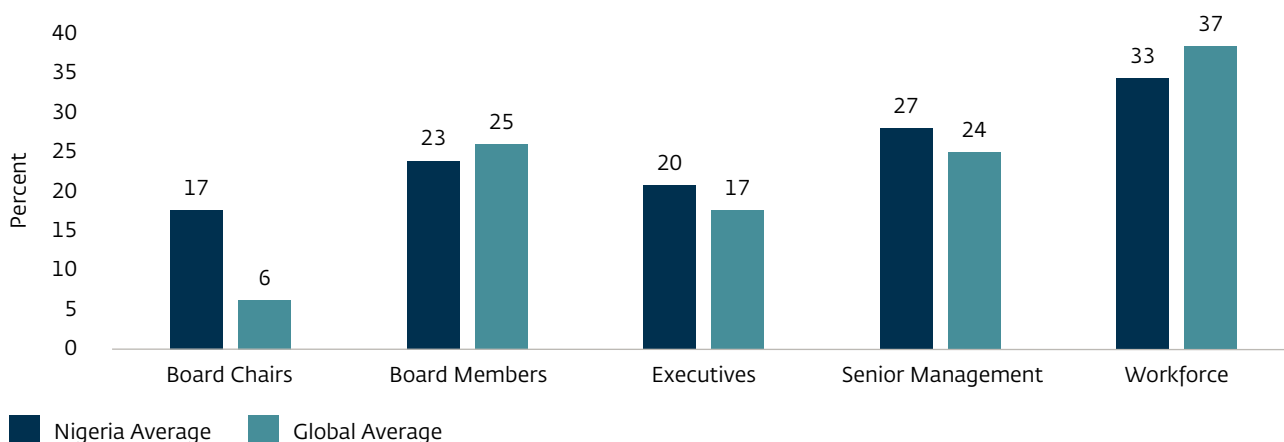
Category A: Gender Balance in Leadership and the Workforce

Gender balance, which Equileap defines as between 40 to 60 percent of either gender, at all levels, from the board to the workforce, is a key component of a company's gender equality performance.¹² Research indicates that companies with more diverse boards have greater returns and lower risk profiles (Thwing Eastman and Seretis 2018, Catalyst 2004, Füllbrunn 2015). For example, a 2020 Glenmede study of the Russell 1000 Index found that companies in the top quintile of Equileap's Category A: Gender Balance in Leadership and Workforce, outperformed the bottom quintile by 2.6 percent, indicating greater returns and less risk (Enyart 2020). Increased participation of women at all levels in the workplace also leads to better business performance for companies, and higher growth for

the communities in which these companies operate (ILO 2019).

In Nigeria, this study shows that women held nearly three times the number of board chair positions (17 percent), compared with Equileap's global average of 6 percent (Figure 2.3). In Nigeria, women's representation in the top leadership level—the board, executive, and senior management—ranged from 20 to 27 percent, and was largely in line with global trends of between 17 and 25 percent. However, at the workforce level, although Nigerian women made up one-third of the workforce, they lagged behind their global peers by 5 percent. There were 6 percent more women at the workforce level than in senior management, indicating that there are barriers preventing women from advancing to higher levels of leadership, which suggests the need for an effective strategy to feed the talent promotion pipeline.

Figure 2.3: Category A: Corporate Gender Balance in Nigeria and Globally



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information.

¹² The International Labour Organization defines gender balance as 40 to 60 per cent of either gender in the general workforce or among senior managers. When the overall workforce is gender balanced, with 40 to 60 per cent of either sex, women are likely to be better represented in middle, senior, and top management positions (ILO 2019).

Best Company for Gender Balance

Access Bank has the highest percentage of women in the workforce (46 percent), and its board has a female chair. Female representation in the board, executive, and senior management was between 25 and 35 percent. Access Bank prioritizes its gender equality strategy, and the bank was the only company out of 30 to have signed the UN Women's Empowerment Principles.

In reflecting on the bank's gender success, Dr. Ajoritsedere Awosika, the female chair of the bank's board said, "What makes Access Bank stand out is that we have over 14 million female customers, which is possibly the largest portfolio of women clients of any bank in Nigeria. The Board and Senior Management take the women's client segment and women's advancement issues very seriously. We even have a special lending program that targets women. Our W-Power loan gives women-owned businesses a large discount on loans at all levels." She added, "We back our commitment to gender equality with a large team of 17 full-time professionals who cater to the needs of women clients."

On professional development, Access Bank has several initiatives. "Access Bank has an undying commitment to the development, training, and capacity building of our workers. These professional development packages are at the disposal of our male and female workers, without discrimination. Also, having recognized the potential

role of women in the future of financing stronger and bigger African economies, Access Bank launched several initiatives to further catalyze the professional development, mentoring, and training of our women employees. These initiatives include the Access Women's Network, which mentors and coaches junior-level and mid-level employees by providing training, and the 'W' Initiative, which provides women with capacity building programs, mentoring programs, and maternal health services" (Access Bank 2019).

On sexual harassment, Access Bank has a whistle-blowing mechanism that enables employees to submit an anonymous complaint, either internally or externally, to KPMG, which then investigates the matter confidentially.

On promotions, Access Bank offers clear pathways, with information on key performance indicators (KPIs), so that employees are aware of the required competencies at the next level. Appraisals are conducted quarterly to provide employees with frequent feedback. On performance reviews, employees can only be assessed in if they have worked for a minimum of four out of the previous six months. This is particularly important to ensure fairness for women who take six months of maternity leave. Further, the number of employees who are promoted annually is disaggregated by gender, and this is reported to the board. Access Bank also offers several structured programs on women's professional advancement, as well as external programs that support women entrepreneurs.

Board of Directors: Of the 30 companies studied in Nigeria, women comprised 17 percent of board chairs, which was higher than Equileap's global average of 6 percent. Also, women comprised 23 percent of board members, which was comparable to the global average of 25 percent (Figure 2.3). Four companies: Lafarge Africa, NASCON Allied Industries, Stanbic IBTC, and Transnational Corporation of Nigeria (Transcorp) achieved gender balance at the board level. One company, NASCON Allied Industries, had both a female board chair, and a female chief financial officer (CFO).

Executive: Overall, at the executive level, women held 20 percent of positions, and this was higher than the global average of 17 percent (Figure 2.3). Three companies, Fidelity Bank, Guinness Nigeria, and Total Nigeria achieved gender balance at the executive level. In this study, women in Nigeria comprised 7 percent of CEOs, which is in line with Equileap's global average of 7 percent. However, at 17 percent, there were slightly more Nigerian women CFOs than the global average of 13 percent. No company had both a female CEO and CFO.

Senior Management: The average percentage of women in senior management was 27 percent, which was higher than the global average of 24 percent (Figure 2.3). No company achieved gender balance at the senior management level. However, 60 percent of the researched companies did not publish a figure for women in senior management and, as a result, the Nigerian average only covers 40 percent of companies. The lack of corporate visibility regarding the gender balance in senior management means that the percentage of women at this level may be higher; hence, companies are encouraged to regularly publish this type of information.

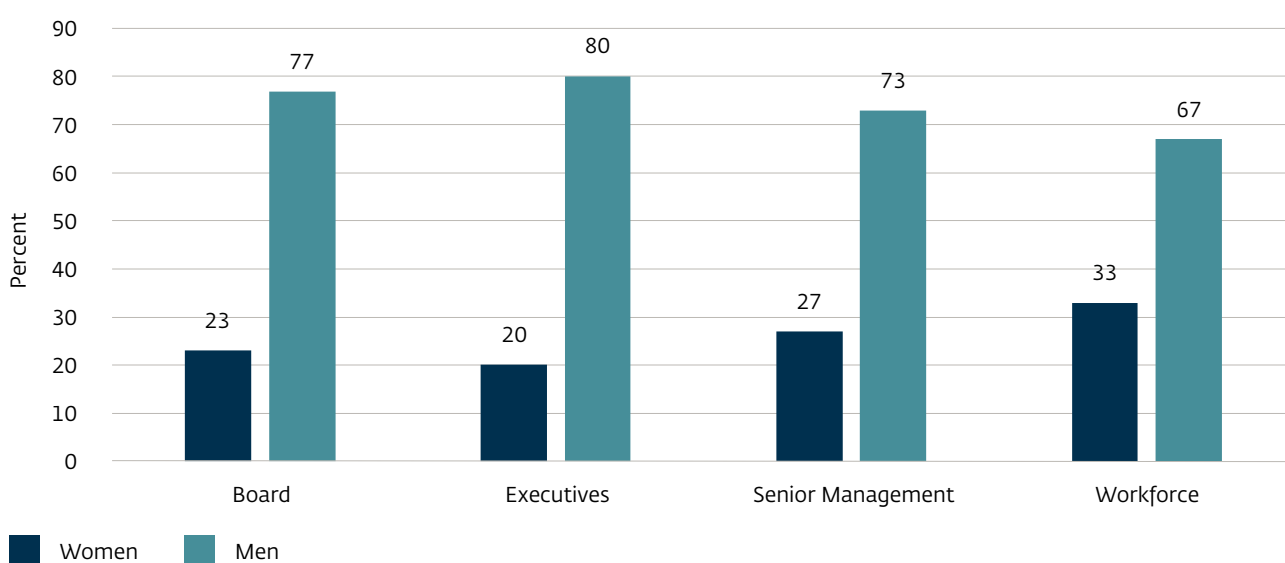
Workforce: The average percentage of women in the workforce was 33 percent, which was lower than the global average of 37 percent (Figure 2.3). The percentage of women at the workforce level was greater than the senior management level, indicating barriers to women's advancement to higher levels of leadership, and the need effective strategies to feed the talent promotion pipeline. Nearly one-third of the 30 companies achieved gender balance at the workforce level, including Access Bank, Ecobank, FCMB Group,

Fidelity Bank, Guaranty Trust Bank, Stanbic IBTC, Sterling Bank, United Bank for Africa, and Zenith Bank.

No Nigerian company achieved gender balance simultaneously across all four levels—in the board, executive, senior management, and workforce

(Figure 2.4), however, two companies achieved gender balance at more than one level. Stanbic IBTC Holdings had a gender balance on its board, and in its workforce, and Fidelity Bank was balanced at the executive and workforce levels.

Figure 2.4: Corporate Gender Balance in Nigeria, by Gender



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information.

Driving the Gender Agenda

Ecobank Transnational (Ecobank) has achieved gender parity with 41 percent of its workforce. At the executive and senior management levels, women’s representation was 25 and 36 percent, respectively. Ecobank’s corporate leadership on gender equality stems from the group level, and it has several initiatives to drive awareness. Ecobank Group also works with institutional investors that have well-established principles for facilitating female participation, and Ecobank has embraced these.

Ecobank is deliberate with its hiring practices in order to achieve a 50/50 gender balance with new hires. For women who take maternity leave, the time period for performance evaluations is prorated so that women are not assessed for the period of their leave. Regarding a flexible work policy, Ecobank has flexible start and end times, and in response to COVID-19, staff have been allowed to work from home or an office location. The pivot to working remotely has

demonstrated that staff can work productively, and hence, the bank’s temporary policy is expected to be retained after the pandemic ends.

Reflecting on what makes gender equality successful at Ecobank in Nigeria, Carol Oyedeji, a board member, and the Executive Director for Commercial Banking made several points. “First, we have established female representation from the staff to the senior management level. Second, is our client focus and the agenda we have to develop our female customers through our Female Entrepreneurship Initiative and our Elevate Program, which are supporting women in their businesses through capacity building initiatives. Third, is the partnerships we have to ensure that the companies in our supply chain have a significant number of women owners or managers, which means that we are driving the gender agenda this way too.” Ms Oyedeji also said, “We are about to launch several new gender initiatives with respect to our gender programs and will strongly promote awareness about these.”

Category B: Equal Compensation and Work-Life Balance

In Category B, the Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™ assessed company compensation and work-life balance policies. On remuneration, Equileap checks for three indicators: (1) that the compensation policy demonstrates a commitment to pay a living wage to all employees, (2) that there is transparency on the gender pay gap at the company level and on multiple pay bands, and (3) that there is a commitment to close the pay gap. Regarding work-life balance, this consists of parental leave and flexible work policies. Equileap looks for parental leave that is paid at a rate of at least two-thirds of the employee's wage, for both the primary and the secondary caregiver, either globally, or at least in the country of incorporation. Flexible work covers options for employees to control and/or vary the start and end times of the workday, and/or vary the location where employees work. Flexible work covers options for employees to control and/or vary the start and end times of the workday, and/or vary the location where employees work.

Living Wage: A living wage is defined as a level of pay that is sufficient to meet a person's basic needs (food, housing, and clothing) in a given place of residence. The provision of a living wage by employers is key to ensuring that employees in low-paid positions can cover their basic needs. In Nigeria, as is the case globally, women occupy the majority of low-paid jobs, and they are disproportionately affected by poverty (Johansson de Silva 2016). The monthly

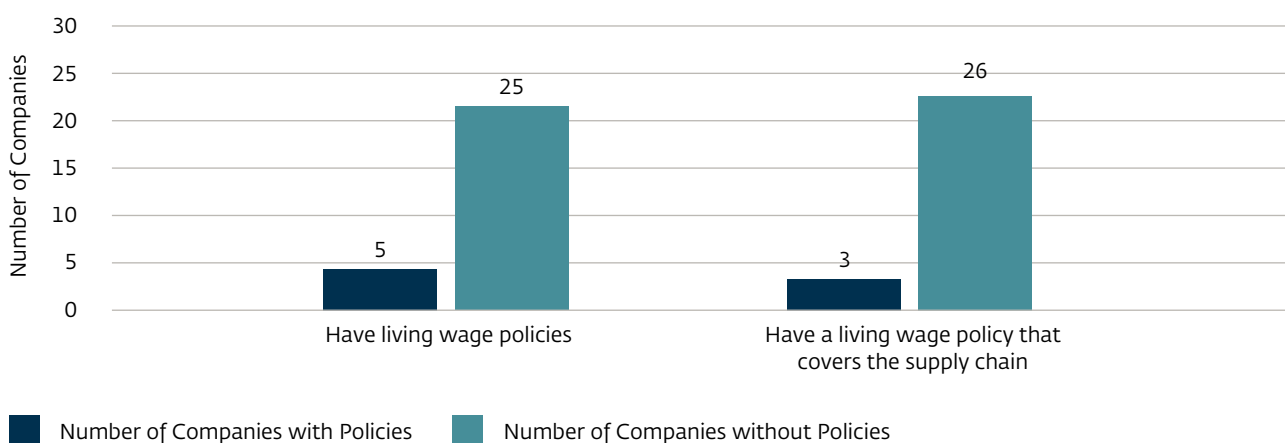
statutory minimum wage for federal workers in Nigeria was increased in 2019, from N18,000 (\$47) to N30,000 (\$79);¹³ however, many states have struggled to pay the salaries of civil servants due to fiscal constraints (Achirga and Eboh 2021). By paying a living wage, companies can contribute to efforts to reduce poverty.

Five Nigerian companies (17 percent) have a living wage policy (Figure 2.5). They include: FBN Holdings, International Breweries, Nestle Nigeria, Nigerian Breweries, and Unilever Nigeria. Four of these companies use their parent company's policy. Four companies (13 percent) have a living wage policy that covers their supply chain partners, too.

"Applying the living wage principle means that our lowest-paid employees should always receive pay that is fair and gives them enough to provide for their family's basic needs with regard to food, housing, education, and healthcare, as well as giving them some discretionary income."

Unilever

Figure 2.5: Living Wages



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information.

¹³ The foreign exchange rate in May 2021 was US\$1 = N381.0000.

Paying a living wage is critical in a rapidly growing country where more than 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and where the average Nigerian woman's income is 58 percent of a man's (Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics 2020, WEF 2021). This inequality results in lower incomes, which leads to less spending and investment by women. Earning a living wage is a foundational need, and while companies may have policies in place, they can go further and publish information about how their compensation frameworks are addressing gender pay gaps. Additional transparency will help accelerate progress toward gender equality.

Regarding paying a living wage, Unilever and FBN Holdings had best practices. Unilever (2021) reported, "At the heart of our Framework (for Fair Compensation) is the principle of a 'living wage'—that is, one that gives our employees enough to provide for their family's basic needs, for food, housing, education, and healthcare, as well as some discretionary income. While what we pay employees in any country is generally based on that country's 'market' for similar jobs (which is defined by an objective analysis of independent pay market surveys), applying the living wage principle means that our lowest-paid employees should always receive pay that is fair and adequate for their basic needs. Since 2015, we have worked closely with the Fair Wage Network (FWN), an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) that works to promote better wage practices. FWN has helped us develop our understanding of living wages, whether our existing compensation arrangements deliver fair wages, and how they fit into our overall Framework for Fair Compensation."

In its 2019 Corporate Governance Report, FBN Holdings reported, "In reviewing the compensation package, factors to be considered include organizational policy, market positioning, the Group's financial performance, government policies, regulations, industry trends, inflation, and the cost-of-living index."

The Gender Pay Gap: The gender pay gap is defined as the difference between the average salary of all women and of all men in a company. At present, women worldwide still get paid 23 percent less than men (for each hour worked, women earn 77 cents on every dollar earned by men), and at the current pace, pay parity is unlikely to be achieved before 2069 (International Trade Union Confederation n.d.). In Nigeria, the average woman's income is 58 percent of a man's (World Economic Forum 2021). This inequality results in reduced incomes, leading to lower spending and investment by women.

Globally, women earn 77 cents on every dollar earned by men, but in Nigeria, the average woman's income is 58 percent of a man's.

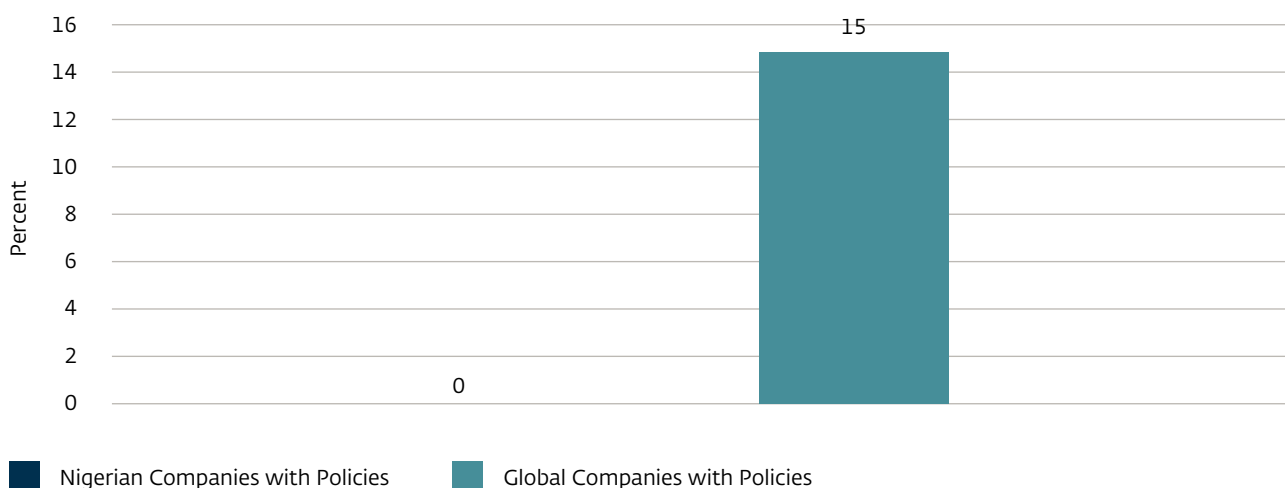
World Economic Forum

Equileap researched both the overall gender pay gap, and the pay gaps at three or more levels in each of the 30 Nigerian companies surveyed. Companies were evaluated based on what they disclose (whether or not they publish gender-segregated pay information, overall, and in all pay bands); on performance (how large the mean, unadjusted¹⁴ pay gaps are); and whether the company has a strategy to close any such gaps. The pay gap remains one of the key issues where disclosure is particularly low.

In Nigeria, no company published any information about closing the gender pay gap to address the difference between the average salary of all women and all men in a company. Globally, as shown in Figure 2.6, 15 percent of companies publish information on the differences between the salaries of male and female employees (Equileap 2021).

¹⁴ The unadjusted gap is the overall difference in average pay for men and women. The adjusted pay gap takes into consideration other factors such as an employee's age, education level, years of work experience, and job title.

Figure 2.6: Gender Pay Gap Disclosure Policy



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information.

Parental Leave: The provision of parental leave is a key issue that disproportionately affects working women. Many companies regard parental leave for the birth or care of a child as a burden that complicates employment. Combined with a widespread gender imbalance in care responsibilities, this view leads to motherhood being a cause of discrimination in the workplace. This ranges from women suffering from negative comments and being perceived as less driven, to dismissal (United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission 2018). In contrast, there is a trend to reward men with children with higher pay and career advancement (Catalyst 2019).

There is a strong business case to be made for family-friendly workplace policies, including parental leave, because supported parents perform better and are more committed to their work, and, ultimately, this improves business performance (ILO 2014). Therefore, effectively supporting employees with care responsibilities can be a source of competitive advantage for companies, as they are more able to retain and develop female talent, which is more cost-effective in the long term. Supporting parents in sharing the responsibility for caring for a new child is also an important step to reduce gender discrimination based on motherhood, and to encourage women's continued participation in the workforce (Catalyst 2019).

As part of assessing gender equality performance, Equileap looked for parental leave that pays at least two-thirds of employees' regular salary for 14 weeks for the primary caregiver, and two weeks at the same rate for the secondary caregiver (see Scorecard in Annex B). These metrics correspond, respectively, to No. 183 of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention (2000), and the European Commission's (EC's) recommendation for paternity leave.

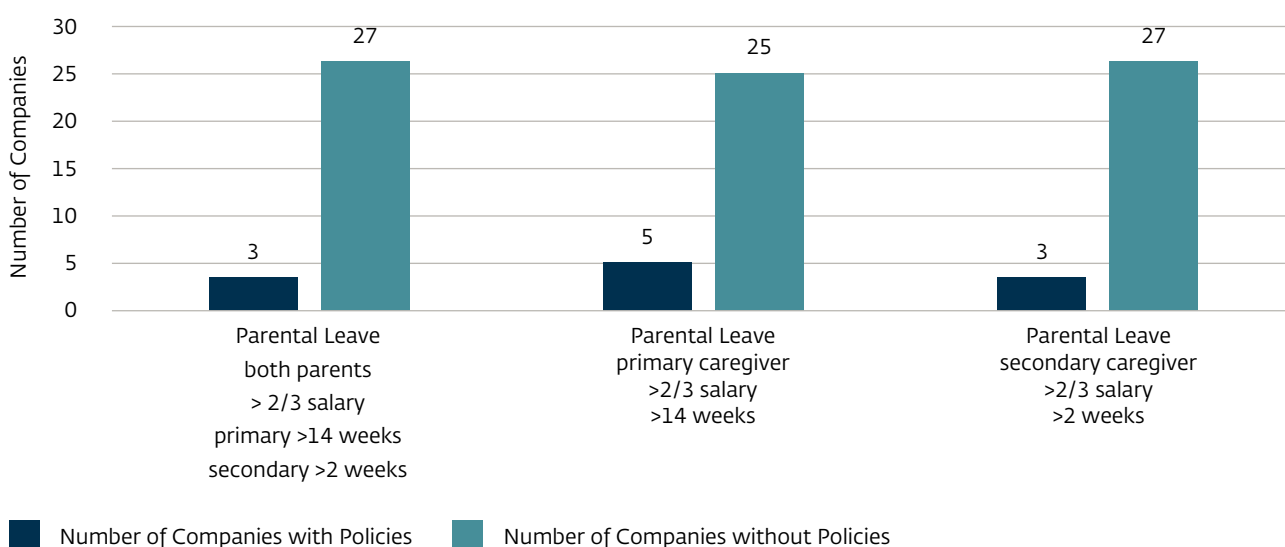
The regulatory environment, as well as company policies, play a major role in supporting working women. In Nigeria, the minimum statutory parental leave requirements are 12 weeks of leave for the primary caregiver (six weeks pre-delivery and six weeks post-delivery) at 50 percent of normal pay, but only if the employee has had six months of continuous service with the employer. However, there is no mandatory leave requirement for secondary caregivers.

Many companies are recognizing that to be competitive, they need to offer maternity leave benefits that are better than the statutory requirements. **Of the 30 listed companies Equileap reviewed, three companies met both the ILO and the EC standards for parental leave for both the primary caregiver and the secondary caregiver (Figure 2.7).** Guinness Nigeria achieved the best-in-class score for offering 26 weeks of fully paid maternity leave, and four weeks of fully paid paternity leave.

Five companies offered 14 weeks or more of primary caregiver leave at a rate of at least two-thirds of employees' regular salary: Access Bank, Guinness Nigeria, International Breweries, Nestle Nigeria, and Unilever Nigeria (Figure 2.7). A total of three companies—Guinness Nigeria, International Breweries, and Unilever Nigeria offer two weeks

or more of secondary caregiver leave at a rate of at least two-thirds of an employee's regular salary (Figure 2.7). Other companies published information on the topic of parental leave but did not specify if leave is paid, or they reported a length of leave that was below the legally required number of weeks.

Figure 2.7: Parental Leave



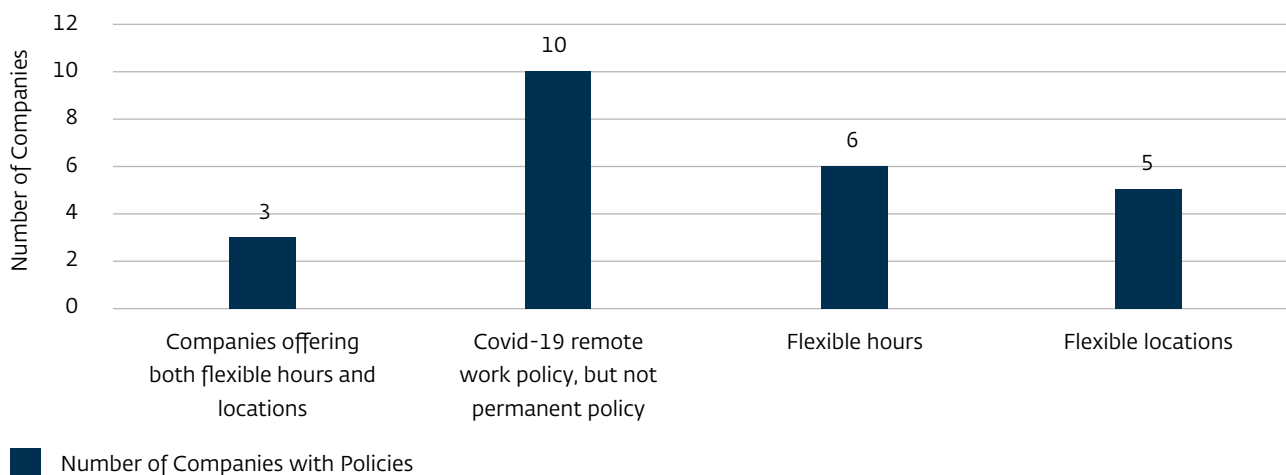
Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information.

Flexible Work: The possibility to alter the workday's start and end times, and work from locations other than the company site facilitates work-life balance, especially for women, who typically have most or all of the family caregiving responsibilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for flexible work policies. Globally, 38 percent of companies publish their policy on flexible work hours, and 24 percent publish a policy allowing flexible work locations, which was in place prior to the COVID-19 emergency measures.

In Nigeria, three companies (10 percent) reported offering both flexible hours and locations as a regular (non-COVID-19 related) policy: Sterling

Bank, Unilever Nigeria, and MTN Nigeria (Figure 2.8). Six companies (20 percent) offer flexible hours: Ecobank, Lafarge Africa, MTN Nigeria, Nestle Nigeria, Sterling Bank, and Unilever Nigeria. Five companies (17 percent) offer flexible locations: Guinness Nigeria, MTN Nigeria, Sterling Bank, Unilever Nigeria, and Union Bank Nigeria. Ten companies (33 percent) have published a remote work policy as a COVID-19 emergency measure but do not have a permanent remote work policy. However, in interviews with IFC, some companies indicated that they are considering continuing to allow flexible work hours after COVID-19 abates. Fifteen companies do not have a remote work policy, even as an emergency measure.

Figure 2.8: Flexible Work



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information

Two companies stand out for best practices in flexible work arrangements—Sterling Bank and MTN Nigeria. MTN Nigeria wrote, “Remote work has a host of advantages for the employer and the employee, providing a strong business case worth exploring. For the employee, it creates a better work-life balance as workers have flexible schedules; they can start and end their day as they choose, as long as their work is complete and meets required expectations” (MTN Nigeria n.d.).

While COVID-19 measures were not scored in this study, they do provide additional insights. FCMB Group reported, “We have deployed our work from home (WFH) strategy to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our employees. Employees who support critical business processes across the Group have been enabled to work from remote locations [...]” (FCMB Group 2020).

“Remote work has a host of advantages for the employer and the employee, providing a strong business case worth exploring. For the employee, it creates a better work-life balance as workers have flexible schedules; they can start and end their day as they choose, as long as their work is complete and meets required expectations.”

MTN Nigeria website

Best Company for Parental Leave

Guinness Nigeria¹⁵ has a diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategy that articulates its talent management goals concerning the attraction, retention, growth, and development of talent, as well as for driving the company’s culture of change. Out of the 30 companies surveyed, Guinness offers the most generous program of parental leave for both parents. Its paid maternity leave is 26 weeks, and its paid paternity leave is four weeks.

Ayodeji Ajibola, Guinness Nigeria’s Human Resources Director said, “We believe the most inclusive and diverse culture makes for a better business and a better world, so we champion inclusion and diversity across our business, and with our partners and communities to help shape a tolerant society. We seek to build a diverse and inclusive business that reflects the totality of our customer and consumer base.

¹⁵ In Equileap’s 2021 “Gender Equality Global Report and Ranking”, Diageo, Guinness’ parent company, scored 70 percent and ranked sixth.

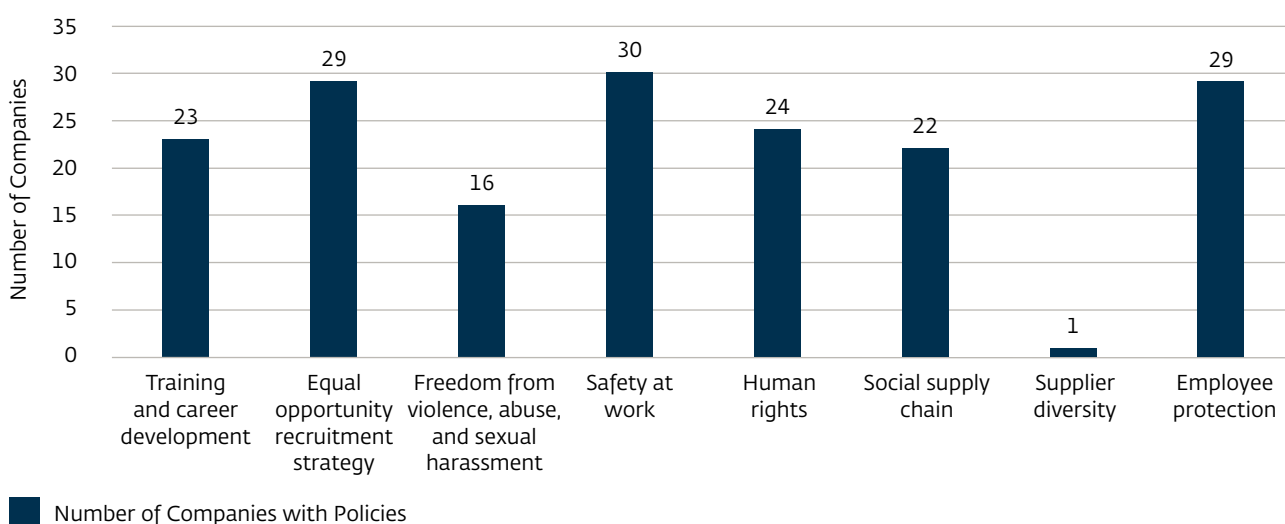
Category C: Policies Promoting Gender Equality

Equileap evaluates companies on eight policies that promote gender equality. These policies concern training and career development; equal opportunity recruitment; freedom from violence, abuse, and sexual harassment; safety at work; human rights; social supply chain; supplier diversity; and employee protection.

None of the 30 assessed companies had published policies for all 8 criteria in this category; however,

12 companies (40 percent) had published information for 7 out of the 8 policies: Access Bank, FBN Holdings, Guinness Nigeria, Lafarge Africa, MTN Nigeria Communications, Nestle Nigeria, Nigerian Breweries, Okomu Oil, Sterling Bank, Total Nigeria, Unilever Nigeria, and Zenith Bank (Figure 2.9). All companies (100 percent) published policies on health and safety, and almost all companies (97 percent) published policies on employee protection, and addressing gender discrimination in recruitment (Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9: Policies Promoting Gender Equality



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information.

On career development, 77 percent of the assessed companies published policies. Two companies (Stanbic IBTC Holdings and Access Bank) were particularly impressive and gender responsive in displaying their awareness of the barriers that women often face in reaching high-level positions. The majority of companies (80 percent) published a human rights policy, and 73 percent published a social supply chain management policy.

Two companies stood out for their best practices on non-discrimination in recruitment. For instance, in its 2019 Annual Report, BUA Cement stated: “Target: Ensure gender equality and empower all women and

girls. Activities: We continued to give priority to women in our recruitment process. In addition, we maintained the pathway which provides leadership opportunities to women” (BUA Cement 2019).

Similarly, in its 2019 Annual Report, Total Nigeria stated: “Our employment policy is free of discrimination against existing or potential employees on grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, disability, political opinion, competencies, background, or faith. We have relevant policies and processes, including recruitment, retention, evaluation, remuneration, and career planning to ensure they are gender sensitive” (Total Nigeria 2019).

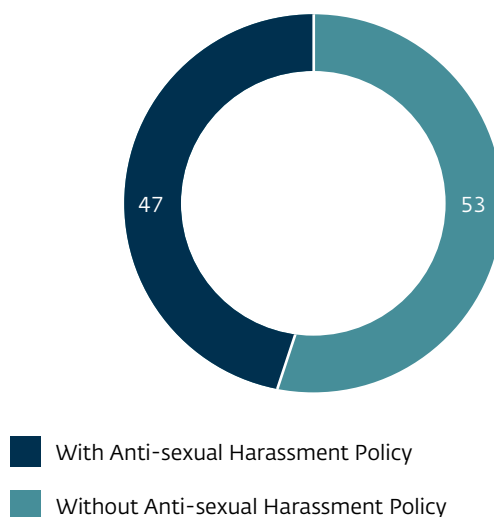
Stanbic IBTC Holdings and Access Bank were particularly impressive and gender-responsive in demonstrating their awareness of the barriers women often face in reaching high positions.

In terms of training and career development, Stanbic IBTC Holdings demonstrated noteworthy best practices in its 2019 Sustainability Report. Regarding Stanbic's women's development program, the report stated: "In line with the objective to promote diversity in the different forms, Stanbic IBTC has instituted two major women's development programs (IGNITE Women's Development Program and "Spring Board" Women's Development Program) focused on both women in the junior cadre, as well as senior management. The women's development program helps equip our women to deal with challenges at the workplace and position them to take up key senior leadership roles in the organization." Stanbic's report also noted that its Blue Women Network is "a platform specifically created for female employees in Stanbic IBTC to connect, inform, and develop the Stanbic IBTC Woman" (Stanbic IBTC Holdings 2019).

Ensuring that employees, irrespective of gender, have a safe place to work so that they feel supported, and can reach their full potential, is essential for achieving gender equality. One key area in this regard is preventing sexual harassment. Under this criterion, Nigerian companies were assessed on their explicit condemnation of sexual harassment and gender-based violence. In total, 16 companies (53 percent) published an anti-sexual harassment policy (Figure 2.10). While Nigeria's percentage was still low, its companies performed slightly better than the global average of 49 percent.

One company, Presco, demonstrated best practice with its anti-sexual harassment policy. In its publication "Presco Policy on Equal Opportunity: Sexual Harassment", the company stated, "Presco Plc is committed to the prohibition of sexual harassment in its workplace. Presco recognizes that sexual harassment erodes the rights of the individual, regards sexual harassment as a serious breach of the Presco Equal Opportunity Policy, and supports the rights of individuals to be free from sexual harassment while engaged in activities undertaken as part of their employment" (Presco 2016).

Figure 2.10: Companies with and without an Anti-sexual Harassment Policy



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information.

A supply chain diversity policy helps address participation barriers for historically underrepresented or marginalized groups, including women. To champion supplier diversity, companies can design a proactive program to procure from women-owned businesses. **Of the 30 companies assessed for this study, one company, Sterling Bank, published information on its supplier diversity program that includes women-owned businesses.**

Sterling Bank has a notable supplier diversity program that includes women-owned businesses. In its 2019 Annual Report, the company explained its supply chain management approach, "We have embedded non-discriminatory and equal opportunity considerations into our procurement practices, and we actively encourage the engagement of local and female suppliers and service providers for the provision of goods and services" (Sterling Bank 2019).

Dangote Cement and Dangote Sugar Refinery both mentioned working with female-owned suppliers in their annual reports prior to 2019; however, they did not repeat these statements in a more recent annual report (Dangote Sugar 2019).

Best Company for Workplace Policies

Lafarge Africa, a building solutions company, has a high demand for specialized professionals from STEM fields such as engineering and geology where women are traditionally under-represented, and the company is working to increase its number of female employees in these fields. In an interview, CEO Khaled El Dokani explained, "Two years ago, Lafarge appointed a board member to lead sustainability, and this is a core part of our business strategy. On International Women's Day 2021, I announced a new target—to have a female plant manager by this time next year. Lafarge's support of STEM, especially for graduate technician and cement technician programs, is a key part of improving our gender equality."

Concerning workplace recruitment and promotion, Lafarge ensures that the language in its vacancy announcements is gender neutral (no references to he or she), and that it includes a statement that it is an equal-opportunity employer, and that women are strongly encouraged to apply. Both men and women are shortlisted for interviews. Women must comprise 40 percent of all the interview candidates on the short list. All Lafarge hiring panels must have female members, and hiring managers must report sex-disaggregated data on the applicants, short-listed

candidates, interviewed candidates, and new hires to the head of Human Resources (HR). The gender of new hires is reported quarterly to the board.

To cultivate its technical female talent pipeline, Lafarge offers several training programs that include management and specialized training. These are complemented with mentoring and sponsorship programs, and especially the equal promotion of women and men into leadership roles. The recently launched Green Women's Network advocates for women in the manufacturing sector, and it is working closely with HR to provide structured mentoring and coaching, quarterly forums, and community boards.

Lafarge recognizes that it not only needs to recruit more women, but that it also needs to provide an environment that is conducive for them to stay. To that end, the company is working to address the needs of working mothers, and in 2021, (after Equileap concluded its research) the company increased maternity leave to 16 weeks and paternity to leave to 7 days. The company also provides childcare subsidies, and paid time off for breastfeeding, and taking children to the doctor. In addition, Lafarge has introduced a flexible work hours policy that allows female staff to arrive and depart up to three hours later, and new mothers to finish working one hour earlier.

Category D: Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability

Companies may be transparent in their gender policies, actions, and data, but in this category, they are assessed on further steps—whether they have signed the [United Nation's Women's Empowerment Principles](#) (WEPs), and whether they evaluate their efforts with the EDGE Certification or the GEEIS Label. Companies that sign the WEPs and use one of these certification processes make a strong, important, and public commitment to achieving gender equality. Compared to all the other criteria on the Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™, this category has the least company disclosure (globally, 6 percent of companies have signed the WEPs).

UN Women's Empowerment Principles: They are a set of Principles that guide businesses on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace, and community. Established by the United

Nations Global Compact and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the WEPs are informed by international labor and human rights standards, and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment. Equileap's scorecard is inspired by the WEPs.

There are seven Women's Empowerment Principles:

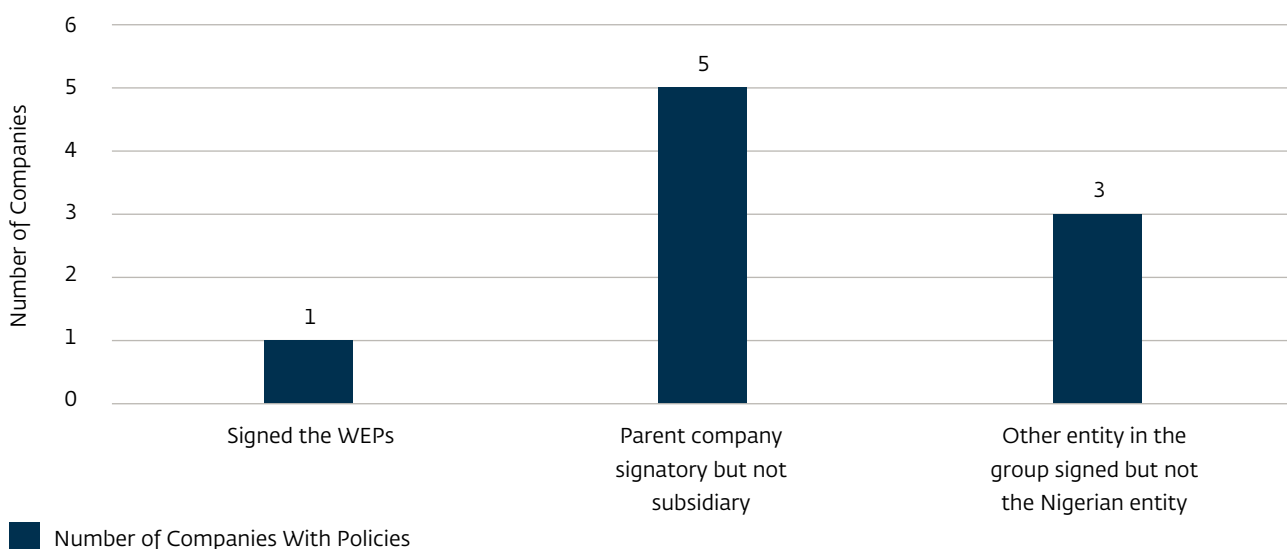
1. [High-level corporate leadership](#),
2. [Treating all women and men fairly at work, without discrimination](#),
3. [Employee health, well-being, and safety](#),
4. [Education and training for career advancement](#),
5. [Enterprise development, supply chain, and marketing practices](#),
6. [Community initiatives and advocacy](#), and
7. [Measurement and reporting](#).

Only one company in this study, Access Bank, has signed the WEPs (Figure 2.11). The parent companies of five of the companies in this study have signed the WEPs, but not their Nigerian subsidiaries: Guinness Nigeria (Parent company Diageo signed), International Breweries (Parent company AB InBev signed), Nestle, Total, and Unilever (Figure 2.11). In the case of three companies in Nigeria, other entities in their corporate group have signed

the WEPs, but not the company that Equileap evaluated. For example, FBN Nigeria has signed but not FBN Holdings (the parent company that was assessed in this study), Lafarge Canada has signed but not Lafarge Africa, and MTN South Africa has signed, but not MTN Nigeria (Figure 2.11).

Gender Diagnostic: None of the 30 companies in this study had undertaken a recognized gender diagnostic such as the EDGE Certification or the GEEIS Label by Arborus.

Figure 2.11: Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability



Source: Equileap 2021. Note: results are based solely on publicly available information

Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives

While this study focuses on gender equality as a core business driver, it also reviewed the philanthropic initiatives of the 30 Nigerian companies. In addition to evaluating companies against the Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™, this study gathered data on whether companies have corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that benefit or empower women or girls (i.e. female-focused CSR programs.) In total, 18 companies (60 percent) have one or more female-focused CSR program. These concern financial inclusion to target female-owned businesses, literacy programs, healthcare

initiatives (especially maternal health), and commitments to support the empowerment of women and girls at the community level.

Three companies had notable CSR programs. For example, in its 2019 Corporate Sustainability Report, FBN Holdings reported, “The growth and success of women-owned businesses is one of the most profound changes taking place in the business world today. Our Bank aligns with this global trend and is demonstrating its support and active participation.” The report also stated that through its innovative empowerment programs, the bank will continue to support women’s development in the medium to long term (FBN Holdings 2019a).



18 companies (60 percent) have one or more female-focused CSR program. These concern financial inclusion to target female-owned businesses, literacy programs, healthcare initiatives (especially maternal health), and commitments to support the empowerment of women and girls at the community level.



3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria's biggest companies have made significant progress, outperforming Equileap's global results in several categories, including women in leadership positions, such as board chairs and CEOs, and in workplace policies. While this is an important achievement for any country, it must be seen in the broader context that progress on women's issues has been slow, and there is much more work ahead. At the current rate of progress, Africa could take more than 140 years to achieve gender parity (McKinsey 2019)—and that is too late for two generations of women and girls.

For a country like Nigeria, with a rapidly growing population, the need for high-quality jobs and skilled workers at every level is an urgent imperative. Addressing the education pipeline for girls to ensure that more female students have access to quality education at all levels, including STEM, is essential—otherwise, companies will continue to encounter skilled labor shortages, even with Nigeria's rapidly increasing population.

The business case for companies is clear, but women still have to overcome multiple hurdles that companies are well-positioned to address. This report provides a proxy temperature reading on the state of gender equality issues in Nigeria's private sector. It has taken stock of progress, and has identified areas that need attention, not only for the 30 companies assessed in this study, but also for the broader corporate community.

Laws and regulations are an important ingredient to help raise the bar, both in protecting individual women, and advancing gender equality in companies. Parental leave laws can be modernized. Governments can require pay gap reporting, such as is the case in the United Kingdom. Sexual harassment laws can also be amended to set civil penalties that would provide financial remedies to women victims.

Initiatives such as the [Nigeria2Equal](#) program and the Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) program are an effective approach to raise awareness and stimulate healthy competition between companies to raise the

collective bar, and tackle a shared challenge. Institutional investors can also exert their influence to improve gender principles and targets. Dialogue is essential for these, as is learning from best practices and transparency to catalyze a demonstration effect. Companies are also encouraged to continue to regularly publish their efforts, policies, and practices. Shedding light on progress on gender equality issues is equally as important as adopting and implementing the policies. Through [Nigeria2Equal](#), IFC and NGX are prepared to help companies address their gender equality needs.

This study indicates that more work is needed to achieve gender equality in the workplace in Nigeria, even in the top-ranking companies and makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

There is strong evidence showing that gender-diverse companies perform better. In 2019, the ILO conducted a worldwide survey of 13,000 enterprises on the impact of their gender diversity initiatives. In that study, the ILO found that approximately 90 percent of the surveyed companies tracked the quantitative impact of their gender diversity initiatives, with regard to promoting women in management. Of these companies, nearly 74 percent saw an increase in profits of between 5 and 20 percent (ILO 2019). Looking at African companies only, the ILO's study showed that the gains in profitability were even higher, with 30 percent of the companies that track gender diversity reporting a profit increase of between 10 and 15 percent (ILO 2019).

To help Nigerian companies reap further business benefits, this report makes a set of recommendations on how companies can reduce gender gaps in their business. The recommendations that follow are based on the gaps identified in this study, and the insights gathered from conversations with the top five Nigerian companies:

Category A: Gender Balance in Leadership and the Workforce

- *Leadership championing:* The board, CEO, and senior management can effectively set the tone, and champion gender equality issues by creating a company culture that embraces gender equality, and backing this with measurable targets. To achieve this mandate, gender equality initiatives need to dedicate a budget and staff, prioritize a strategy and action plans, and use a data-driven approach for measuring progress.
- *Targets:* Set time-bound, achievable targets to increase the representation of women at all company levels—in the boardroom, executive, senior management, and workforce. Aim to achieve a company-wide gender balance of between 40 to 60 percent over a specific period of time, and promote accountability by publishing the results.
 - Revise corporate board renewal and succession planning policies to include specific and measurable diversity targets. A well-balanced board will comprise a mix of male and female directors who have a range of skills, experience, perspectives, and knowledge. Also, institute term limits for directors, combined with diversity targets, which will enable progress toward diversity.
 - Promote more women into core business functions as these positions will help prepare them for C-suite and management positions.
- *Promote diversity proactively:* Address barriers to women's boardroom and C-suite appointments by: prioritizing diversity, equality, and inclusion throughout the organization; providing professional development opportunities for women; conducting training for all employees to help develop their emotional intelligence and recognition of unconscious gender bias; setting key gender performance indicators, monitoring these, and publicly disclosing the results; and holding managers accountable for progress toward achieving gender diversity goals.

Category B: Equal Compensation and Work-Life Balance

- *Equal compensation:* Put in place a policy and strategy to close the gender pay gap, and increase transparency by publishing information on living wage commitments and sex-disaggregated pay.
- *Family-friendly workplace policies:* Develop and implement more robust parental leave policies for both parents that meet or exceed international standards for the length of leave and rate of pay.

Offer flexible work policies covering both hours and location, and especially offer these as long as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Invest in company-sponsored childcare programs (IFC 2019, IFC 2020).

Category C: Policies Promoting Gender Equality

- *Proactive talent management:* Support women's career progression from recruitment to retention. This includes strategies that feed the talent pipeline, career development assignments, mentoring, formal education opportunities, leadership programs, and promotions.
- *Diversity and inclusion (D&I) Council:* Establish a D&I Council that promotes and monitors gender equality performance. Make targets public and report on D&I progress in an annual report.
- *Safe workplaces for women and men:* Deploy strong policies to prevent sexual harassment, coupled with frequent training and communications campaigns. Publish information about safe workplace policies, including those on sexual harassment. Support employees affected by domestic violence (EBRD, IFC, and CDC 2020).
- *Supplier diversity:* Implement supplier diversity programs that include women-owned businesses. These programs should increase market opportunities for women-owned suppliers through procurement contracts, and build the capacity of women-owned business suppliers through training and mentoring (IFC n.d.).

Category D: Commitment, Transparency, and Accountability

- *Endorsements:* To emphasize the importance of gender equality in the company, sign voluntary principles such as the UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). Through such programs companies can access information on the latest women's empowerment trends and strategies, as well as best practices to address the gender gap.
- *Gender diagnostics:* Conduct gender diagnostics such as the [EDGE Certification](#) or the [GEEIS Label by Arborus](#) to identify gaps, priorities for action, and areas where investment is needed to make improvements.
- *Visibility:* To give greater visibility to the company's high-level commitment to gender equality, promote these high-level endorsements inside and outside the company. This will send a strong message to employees across the organization, as well as to the wider business community, and both can help to accelerate progress.



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Annex A. Methodology

IFC commissioned Equileap to conduct the underlying research for this study. Equileap provided the data and IFC prepared the report based on Equileap's data.

Dataset

The dataset for this report consists of the 30 most capitalized companies listed on the Nigerian Exchange (NGX). Research for this report concluded in May 2021.

Ranking

Companies are ranked according to their overall Equileap gender equality score based on the 19 criteria listed in the Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™ in Annex B. When two or more companies have the same score, Equileap uses Category A data to break the tie.

Data Collection and Appeal Process

Equileap uses a two-fold research approach. First, Equileap gathers publicly available information provided by the companies themselves, including in their annual reports, sustainability reports and/or on their websites. Second, Equileap engages with companies to allow them to send the latest publicly available data they have. Equileap makes every effort to ensure that the information reported is accurate. In the event of an error, we invite companies to email up-to-date information and corroborating evidence to research@equileap.com.

Transparency

The Equileap methodology favors companies that are more transparent and make their data publicly available. We firmly believe that transparency, and acknowledging where there are gaps and problems, is the first step toward taking action to close the global gender gap. Publicly available data enables investors and employees to hold companies accountable for the policies they offer and the steps they are taking to ensure gender equality in their workplaces. We encourage companies to be as transparent as possible about their progress toward gender equality as part of their contribution to economic justice for women globally.

Disclaimer

This report contains certain data sourced from Equileap Investment Services Support or its affiliates (hereafter "Equileap"). Equileap is a third-party data provider and does not accept any direct or indirect liability for the accuracy, completeness or use of the information it provided. The Equileap data and information contained herein: (a) is proprietary to Equileap; (b) may not be copied or distributed without Equileap's express written consent; and (c) is not warranted to be accurate, complete, or timely. Copyright 2021 Equileap. All Rights Reserved.

Annex B: Equileap Gender Equality Scorecard™

The Equileap Gender Scorecard™ is inspired by the UN's Women Empowerment Principles. For each gender criterion, one or several metrics have been identified to evaluate it. Last, a score and weighting has been allocated to each criterion to reflect that some issues may be more important for furthering gender equality than others.

A GENDER BALANCE IN LEADERSHIP & WORKFORCE

1 / Board of Directors

Gender balance of the company's board of directors and non-executive board (or supervisory board)

2 / Executives

Gender balance of the company's executives and executive board

3 / Senior Management

Gender balance of the company's senior management

4 / Workforce

Gender balance of the company's workforce

5 / Promotion & Career Development Opportunities

Gender balance of the company's senior management compared to the gender balance of the company's workforce, signalling career progression opportunities

B EQUAL COMPENSATION & WORK LIFE BALANCE

6 / Living Wage

Commitment to pay a living wage to all employees

7 / Gender Pay Gap

Transparency on the gender pay gap at company level and on multiple pay bands, commitment to close the pay gap

8 / Parental Leave

Paid leave programs (at least 2/3 paid) for child care to both primary or secondary carers globally or at least in the country of incorporation

9 / Flexible Work Options

Option to employees to control and / or vary the start and end times of the work day, and / or vary the location from which employees work

C POLICIES PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

10 / Training and Career Development

Commitment to ensure equal access to training and career development irrespective of gender

11 / Recruitment Strategy

Commitment to ensure non-discrimination against any type of demographic group and equal opportunities to ensure gender parity

12 / Freedom from Violence, Abuse and Sexual Harassment

Prohibits all forms of violence in the workplace, including verbal, physical and sexual harassment

13 / Safety at Work

Commitment to the safety of employees in the workplace, in travel to and from the workplace and on company related business, as well as safety of vendors in the workplace

14 / Human Rights

Commitment to ensure the protection of human rights, including employees' rights to participate in legal, civic and political affairs

15 / Social Supply Chain

Commitment to reduce social risks in its supply chain such as forbid business related activities that condone, support, or otherwise participate in trafficking, force and child labour or sexual exploitation

16 / Supplier Diversity

Commitment to ensure diversity in the supply chain, including support for women owned businesses in the supply chain

17 / Employee Protection

Systems and policies for the reporting of internal ethical compliance complaints without retaliation or retribution, such as access to confidential third-party ethics hotlines or systems for confidential written complaints

D COMMITMENT, TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

18 / Commitment to Women's Empowerment

Signatory to the UN Women's Empowerment Principles

19 / Audit

Undertaken and awarded an independent gender audit certificate by an Equileap recognized body

E GENDER CONTROVERSIES

Equileap monitors incidents involving sexual harassment or gender discrimination and provides gender controversy research to investors.

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