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POLICY BRIEF

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THE CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON FINANCIAL MARKETS AND POLICY®

Bridging gender gaps in credit access in Kenya: How can we track progress?

Executive Summary

Access to credit in Kenya remains disproportionately skewed in favour of men, largely due to structural barriers that disadvantage women entrepreneurs. To address this, the brief proposes a centralized MSME credit analytics dashboard leveraging Credit Reference Bureau data to generate system-wide, gender sensitive insights. The dashboard tracks key indicators across access, usage, quality and impact, enabling stakeholders to identify gaps, benchmark performance and design targeted interventions. The tool supports policymakers, financial institutions and development partners in advancing inclusive finance and closing the gender credit gap by using a measurable and data-driven approach.

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1. Context and Problem

This policy brief seeks to answer a question central to Kenya's development agenda yet seldom addressed with sufficient clarity: how can we effectively track progress in bridging gender gaps in credit access?

Gender equality in economic participation has remained a key development objective at the global and domestic level. More importantly, women play significant role in Kenya's entrepreneurial landscape, and their businesses contribute to employment creation, household income generation and local economic growth.

Over the past two decades, Kenya has attained remarkable gains in financial inclusion. Access to formal financial services has expanded dramatically, supported by innovations such as mobile money, agency banking and digital financial services. These developments have significantly reduced the gender gap in basic financial access.

However, this progress in financial inclusion has not translated into equal access to productive financial services such as business credit. While women have nearly equal access to transaction platforms such as mobile money, they remain significantly underrepresented in traditional banking products and formal credit markets.

Evidence indicates that women-led MSMEs receive a relatively small share of formal credit despite representing a large proportion of enterprises. Women entrepreneurs also tend to receive smaller loans and shorter loan tenors than male-owned businesses. Structural constraints contribute to these disparities, including limited ownership of immovable assets used as collateral, concentration in lower capital sectors and existence of financial products that are not tailored to women's business realities.

A critical barrier to addressing these disparities is the lack of comprehensive, gender-disaggregated financial data. Current reporting frameworks rely largely on aggregate statistics that obscure gender-specific patterns in credit allocation, loan performance and institutional lending practices. Financial data is dispersed across multiple institutions, including commercial banks, SACCOs, microfinance institutions and digital lenders. As a result, policymakers and financial institutions lack the integrated evidence required to diagnose constraints, design targeted interventions and monitor progress toward gender parity in credit markets.

Without reliable and systematic data, women entrepreneurs often remain invisible within financial systems. This invisibility limits the development of gender-responsive financial products and weakens accountability for closing the gender credit gap.

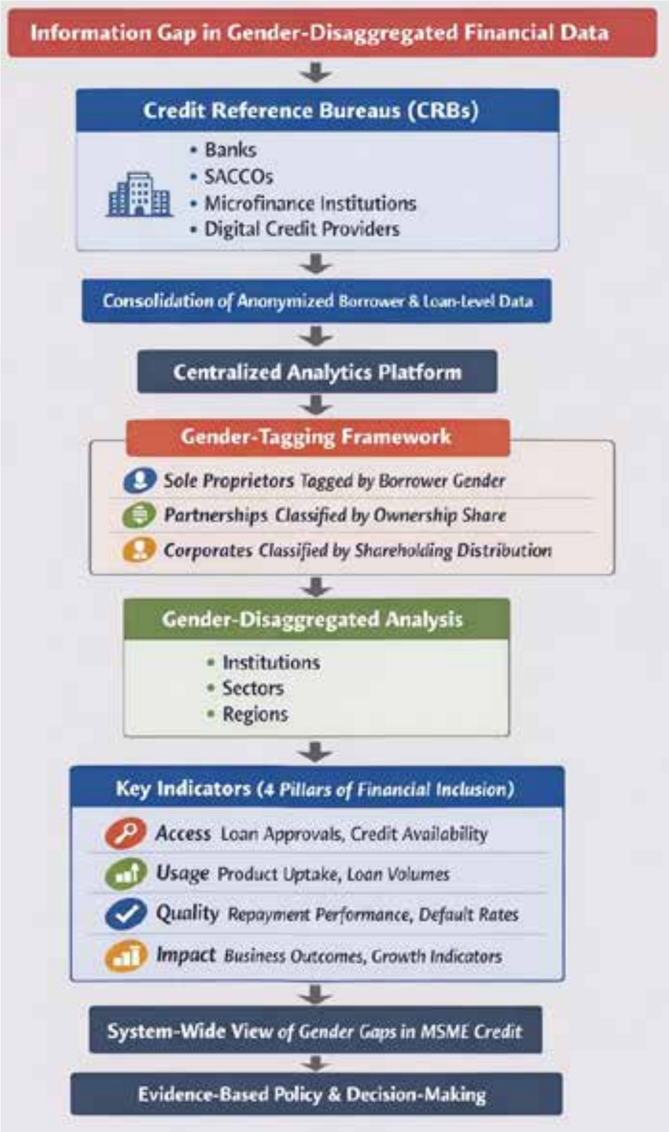
2. Methodology

2.1 Dashboard Concept

To address the information gap in gender-disaggregated financial data, this brief presents a gender-disaggregated MSME credit analytics dashboard concept (**Figure 1**) that consolidates anonymized credit data from multiple financial institutions through Credit Reference Bureau (CRB) datasets.

CRBs collect standardized borrower and loan-level data from regulated financial

Figure 1: Dashboard concept



institutions, including banks, SACCOs, microfinance institutions and digital credit providers. By integrating these datasets into a centralized analytics platform, the dashboard provides a system-wide view of credit access and performance across gender, institutions, sectors and regions.

The analytical framework applies standardized gender-tagging rules to classify borrowers and enterprises according to ownership structures. Sole proprietors are tagged directly by borrower gender, while partnerships and legal entities are classified based on shareholding distribution. This methodology enables consistent gender-disaggregated analysis across different borrower types.

The dashboard generates a range of indicators aligned with the four pillars of financial inclusion: access, usage, quality and impact. These indicators track loan approvals, outstanding loan values, product usage, repayment performance and collateral requirements across genders and financial institutions.

2.2 MSME Gender-Disaggregated Dashboard User Guide

2.2.1 About the MSME Gender-Disaggregated Dashboard

The MSME Gender-Disaggregated Dashboard is a strategic tool designed to provide a comprehensive overview of how credit is allocated across different genders and business types in Kenya. The latter serves as an accountability tool to track national progress in inclusive finance while providing transparency for development partners and the public.

2.2.2 User Access and Views

The system is structured into three distinct user views, as shown in **Figure 2**, to ensure stakeholders access information appropriate to their roles while ensuring data confidentiality is always maintained.

Figure 2: User views

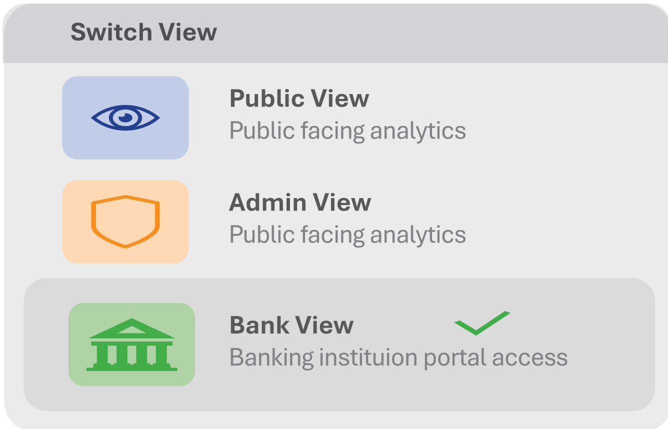
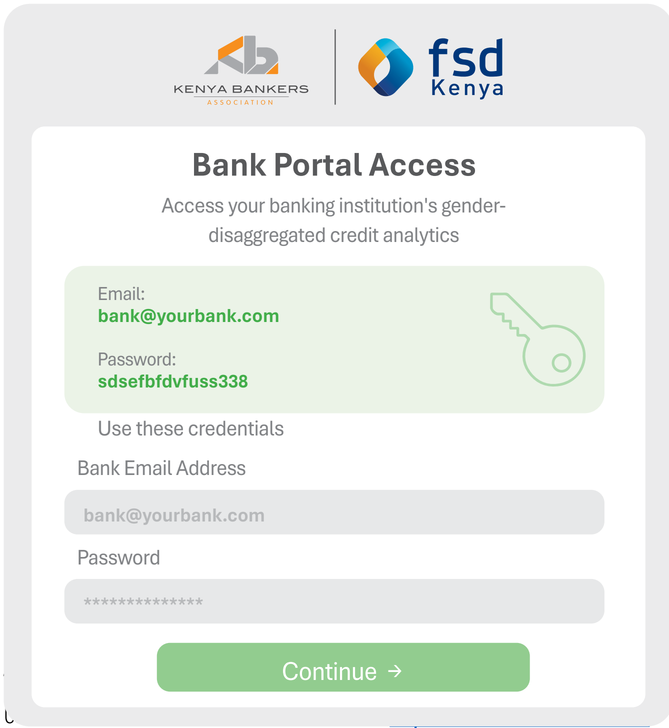


Figure 3: Bank portal access



Basic Navigation

- Use the main menu to switch between dashboard modules
- Select filters to refine data views
- Click on charts to explore deeper insights (drill-down functionality)

2.3 Working with Dashboard Components

Each dashboard page contains components (charts/visuals) that display data.

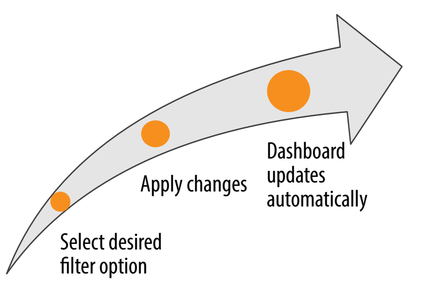
Figure 4: Key Functionalities

Functionality	Operation
Mouse over	Hover over charts to view detailed values
Drill-Down	Click on data points to view deeper breakdowns
Dynamic Refresh	Charts update automatically when filters are applied

2.4 Using Filters and Data Exploration Tools

Filters allow users to customize their analysis, as illustrated in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5: Common filter dimensions and how to use them

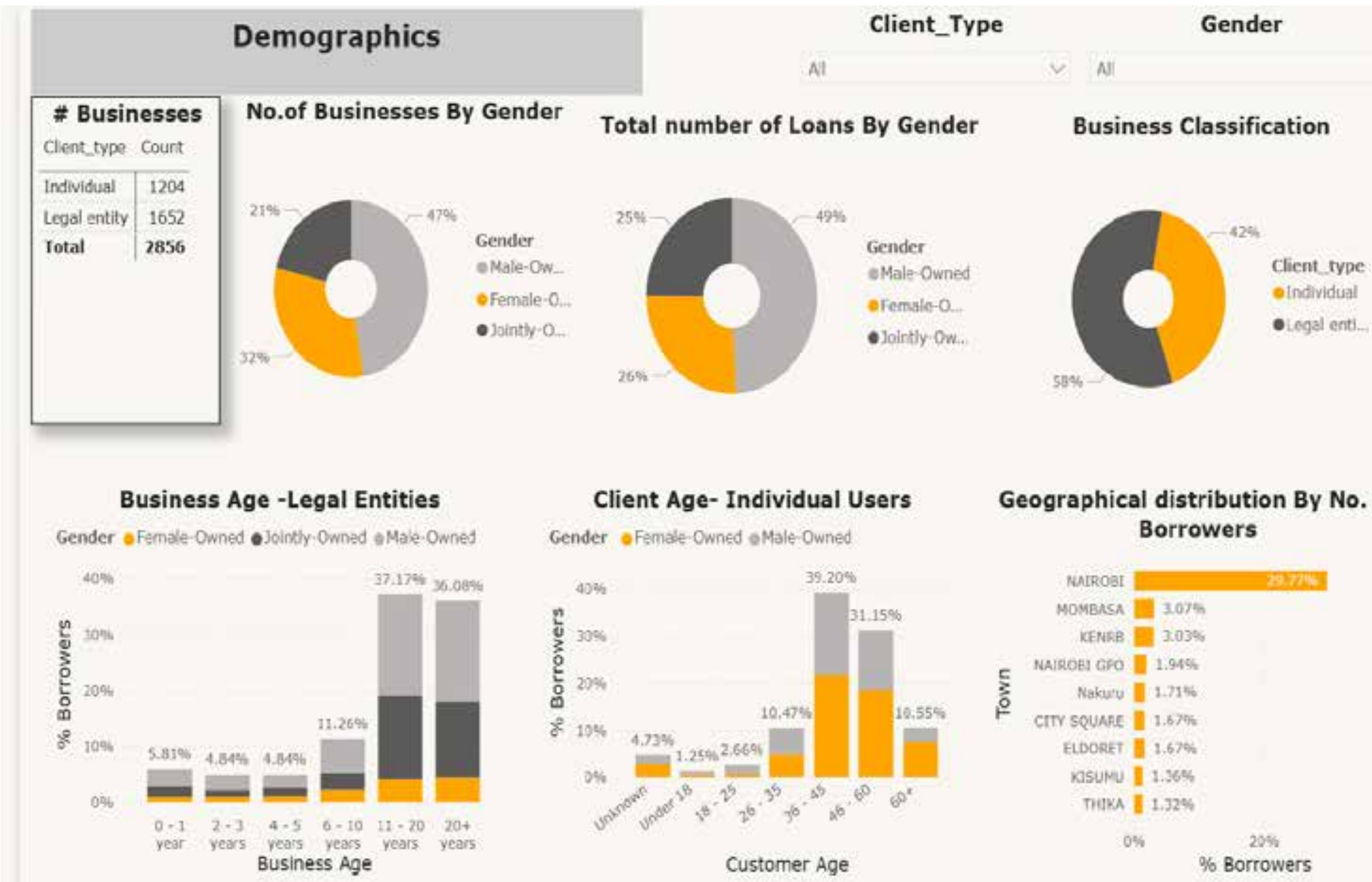
Common Filter Dimensions	How to Use Filters
▪ Gender (Male, Female, Joint)	
▪ MSME Type	
▪ Financial Institution Type	
▪ Loan Product Category	
▪ Region	

2.5 Dashboard Modules

2.5.1 Demographics

This page establishes a baseline understanding of the borrowers in the formal credit markets. The latter seeks to identify participation gaps in formal credit markets. The key metrics presented include Gender composition of borrowers, age distribution, business maturity and geographical distribution. On this page, the Users can drill down by gender, client type (individual vs. legal entity) and business registration status to highlight disparities in representation.

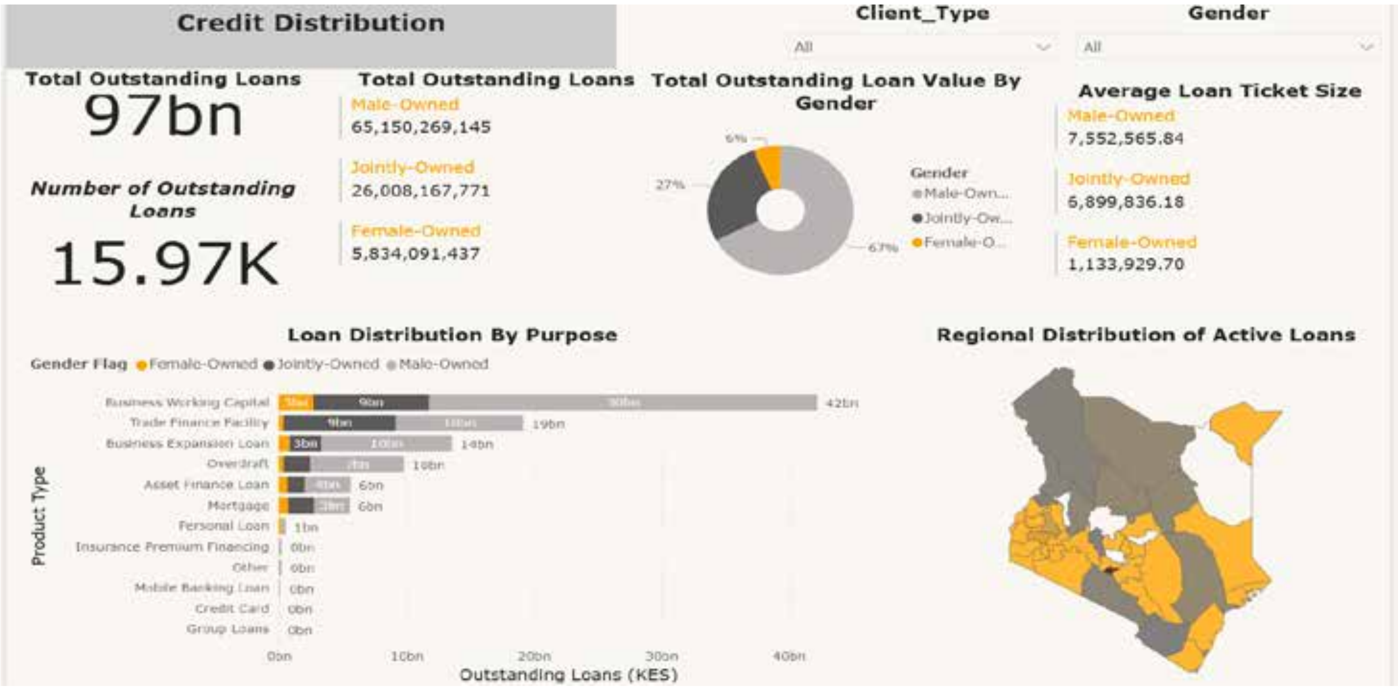
Figure 6: Demographics page



2.5.2 Credit Allocation Patterns

This page presents a picture of credit distribution, with the key metrics under presentation being Number of borrowers, Total loan values and Average loan sizes. As such, Users can explore the distribution of outstanding loan values and average ticket sizes to gain insights into equity within the credit market. Which is insightful for understanding Gender disparities in access to credit and Distribution across MSME segments

Figure 7: Credit Distribution



2.5.3 Credit Performance

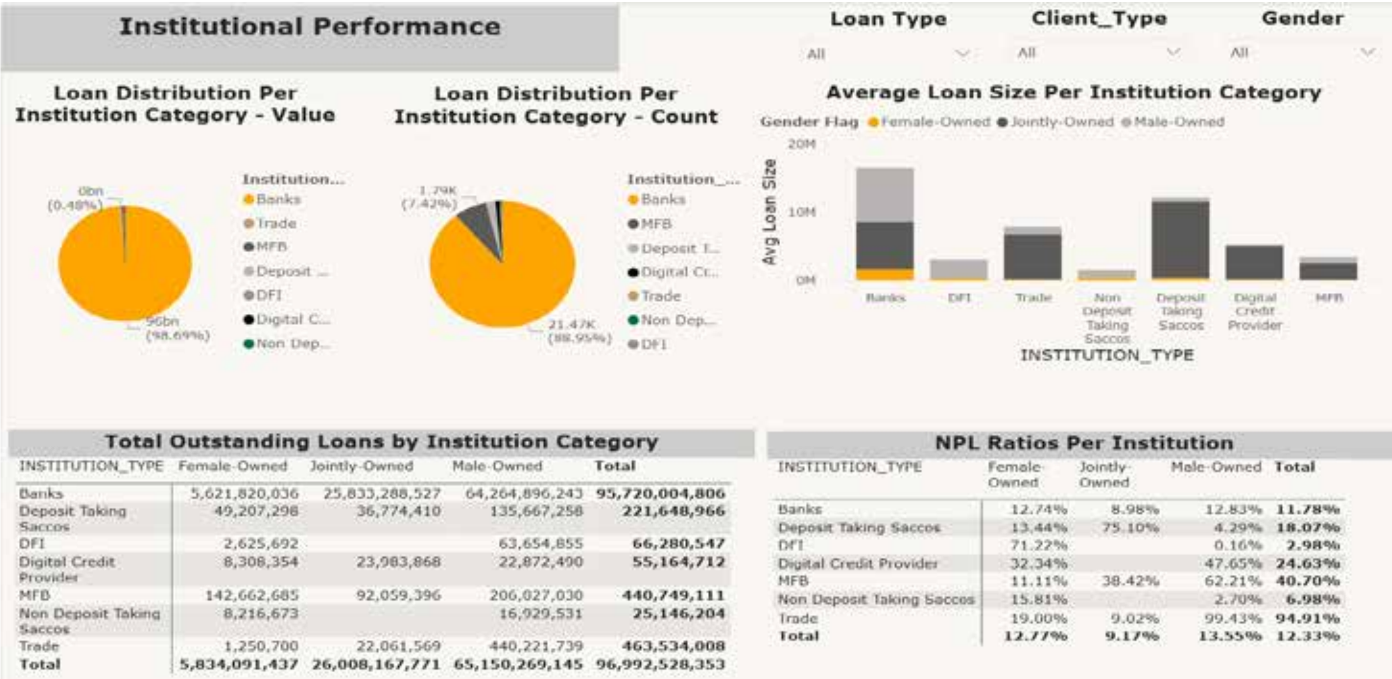
The Loan Performance page provides visibility into the quality of lending portfolios, by painting a picture on loan repayment and portfolio quality. Key Indicators captured here are Repayment rates, Default patterns and Portfolio risk. Users can be able to have the risk assessment of the borrowers by evaluating repayment behaviours and credit outcomes disaggregated by gender and institution category. These insights are useful at informing risk management and the design of gender-smart credit products.

Figure 8: Credit Performance

2.5.4 Institutional Performance

The page compares performance across financial institutions. As such, stakeholders can compare how different categories, including Banks, SACCOs, microfinance institutions and digital lenders, perform in managing credit across genders. Hence, it is ideal for exposure Tracking, where the institution is able to identify where the largest loan exposures lie and which segments present the highest potential or risk.

Figure 9: Institutional Performance.



INSTITUTION_TYPE	Female-Owned	Jointly-Owned	Male-Owned	Total
Banks	5,621,820,036	25,833,288,527	64,264,896,243	95,720,004,806
Deposit Taking Saccos	49,207,298	36,774,410	135,667,258	221,648,966
DFI	2,625,692		63,654,855	66,280,547
Digital Credit Provider	8,308,354	23,983,868	22,872,490	55,164,712
MFB	142,662,685	92,059,396	206,027,030	440,749,111
Non Deposit Taking Saccos	8,216,673		16,929,531	25,146,204
Trade	1,250,700	22,061,569	440,221,739	463,534,008
Total	5,834,091,437	26,008,167,771	65,150,269,145	96,992,528,353

INSTITUTION_TYPE	Female-Owned	Jointly-Owned	Male-Owned	Total
Banks	12.74%	8.98%	12.83%	11.78%
Deposit Taking Saccos	13.44%	75.10%	4.29%	18.07%
DFI	71.22%		0.16%	2.98%
Digital Credit Provider	32.34%		47.65%	24.63%
MFB	11.11%	38.42%	62.21%	40.70%
Non Deposit Taking Saccos	15.81%		2.70%	6.98%
Trade	19.00%	9.02%	99.43%	94.91%
Total	12.77%	9.17%	13.55%	12.33%

2.5.5 Product Analysis

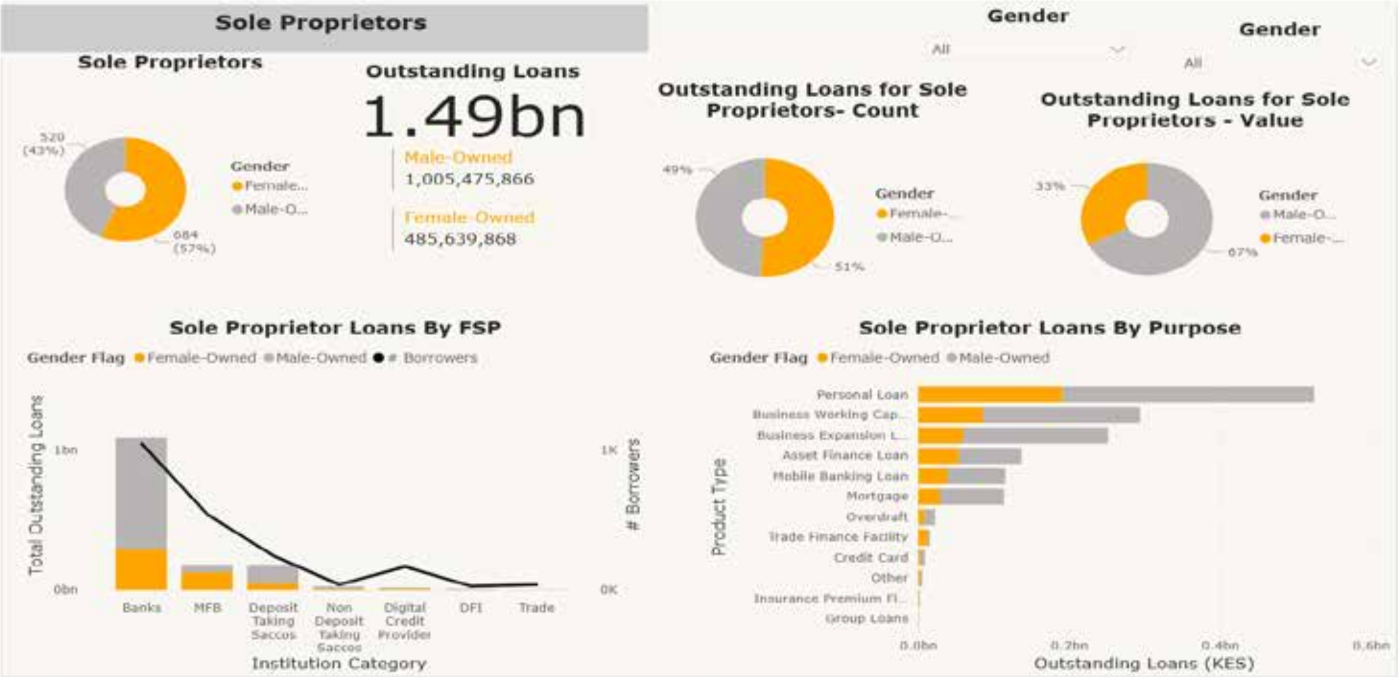
This dashboard explores the structural differences in how credit products are accessed. From a Product Breakdown standpoint, an analysis of loan tenors, ticket sizes and product distribution for male, female, and jointly owned enterprises. Data from this view is crucial for identifying usage gaps that can inform the creation of new, gender-responsive products.

Figure 10: Product Analysis

2.5.6 Sole Proprietors

Focuses on individuals operating businesses under their personal names rather than registered entities. This is essential for understanding gender-specific behaviours in the microenterprise segment, including Loan access, Loan size and Loan purpose. This page is significant in gauging as to whether structural imbalances exist between the male and female.

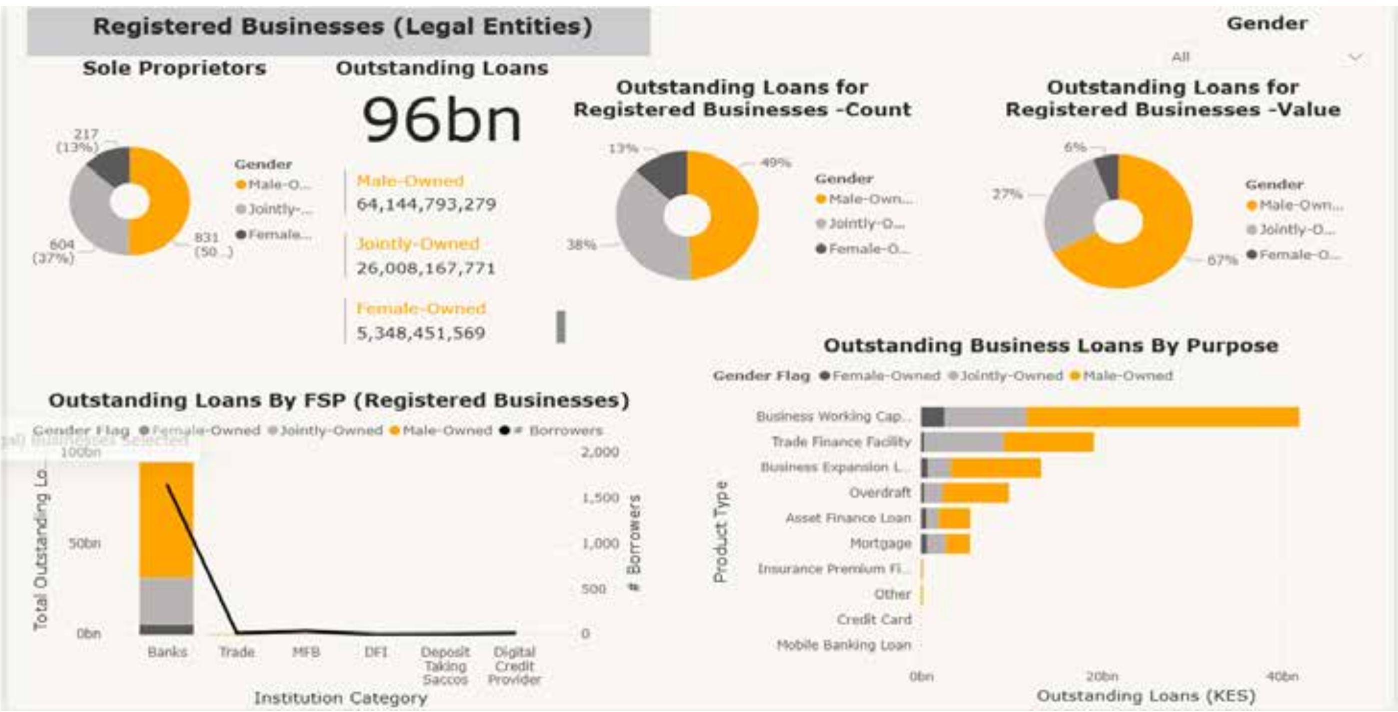
Figure 11: Sole Proprietors



2.5.7 Registered Businesses

Provides a gender-disaggregated perspective on legally registered formal enterprises. The page visualizes loan values, borrower counts and purposes for women-owned formal businesses. This is essential for highlighting financing gaps and identifying sectors where women's access to formal credit can be strengthened.

Figure 12: Registered Businesses (Legal entity)



2.5.8 Collateral Requirements

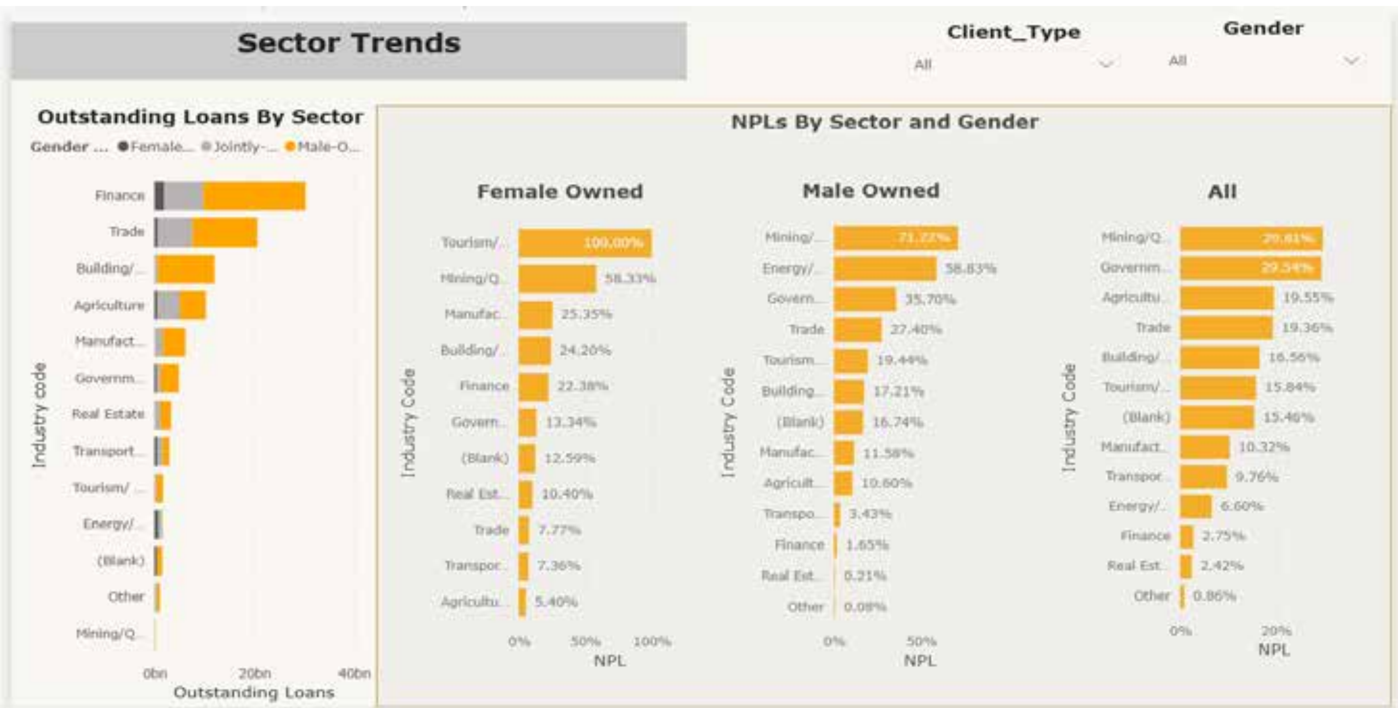
Explores the role of collateral in credit access. It compares secured versus unsecured loans and examines the types of collateral pledged (e.g., land, property, or chattels), consequently, this helps build a case for collateral-light or alternative financing models for women who may lack high-value assets.

Figure 13: Collateral Requirements

2.5.9 Sectoral distribution

This page examines credit distribution and performance across various industries. It sheds light on industry Concentration by identifying which sectors dominate loan value and where women-led businesses are most active. Moreover, it is significant for risk mitigation as it highlights sectors with the highest credit risk to help shape targeted interventions.

Figure 14: Sector Trends



3. Dashboard Use Cases

The dashboard supports the activities of the policy makers, financial institutions and development partners as highlighted in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Use case of the dashboard

Policymakers	Financial Institutions	Development Partners
☐ Monitor financial inclusion progress	☐ Benchmark performance	☐ Track impact of interventions
☐ Design gender-responsive policies	☐ Identify underserved segments	☐ Support evidence-based programming
	☐ Develop inclusive financial products	

4. References

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