

Advancing Gender-Responsive Climate Action: Strengthening Gender Integration in Uganda's NDC 3.0



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SUMMARY

Uganda submitted its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 2.0) in 2022, reaffirming its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change through ambitious goals in mitigation and adaptation, and in cross-cutting areas like gender equality. Following global mandates such as the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan, countries are required to mainstream gender considerations across all climate action and reporting. Through Uganda's ongoing review of NDC 2.0 and preparation of NDC 3.0 in response to the global stocktake, the country has a critical opportunity to advance gender equality, social inclusion, and climate justice within national climate commitments. This process also provides a chance to address existing gaps in gender mainstreaming and ensure its more systematic integration across sectors and in reporting frameworks. This policy brief evaluates the extent of gender integration in NDC 2.0 and associated climate policy frameworks, analyses progress in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming across planning and implementation processes, and outlines strategic recommendations to enhance gender-responsive approaches in NDC 3.0.

KEY RESULTS

- Uganda broadly recognizes gender as a cross-cutting climate issue but has no specific gender objectives or measurable indicators.
- Enabling actions are proposed for gender-responsive implementation but lack necessary operational details to ensure their meaningful execution.
- Finance needs are outlined, but gender-focused interventions lack financing and budgeting mechanisms are not gender-responsive.
- There is no formal national framework or sufficient capacity to effectively implement gender-responsive climate action.

BACKGROUND

Gender equality is a critical factor for effective climate action because climate change impacts are not gender neutral. They disproportionately affect women and girls, particularly in developing countries like Uganda, where livelihoods heavily depend on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, water, and forestry. Women often have less access to resources, information, and decision-making power, making them more vulnerable to climate-related disruptions. Recognizing climate change's uneven impacts, the Paris Agreement calls for national commitments that include gender-responsive approaches.

At the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29), all states that are Parties to the Convention reaffirmed the importance of the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its subsequent Gender Action Plan (GAP) and emphasized the need to accelerate efforts to mainstream gender across all climate policies and frameworks. Parties can demonstrate their efforts to meet GAP priorities and targets by developing and implementing frameworks like Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Uganda, a Party to the Paris Agreement, is currently developing its third NDC (NDC 3.0) with technical support from stakeholders, including the NDC Partnership. NDC 3.0's development provides a strategic opportunity to move beyond gender awareness to action by embedding gender equality into Uganda's climate planning and implementation processes.

This policy brief examines the extent to which NDC 2.0 integrated gender considerations in its goals; assesses the implementation of gender-mainstreamed targets and actions; and identifies key emerging issues, gaps, and challenges in advancing gender-responsive climate action. Its analysis focuses on both explicit and implicit references to gender, women, and vulnerable groups throughout the NDC 2.0. It also outlines strategic recommendations to enhance NDC 3.0's gender-responsive approaches.

METHODS

We based this brief's content analysis on Uganda's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 2.0). Our review examined several aspects of gender integration, including climate adaptation and mitigation actions; governance structures and institutional arrangements; financing mechanisms; and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting frameworks. To contextualize Uganda's NDC within global standards, we referenced international gender and climate policy frameworks, including the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its GAP, the gender decision adopted at COP29, and key insights from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Team's Information Session on Gender at COP29.

Additional resources from civil society and development partners, such as the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) and 2X Global helped us align our analysis with global best practices. In determining our findings, we referenced insights from the Gender Climate Tracker, Regenerate Africa's grassroots experience, and other stakeholder inputs, which provided critical appraisal of progress on and bottlenecks to incorporating gender equality in Uganda's climate response. We then organized themes from those findings into key results and emerging issues to inform our strategic recommendations for NDC 3.0.

KEY RESULTS

Uganda broadly recognises gender as a cross-cutting climate issue but has no specific gender objectives and measurable indicators

Uganda's NDC 2.0 recognizes gender as a critical cross-cutting issue in both climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. A comprehensive gender analysis conducted as part of the NDC update assessed the differentiated roles of women

and men, specific challenges they face in the context of climate change, and priority actions for improving resilience. The analysis highlighted that women and girls, especially those living in poverty, are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts. Their heightened vulnerability is attributed to structural barriers such as unequal land rights and women's exclusion from decision-making spaces, which limits their access to climate adaptation technologies and practices. Despite Uganda's strong policy recognition, gender integration remains descriptive rather than operational. Key gaps include:

- Absence of explicit gender objectives and measurable indicators within the NDC Monitoring and Evaluation framework. These tools allow gender-transformative climate resilience to be measured, reported, and verified.
- Lack of systematic gender-disaggregated baselines in the NDC's National Circumstances and Risk and Vulnerability Assessment sections. Without these baselines, it is difficult to track how impacts differ by gender.
- Absence of a gender-specific Measurement, Reporting, and Verification framework. Uganda has a UNFCCC Gender and Climate Change Focal Point, but the role is not referenced in NDC 2.0's implementation architecture.

Enabling actions are proposed for gender-responsive implementation but lack necessary operational details to ensure their meaningful execution

NDC 2.0 proposes several enabling actions to support gender mainstreaming and links gender considerations to adaptation and mitigation actions across priority sectors such as agriculture, energy, water, ecosystems, and health. These actions include enhancing women's participation in decision-making, designating gender specialists across institutions, integrating gender into budget frameworks, developing gender-disaggregated data systems, and building institutional capacity on gender and climate change. Key policy gaps include:

- Enabling actions are not accompanied by clear implementation plans, timelines, or responsible institutions.
- Failure to address the specific priorities of women, girls, persons with disabilities, and older adults in climate mitigation strategies, and missing opportunities for gender co-benefits, especially in energy and forestry.

- Absence of mechanisms to ensure accountability and follow-through, limiting effective mainstreaming.
- No systematic integration of enabling actions into sectoral or local-level plans, constraining tangible outcomes.
- Lack of detail on how inclusive participation will be achieved, who will be engaged, and how, despite NDC 2.0 highlighting the importance of stakeholder engagement. The role of women and other marginalized groups in providing input into design, implementation, and monitoring of NDC is not specified.

Finance needs are outlined, but gender-focused interventions lack financing

NDC 2.0's Means of Implementation section outlines overall climate finance requirements of US\$28.1 billion for mitigation and adaptation and US\$0.1 billion for cross-cutting activities mentioning gender. However, dedicated financing for gender-focused interventions is largely absent, and sectoral adaptation and mitigation actions do not include specific gender-related activities or budget lines. Key gaps include:

- Lack of concrete, financed actions despite gender's high-level recognition.
- No gender-responsive budgeting frameworks or funds dedicated to gender-focused interventions.
- Insufficient actions to address the specific needs of women, girls, youth, persons with disabilities, and older adults, especially at the community level.

There is no formal national framework or sufficient capacity to effectively implement gender-responsive climate action

Uganda faces institutional and capacity constraints that limit its ability to effectively implement gender-responsive climate action. Although the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) participates in climate policy processes and hosts Uganda's UNFCCC Gender and Climate Change Focal Point, the country lacks a formal National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as mechanisms to systematically integrate gender into sectoral planning, resourcing, and accountability frameworks. This persistent capacity and coordination gap undermines Uganda's ability to deliver on its NDC gender-related goals and achieve transformative, inclusive climate resilience. Gaps in the current policy framework include:

- Limited collaboration between MGLSD and key line ministries, hindering gender mainstreaming in sectoral climate plans such as agriculture, energy, and water. Ministries often operate in silos without shared gender objectives or joint programming mechanisms.
- Lack of trained or designated gender focal points in many implementing entities, including entities at subnational levels, resulting in fragmented gender integration.
- Insufficient skills in gender-responsive budgeting, gender analysis, and the collection and use of sex- and gender-disaggregated data at national and local institutions, which are critical for designing inclusive climate actions and measuring differentiated impacts.
- No institutionalised accountability frameworks: Performance monitoring systems to track gender outcomes are missing, and NDC 2.0's gender-related commitments lack indicators, reporting lines, and incentive structures to ensure progress and compliance.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop gender-specific targets.

NDC 3.0 should include gender-sensitive vulnerability analyses to understand how climate impacts affect women, men, boys and girls, and marginalised groups differently. Insights from these analyses should guide the prioritisation and development of measurable objectives, actions, and targets for gender equality in climate strategies and actions.

2. Identify gender-specific actions.

NDC 3.0 should include a dedicated gender component with targeted actions to reduce gender inequality in climate responses. These actions include expanding women's access to climate-smart agriculture and climate-related businesses, integrating sexual and reproductive health and rights into adaptation strategies, and promoting gender-inclusive early warning systems. Interventions should be designed and implemented in partnership with women's organisations and community leaders to ensure they are gender-transformative and supported by clear implementation mechanisms and monitoring frameworks.

3. Ensure participation and equity.

NDC 3.0 should institutionalize gender-balanced representation in the consultation, planning, and implementation of strategies and actions. Mechanisms such as community-based participatory processes, gender and social inclusion platforms, and feedback systems should be established to ensure women's voices are heard and influence decisions. Special attention must be paid to empowering young women, indigenous women, and persons with disabilities.

4. Create a gender-responsive monitoring, evaluation, and reporting framework.

NDC 3.0 should incorporate gender-sensitive indicators into its monitoring and evaluation systems across all sectors and mechanisms to track and report on gender outcomes. Periodic gender audits and participatory reviews should be planned and undertaken to enhance transparency and accountability. Uganda should also align national reporting with the Enhanced Transparency Framework and Biennial Transparency Reports under the UNFCCC, including sections on gender-responsive actions and outcomes.

5. Establish financial commitments and gender-responsive budgeting.

NDC 3.0 should clearly identify budget lines for gender-related activities and establish ways to track expenditures through gender-responsive budgeting and financial reporting. Uganda should work with partners and climate finance providers to expand financial access for grassroots women's organisations. These investments should aim to remove structural barriers and unlock the full potential of women's contributions to climate resilience.

6. Integrate planning and governance.

NDC 3.0 should formally support the already existing National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point, as encouraged in negotiations by previous COPs. This focal point should play a coordinating role across ministries and sectors. In addition, the technical working group for NDC 3.0 should include representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development; women's rights organisations; and local community leaders. Intersectoral collaboration and stakeholder engagement should be institutionalised to ensure gender is integrated across planning and implementation levels.

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