

Climate and Gender: Advancing Gender-Inclusive Climate Action Across Africa



Charles Kabiswa

Regenerate Africa, Poster Road,
Lukuli, Makindye, P.O. Box 107466,
Kampala, Uganda. [ckabiswa@
regenerateafrica.org](mailto:ckabiswa@regenerateafrica.org)

Nakuya Niona Kasekende

Regenerate Africa, Poster Road,
Lukuli, Makindye, P.O. Box 107466,
Kampala, Uganda.
nakuyaniona@regenerateafrica.org

Dr. Joshua Zake

Regenerate Africa, Poster Road,
Lukuli, Makindye, P.O. Box 107466,
Kampala, Uganda. [joszake@
regenerateafrica.org](mailto:joszake@regenerateafrica.org)

Dr. Monica Kansiime

CAB International, 673 Limuru Road,
Muthaiga, P.O. Box 633-00621,
Nairobi, Kenya.
m.kansiime@cabi.org

Endashaw Mogessie Tiruneh

Population, Health and Environment
Ethiopia Consortium, Tito Street,
Kazanchis, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
endashaw.mogessie@phe-ethiopia.org

Reebok L Mnyigumba

Climate Action Network Tanzania, P.O.
Box 32900, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
reebok@cantz.or.tz

Namakando Simamuna

Marie Stopes Zambia, Plot 120 Kudu
Road, Kabulonga, P.O. Box 33739,
Lusaka, Zambia - 10101.
[namakando.simamuna@mariestopes.
org.zm](mailto:namakando.simamuna@mariestopes.org.zm)

Sani Ayouba

Jeunes Volontaires pour
l'Environnement, Dan Gao, P.O. Box
11944 - Niamey Niger.
jveniger@gmail.com

Sosten Chiotha Leadership for
Environment and Development-
Southern and Eastern Africa,
Private Bag 07, Zomba, Malawi.
schiotha@leadsea.mw

CONTEXT

Climate change is a threat multiplier that worsens existing gender inequalities across sub-Saharan Africa. Women and men experience its impacts differently due to unequal access to resources, decision-making, and opportunities. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts because they are primarily responsible for securing water, food, and energy for their households—resources that are increasingly scarce and unreliable due to climate shocks brought on by shifting weather patterns, resulting in more or longer droughts, floods, and other weather events. These responsibilities intensify under environmental stress, increasing the burden of unpaid care work and often forcing girls to drop out of school. In parallel, climate-induced poverty, displacement, and instability are fueling higher incidences of forced child marriage, transactional sex, human trafficking, and gender-based violence.

Despite growing recognition of these challenges, gender remains insufficiently integrated into national climate policies and plans. Global and regional frameworks, including the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Action Plan, and African Union strategies, have called for stronger gender integration in climate policy and finance. Regional economic communities such as the East African Community, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and Southern African Development Community have also encouraged member states to develop and implement gender-responsive climate policies.

This policy brief draws on evidence from eight sub-Saharan African countries—Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia—to assess how gender is reflected in climate change policies, plans, strategies, and financing. The findings aim to inform more gender-responsive and -inclusive climate action, promoting policies that empower both women and men as active agents of resilience and transformation.

METHODS

We analysed a total of 44 policy documents using a structured gender integration checklist (Table 1). For Niger, we reviewed a country report based on a review of nine policy documents instead of individual policies.

Our assessment focused on three areas:

1. **General gender integration:** We examined the recognition of women’s roles in rural development, inclusion of gender equality as a policy objective, targeted measures addressing women’s needs, participation in policy processes, institutional capacity for gender-sensitive programming, and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators.
2. **Cross-cutting issues:** We considered such issues as attention to discriminatory social norms, gender-based violence, and budgetary provisions for gender-related activities.
3. **Integration in climate-relevant rural sectors:** We looked for integrations such as access to productive resources, financing, markets, and employment.

We coded each policy as “yes” or “no” against the agreed indicators using a key findings tracking sheet, with supporting quotes and references. We consolidated findings into a summary to

highlight trends, strengths, and gaps. Our results are presented as a cross-country assessment with country-specific examples, followed by general recommendations.

TABLE 1: POLICIES REVIEWED

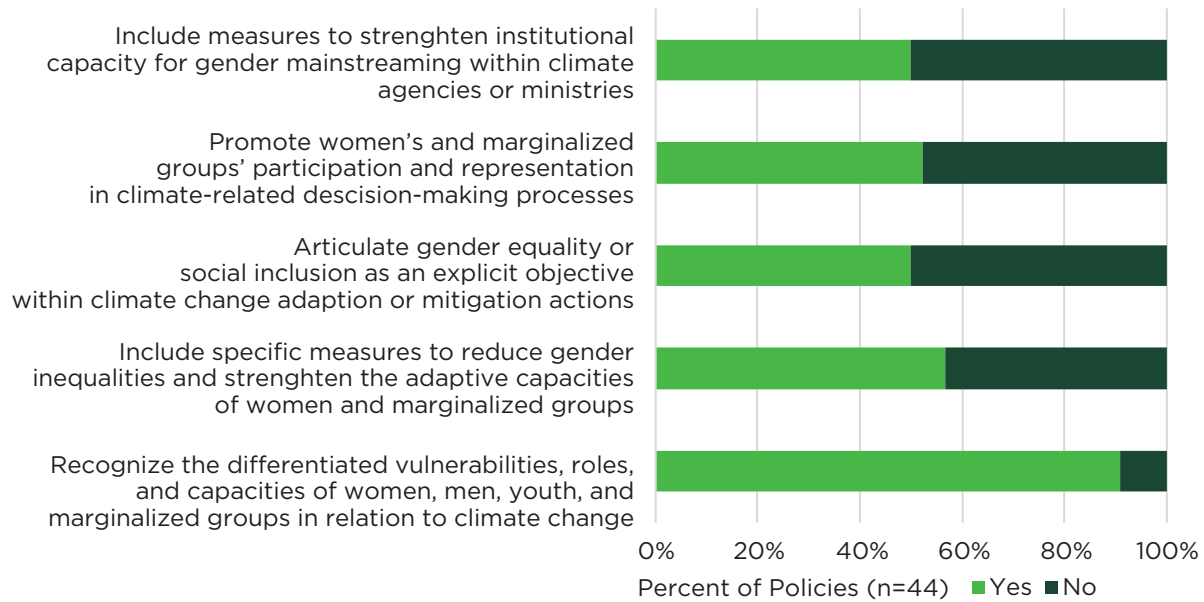
Country	Number of Climate-Related Policies Reviewed
Ethiopia	10
Kenya	9
Malawi	1
Rwanda	10
Tanzania	4
Uganda	9
Zambia	1
Total Policies Reviewed	44

RESULTS

Most climate-related policies recognise gender inequalities but do not fully institutionalise integration and embed it in operations.

Across the reviewed climate policy documents, we found recognition of gender-differentiated vulnerabilities and roles (91%), which shows that countries have a strong rhetorical commitment to inclusion and awareness of how climate impacts vary by gender and social group (Figure 1). However, the translation of recognition into concrete actions remains uneven. Only 57% of policies include specific measures to reduce inequalities or enhance adaptive capacities, and just half (50%) of policies explicitly make gender equality an objective. Institutional commitment shows similar gaps. Most climate policy frameworks emphasise the participation and representation of women, especially rural and Indigenous women. However, only about half of the policies include concrete actions to promote women’s participation or strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming. Fewer policies outline mechanisms to ensure sustained engagement or accountability, such as gender-responsive budgeting, designated gender focal points, and monitoring and tracking systems. This lack of integration suggests that the next generation of climate policies should move from intent to implementation, anchoring gender equality in institutional frameworks, monitoring systems, and financing mechanisms.

FIGURE 1. Half of Policies Prioritise Gender Equality and Institutional Capacities for Integration



Gender-responsive monitoring, evaluation, and financing remain weak areas.

Most climate policy frameworks—such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans (NAPs), and national climate strategies—acknowledge that women and other vulnerable groups face disproportionate climate risks. However, few countries have translated this recognition into concrete financial commitments through costed gender actions, dedicated budget lines, or gender-responsive tracking mechanisms. Our review of policy documents reveals that while just over half of the policies (55%) promote the collection and use of sex-disaggregated or intersectional data, fewer policies (39%) include gender-sensitive indicators to track progress on climate action (Figure 2). This gap suggests that although there is some recognition of the importance of gender data, its systematic

integration into monitoring frameworks is still limited. The most significant shortfall lies in financing mechanisms, where only 20% of policies specify dedicated budget lines or resources for gender-responsive climate action. This gap indicates that gender considerations are often not backed by financial commitments, constraining their translation from policy intent to practice.

Practical mechanisms and institutional frameworks to achieve gender-responsive climate financing are limited.

Our policy review shows that less than half of the documents include mechanisms for gender-responsive climate finance: 39% provide guidance on access, 32% outline institutional arrangements for equitable access, and 41% encourage partnerships with women's, youth, or civil society organisations (Figure 3). This evidence indicates that, while

FIGURE 2. On Average, Few Policies Incorporate Gender-Responsive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Financing

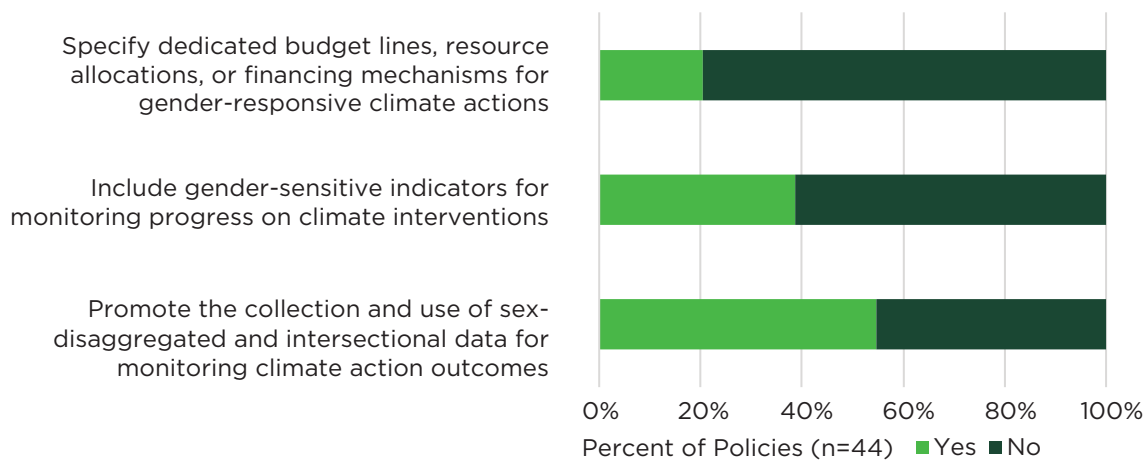
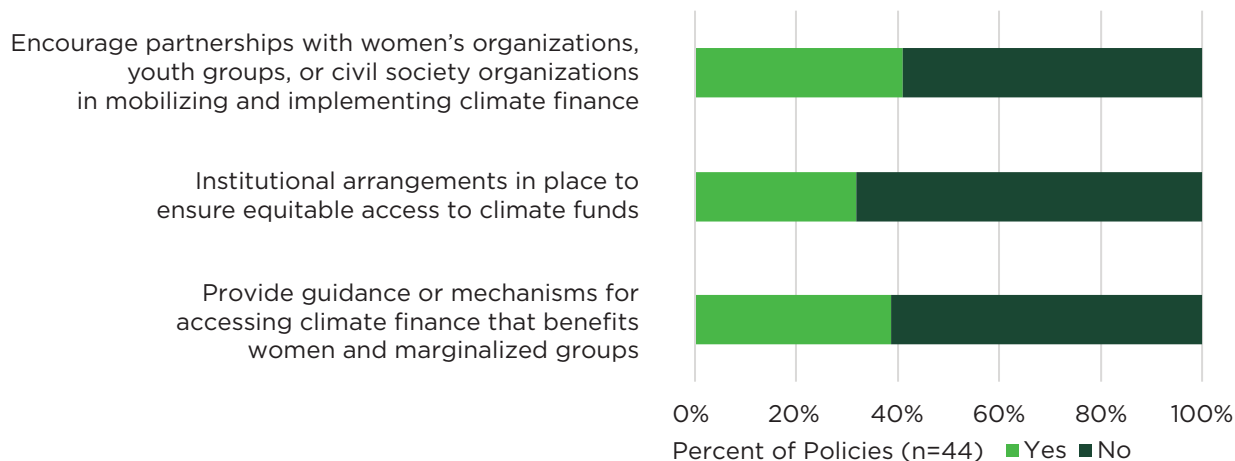


FIGURE 3: Less Than Half of Policies Foster an Enabling Environment for Gender-Responsive Climate Finance



countries are increasingly recognising the need for inclusive climate finance, institutional arrangements to implement it remain weak. In most cases, gender considerations are not embedded within the institutional architecture—such as coordination bodies, oversight mechanisms, and eligibility frameworks—that govern climate finance. The absence of clear mandates, accountability systems, and capacity within implementing institutions limits governments’ ability to channel resources equitably and ensure that women and marginalised groups benefit from climate funds. It is essential for governments to strengthen institutional capacity, establish gender-responsive governance and accountability structures, and embed equity criteria in their fund allocations so they can effectively translate inclusivity commitments into practice and advance equitable climate finance systems.

Cross-cutting gender issues remain largely overlooked in climate policy frameworks.

Most of the policies we reviewed give limited attention to the structural and intersectional barriers that shape gendered vulnerabilities to climate change. Few policies explicitly address gender-discriminatory social norms or recognise the burden of unpaid care work, both of which constrain women’s capacity to participate fully in climate adaptation and resilience-building. Similarly, gender-based violence (GBV), a critical factor influencing women’s safety, mobility, and decision-making power, is rarely mentioned in relation to climate risks and responses. Intersectional inequalities affecting youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised

rural groups are also insufficiently integrated into policy design and implementation. Overall, while policies increasingly acknowledge gender as a cross-cutting issue, they continue to leave the deeper social and structural drivers of inequality unaddressed, limiting the transformative potential of climate policies to advance gender equality and social justice.

Gender equality’s integration in climate-relevant rural sectors is limited.

The reviewed policies recognise gender equality and rural women’s empowerment, yet they lack sufficient practical measures to enhance women’s access to productive and adaptive resources. Most policies acknowledge women’s vulnerability to climate change, but few go so far as to identify specific actions, such as securing women’s land rights, which is a critical next step to enable the adoption of climate-smart and sustainable agricultural practices. Provisions that promote women’s participation in rural organisations and cooperatives—essential platforms for accessing climate information, inputs, and finance—are also limited. Similarly, while some policies highlight the importance of inclusive climate finance, explicit mechanisms linking women to credit schemes, insurance, and climate funds are largely absent. The lack of gender-specific measures across land, finance, employment, and knowledge systems ultimately constrains rural women’s and marginalised groups’ adaptive capacity, weakening overall resilience and inclusivity in climate action. Strengthening these connections is essential to ensure that climate policies deliver equitable and transformative resilience outcomes.

COUNTRY CASES

ETHIOPIA



Ethiopia has made notable progress on integrating gender considerations into climate policy, with all 10 documents we reviewed recognising the differentiated vulnerabilities and roles of women, men, youth, and marginalised groups in the face of climate change.

The Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP, 2024) provides a solid framework for gender-responsive action, introducing costed interventions—such as ETB 6 million (nearly US\$38,900) allocated for awareness creation and the promotion of women’s leadership in adaptation. Similarly, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP-ETH, 2019) and Scoping Report – Ethiopia’s Response to Climate Change and Gender (2020) highlight climate change’s disproportionate impacts on women and call for inclusive participation.

However, our review shows that Ethiopia’s gender integration remains largely incidental rather than transformative. Only 40% of its policies include concrete measures to reduce gender inequalities or build capacity to adapt to climate shifts, and just half of its policies explicitly promote women’s participation in climate governance. Institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming also remains weak, with limited enforcement and coordination occurring across ministries. While the ccGAP introduces gender targets and some gender-sensitive indicators, financing and monitoring mechanisms are underdeveloped, only two policies specify dedicated budget lines for gender-responsive actions, and three policies provide guidance on equitable access to climate finance. Critically, these policies overlook critical cross-cutting issues such as GBV, unpaid care work, and intersectional vulnerabilities affecting women with disabilities, Indigenous women, and other marginalised groups. Broader climate finance mechanisms, including the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Facility, have yet to systematically channel resources towards gender outcomes.

To move from recognition to transformation, Ethiopia’s future policymaking efforts must embed gender equality as a central pillar, backed by data, funding, and institutional accountability to ensure climate responses are inclusive, equitable, and effective.

KENYA



Kenya’s climate policies show moderate progress on integrating gender considerations. Foundational frameworks such as the National Policy on Gender and Development (2019) and the Updated NDCs (2020) affirm the country’s commitment to gender equality and recognise the differentiated impacts of climate change on women, youth, and vulnerable groups. The National Climate Change Action Plan (2018-2022) also reinforces inclusion across sectors and planning levels.

However, Kenya does not articulate gender equality as an explicit objective in any of its adaptation or mitigation frameworks. About two-thirds (67%) of the policies we reviewed promote women’s and marginalised groups’ participation in climate-related decision-making; just over half (56%) of the policies include measures to strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming. Yet these provisions remain fragmented and under-resourced. Notably, newer frameworks such as the National Climate Change Strategic Plan show weaker integration of gender compared to earlier efforts, signaling a regression in mainstreaming efforts. Progress on monitoring and financing is even more limited. Only one-third (33%) of policies specify budget lines or financing mechanisms for gender-responsive climate action, and no policies include gender-sensitive indicators to track results.

Overall, Kenya’s policy intent towards gender inclusion is clear, but translation into institutional structures, budgets, and accountability mechanisms remains limited. Most frameworks recognise gender disparities without establishing actionable measures or accountability mechanisms. Strengthening institutional capacity, adopting gender-responsive budgeting, and integrating equity criteria into devolved financing mechanisms such as Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) are critical next steps for Kenya to move from policy intent to tangible, equitable outcomes.

MALAWI



Malawi has made visible progress in recognising gender as a cross-cutting issue in its climate-related policies but concrete implementation remains limited. Malawi’s Updated NDCs (2021) explicitly acknowledge climate change’s gender-differentiated impacts and commit to mainstreaming gender through instruments like a forthcoming ccGAP. The Updated NDCs

identify women, particularly in agriculture and rural settings, as disproportionately affected by climate change and in need of targeted support. However, this document does not identify measurable gender-specific targets, indicators, or budgets. Issues such as GBV, harmful sociocultural norms, and women's participation in climate governance receive minimal attention.

NIGER



Niger has shown commendable political commitment to integrating gender into its climate change policies, positioning women among vulnerable populations and central actors in climate resilience.

The Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (2023-2027) marks a significant step by promoting women's participation in climate governance, advocating for gender-responsive budgeting, and encouraging the use of sex-disaggregated data. The revised NDC (2021) reflects growing gender sensitivity, especially in vulnerable sectors like agriculture, water, and health. Niger's Constitution (2010) and national development strategies, such as the Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy-Niger 2035 and Economic and Social Development Plan (2022-2026), include gender as a central consideration in their frameworks and support efforts to eliminate discrimination, creating an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming in climate policy. Nevertheless, implementation gaps persist. Many plans acknowledge gender without detailing actions for specific groups like adolescent girls or displaced women. Moving forward, Niger can craft more inclusive, equitable, and locally owned climate responses by embedding gender targets into its policies and strategies, promoting women's leadership, integrating sexual and reproductive health and rights in its policy frameworks, and funding grassroots women's organisations.

RWANDA



Rwanda demonstrates strong political commitment to gender equality and climate resilience, reflected in gender's integration across most national policy frameworks. The National Environment and

Climate Change Policy (2019) and the updated NDCs recognise gender as a cross-cutting issue and call for the collection of disaggregated data to inform inclusive climate action. Overall, 80% of policies acknowledge the differentiated vulnerabilities,

roles, and capacities of women, men, youth, and marginalised groups, and 70% of policies explicitly articulate gender equality or social inclusion as an objective within adaptation or mitigation actions. Institutional commitment is also evident, with 70% of the policies we reviewed including measures to strengthen gender mainstreaming within climate agencies and aligning with national mandates such as the Revised National Gender Policy (2021).

However, financing and monitoring mechanisms could be strengthened. Only 30% of policies specify dedicated budget lines for gender-responsive climate actions, and less than half of the policies provide guidance or institutional arrangements for equitable access to climate finance. While some frameworks promote sex-disaggregated data collection and gender-sensitive indicators, implementation of these efforts is uneven across sectors. Other national strategies, like the National Strategy for Transformation (2017-2024) and disaster management policies, acknowledge gender mainly in governance or social protection terms that lack direct links to climate resilience. Sectoral plans in agriculture, energy, and urban development also miss opportunities to address gender-differentiated needs and roles.

Overall, Rwanda's climate policy environment is progressive and evolving, underpinned by strong political will but constrained by limited financing and accountability mechanisms. The ongoing development of a ccGAP, led by the Ministry of Environment, represents a major step towards implementing these commitments and embedding intersectional, gender-responsive measures across sectors.

TANZANIA

Tanzania's climate and development policy frameworks increasingly recognise the gendered dimensions of climate change, though progress remains uneven across sectors. The National Climate Change Response Strategy (NCCRS, 2021-2026) explicitly acknowledges the disproportionate impacts of climate shocks on women, highlighting increased caregiving burdens, exposure to GBV, and unequal access to productive resources. It commits to promoting gender-responsive climate interventions and sets targets for mainstreaming gender into climate actions by 2026. Similarly, the Five Year Development Plan (2021/22-2025/26) incorporates gender priorities such as girls' education and women's economic empowerment, though they are not directly linked to climate resilience.



In contrast, sectoral frameworks—particularly the Health Sector Strategic Plan V (HSSP V, 2021-2026) and the outdated National Health Policy (2007)—give limited attention to the intersection between gender, health, and climate change. Most policies provide weak or no mechanisms for ensuring women’s participation in climate governance, the use of sex-disaggregated data, and gender-responsive budgeting. While the NCCRS and related frameworks mention GBV and harmful norms, they lack concrete strategies to address these matters within climate adaptation and resilience planning.

Climate finance allocations continue to favor sectors such as energy, agriculture, and forestry, with minimal investments directed towards gender equality or women’s health resilience. However, Tanzania’s new policy directive requiring local governments to allocate 10% of own-source revenue to women, youth, and persons with disabilities for climate adaptation marks a promising shift towards inclusive financing. The NCCRS and the draft Health National Adaptation Plan also signal an emerging recognition of health resilience within climate policy.

Overall, Tanzania demonstrates growing awareness of gendered climate vulnerabilities and should strengthen institutional mechanisms, financing frameworks, and accountability systems to translate policy intent into transformative, gender-responsive climate action.

UGANDA

Uganda’s climate policy framework demonstrates a moderate to strong integration of gender, with several policies reflecting the country’s growing commitment to gender-responsive climate action. The updated NDC (2022) is particularly progressive, explicitly promoting gender-responsive implementation through measures such as appointing gender and climate specialists across institutions, collecting sex-disaggregated data, and enhancing women’s participation in decision-making. The National Climate Change Policy (2015) similarly identifies gender as a cross-cutting issue and calls for capacity strengthening to reduce women’s and vulnerable groups’ climate risks. Policies such as the National Population, Health and Environment Network Strategic Plan (2020/21-2024/25) go further by integrating gender, health, and environment through a Population, Health, and Environment (PHE) lens, addressing issues like GBV and early marriage.

However, implementation remains uneven across sectors. While 89% of the policies we reviewed

recognise differentiated vulnerabilities, only 67% of the policies include specific measures to reduce gender inequalities, and 44% contain provisions for institutional capacity strengthening. Financing mechanisms are notably absent—none of the policies specify dedicated budget lines or gender-responsive financing frameworks. Although over half (56%) of policies promote the use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators, this promotion has yet to translate into systematic monitoring or reporting.

To move from intent to action, Uganda must institutionalise gender across all climate policies by embedding measurable targets, costed interventions, and accountability systems. Integrating GBV prevention into climate adaptation financing would strengthen the country’s resilience and ensure that its climate action benefits women and marginalised groups equitably.

ZAMBIA

Zambia’s climate policy framework—based primarily on our review of the NDC 3.0 (2025)—shows moderate attention to gender equality, with recognition of women’s and marginalised groups’ heightened vulnerabilities to climate impacts. The NDC identifies gender as a cross-cutting issue and calls for inclusive approaches in adaptation and mitigation. However, it identifies no gender-specific goals, measurable targets, or clear accountability mechanisms. Women’s participation in climate governance, particularly at community and rural levels, is acknowledged but not carried through into practice with institutional measures or financing.

The NDC 3.0 does not include provisions for sex-disaggregated data collection or gender-sensitive indicators to track progress, and its guidance on gender-responsive budgeting is vague.

While the ccGAP references the need for gender-responsive finance, its implementation framework and linkages to broader climate financing mechanisms remain unclear. Importantly, the policy does not address structural barriers such as the harmful social norms and GBV that limit women’s adaptive capacity. The ccGAP acknowledged its intention to align with international frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Action Plan but does not translate this intention into actionable measures.



Recommendations: Towards Climate Action That Integrates Gender

To position gender as a core element in climate resilience actions, countries should:

- **Integrate gender equality as a core component of future policies** like NAPs, NDCs, and ccGAPs, with clear targets, budgets, and measurable outcomes across adaptation and mitigation sectors.
- **Frame gender inclusion as a driver of adaptive capacity and resilience**, emphasising women's leadership, access to resources, and participation in climate decision-making.
- **Introduce gender-responsive budgeting and tagging mechanisms in national and subnational climate finance systems** to enable tracking, transparency, and accountability.
- **Include gender-responsive interventions in national climate finance proposals** (to the Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Funds, and others) such as climate-smart agriculture for women farmers, access to clean energy, and capacity building for women-led enterprises.
- **Expand and strengthen domestic financing mechanisms** (such as Tanzania's 10% local government allocation for women and youth) to support women's economic empowerment and resilience in climate-vulnerable areas.
- **Establish cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms** linking environment, gender, finance, and planning ministries to co-develop and monitor gender-responsive climate policies and investments.
- **Strengthen the capacity of national and local planners to integrate gender analysis and gender-responsive approaches** throughout the climate policy cycle—from planning to implementation and reporting.
- **Invest in gender-disaggregated data systems and indicators** to track progress on women's participation, access to climate finance, and resilience outcomes.
- **Strengthen accountability frameworks** to ensure gender commitments in climate policies translate into funded, measurable, and sustained action on the ground.

Sources

Itza Castañeda Carney, Laura Sabater, Cate Owren et al., eds, *Gender-Based Violence and Environment Linkages: The Violence of Inequality* (Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, 2020).

Niona Nakuya Kasekende, Charles Kabiswa, Joshua Zake et al., "Advancing and Scaling up Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for Climate Adaptation and Resilience in Uganda," *Frontiers in Global Women's Health* 6 (2025).

Sara L. Nam, A. Abril, and Karl Blanchet, *A Research Prioritisation Exercise for R2HC: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRH) in Humanitarian Crises—What Evidence Is Missing to Improve Future Policy and Practice?* (Geneva: Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies, 2024).

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Queen Mary University of London, *Taking Stock: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Climate Commitments: A Global Review* (New York: UNFPA, 2023).

UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects* (New York: UNICEF, 2014).

World Health Organization (WHO), *Trends in Maternal Mortality 2000 to 2020: Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, Work Bank Group and UNDESA/Population Division* (Geneva: WHO, 2023).

Women Deliver, *The Link Between Climate Change and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: An Evidence Review* (2021).

Acknowledgments: This work was supported by the generous funding of the Population Institute and Panorama Global.

Contact: Mr. Charles Kabiswa, Executive Director, Regenerate Africa, Poster Road, Lukuli, Makindye, P.O. Box 107466, Kampala, Uganda. Email: ckabiswa@regenerateafrica.org



POPULATION
INSTITUTE



PANORAMA
GLOBAL



Explore more of our
health-climate analyses