

From Promise to Practice: An Urgent Call for Implementing Nigeria's National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (NAPGCC)

Executive Summary

Nigeria's National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (NAPGCC 2021-2025) was developed to ensure that climate policies and interventions respond to the distinct vulnerabilities, capacities, and contributions of women, men, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The Action Plan represented an important policy milestone, providing a framework for integrating gender considerations into climate governance across key sectors.

However, evidence gathered across twelve states and the Federal Capital Territory reveals that implementation of the NAPGCC remained weak, fragmented, and largely dependent on external actors. Although many climate-related initiatives addressed issues that align with the objectives of the Action Plan, these interventions were rarely implemented under a coherent NAPGCC framework. As a result, progress has been largely incidental rather than strategic, driven predominantly by donor-funded projects and civil society initiatives rather than by sustained government leadership and investment.

The assessment of the implementation of the NAPGCC points to a broader governance gap within Nigeria's climate response architecture. While commitments to gender-responsive climate action have expanded across national policies and international obligations, institutional mechanisms required to translate these commitments into practice remain underdeveloped. Limited awareness of the NAPGCC among implementing institutions, weak coordination between climate and gender actors, inadequate technical capacity, and the absence of dedicated financing have collectively constrained implementation. These challenges suggest that gender considerations have yet to be fully embedded within mainstream climate planning, budgeting, monitoring, and accountability systems.

A particularly significant finding from the assessment of the implementation of NAPGCC is the near-total absence of dedicated public financing for NAPGCC implementation. This reflects not only a resource challenge but also a broader issue of policy prioritization. Without institutionalized budget allocations, implementation has relied heavily on short-term and unpredictable external funding, undermining sustainability, scalability, and national ownership. Similarly, the persistent lack of sex-disaggregated and intersectional data has limited the ability of institutions to measure outcomes, assess effectiveness, and demonstrate the contribution of gender-responsive approaches to climate resilience.

The assessment further demonstrates that the NAPGCC has not yet become a central reference point for climate-related planning and decision-making. Despite increasing recognition of gender within emerging policy frameworks such as Nigeria's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0), operational linkages between these processes and the NAPGCC remain weak. Consequently, valuable opportunities to leverage the Action Plan as a practical implementation framework for achieving national climate objectives have not been fully realized.

As Nigeria advances the implementation of NDC 3.0, the National Adaptation Plan, and other climate-related initiatives, a strategic window exists to address these shortcomings. The assessment suggests that future success will depend less on developing new policy commitments and more on strengthening the institutional, financial, and accountability systems required to implement existing ones. This will require repositioning the NAPGCC as an operational tool embedded within climate governance structures, supported by dedicated financing, stronger inter-agency coordination, improved data systems, and clear implementation responsibilities across federal and state institutions.

1.0. Why Gender-Responsive Climate Action Matters

Climate change is not gender-neutral. While climate-related hazards affect entire populations, their impacts are experienced differently by women and men due to existing social, economic, and institutional inequalities. Women often face greater climate-related risks because they have less access to productive resources, land, finance, technology, information, and decision-making processes, all of which influence their capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate shocks (UNFCCC, 2023; UN Women, 2025).

Across Nigeria, climate-related challenges such as flooding, drought, desertification, erosion, and rising temperatures intersect with longstanding gender inequalities to heighten the vulnerability of women and girls. As primary actors in household food production, water collection, energy provision, and family welfare, women frequently bear a disproportionate share of the social and economic costs associated with climate variability and environmental degradation. When climate-related resources become scarce, women often experience increased workloads, livelihood insecurity, and reduced opportunities for education, economic empowerment, and participation in public life (UN Women, 2025; UNEP, 2023).

However, women should not be viewed solely as victims of climate change. Evidence increasingly demonstrates that women make significant contributions to climate adaptation, natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, and community resilience. Their knowledge, experiences, and leadership often enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of climate interventions, particularly at household and community levels. Studies have shown that climate policies and programmes are more effective when women participate meaningfully in decision-making and implementation processes (UNFCCC, 2023; UNEP, 2023).

A gender-responsive approach to climate action therefore seeks not only to address unequal vulnerabilities but also to strengthen the capacity of women and other marginalized groups to contribute to climate solutions. This involves integrating gender considerations into climate policy development, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure that climate investments generate equitable and sustainable outcomes. International climate policy frameworks increasingly recognize that gender equality is essential for improving the effectiveness, fairness, and sustainability of climate action (UNFCCC, 2025; United Nations Secretary-General, 2022).

For Nigeria, gender-responsive climate action is both a development imperative and a policy obligation. The country has committed to advancing gender equality and inclusive climate governance through national policies, the Climate Change Act (2021), its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and international commitments under the Paris Agreement. The National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (NAPGCC) was developed to translate these commitments into practical action by providing a framework for integrating gender considerations across climate-related sectors and institutions.

As Nigeria advances implementation of NDC 3.0, the National Adaptation Plan, and other climate-related initiatives, gender responsiveness should be viewed not as a stand-alone social objective but as a strategic investment in climate resilience and sustainable development. Ensuring that women and other marginalized groups have equitable access to

resources, opportunities, climate finance, and decision-making processes will enhance the effectiveness of adaptation and mitigation efforts while contributing to broader national development goals. The implementation experience of the NAPGCC therefore provides important lessons for strengthening the integration of gender equality within Nigeria's evolving climate governance architecture.

2.0. The NAPGCC at a Crossroads

Nigeria's National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (NAPGCC) stands at a critical juncture. As the first implementation cycle of the Plan concludes, the assessment findings reveal a striking contrast between policy ambition and implementation reality. While the NAPGCC established a comprehensive framework for integrating gender considerations into climate action across key sectors, its influence on planning, budgeting, programme implementation, and accountability systems has remained limited. The evidence suggests that the challenge is not the absence of a policy framework, but rather the failure to institutionalize it within the structures that drive climate governance and development planning in Nigeria.

The assessment found that implementation has been characterized largely by fragmented and project-based initiatives rather than a coordinated national response. In many instances, interventions promoting women's climate resilience, climate-smart agriculture, clean energy access, and sustainable livelihoods have been implemented without explicit reference to the NAPGCC. This indicates that while gender-responsive climate actions are occurring, they are not being systematically guided by the framework intended to coordinate and scale such efforts. Consequently, achievements remain localized, dependent on donor support, and vulnerable to discontinuation once external funding ends.

More fundamentally, the findings point to a broader governance deficit. The low level of awareness among implementing institutions, weak coordination between climate and gender actors, lack of dedicated financing, and absence of robust monitoring systems collectively suggest that the NAPGCC has not been embedded within government systems as a mandatory implementation framework. Policies are most effective when they influence institutional incentives, budgetary allocations, performance indicators, and reporting requirements. In the case of the NAPGCC, these enabling conditions have largely been absent, limiting its ability to drive transformative change.

The near-total absence of dedicated public financing emerged as perhaps the clearest indicator of this institutional gap. Although the policy recognizes the importance of gender-responsive climate action, this commitment has not been consistently translated into budgetary decisions. The continued reliance on donor-funded programmes raises questions about the sustainability, scale, and national ownership of implementation efforts. Without predictable and institutionalized financing mechanisms, gender-responsive climate action is likely to remain peripheral rather than integral to Nigeria's climate and development agenda.

At the same time, the assessment identifies a significant strategic opportunity. The ongoing implementation of Nigeria's National Adaptation Plan (NAP), the adoption of the country's Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0), and the growing availability of international climate finance create an enabling environment for repositioning the NAPGCC. Unlike previous policy cycles, these emerging frameworks increasingly recognize the importance of gender equality as a prerequisite for effective climate action. This presents an opportunity to move beyond treating gender as a cross-cutting issue and instead establish it as a core pillar of climate resilience, adaptation, and low-carbon development.

The assessment therefore suggests that the next phase of the NAPGCC should focus less on developing new policy commitments and more on strengthening implementation architecture. Success will depend on institutionalizing gender-responsive climate action through clear mandates, sustainable financing, strengthened coordination mechanisms, robust data systems, and enforceable accountability measures. Without these reforms, the NAPGCC risks remaining a valuable but largely symbolic policy instrument. With them, however, it could become a powerful vehicle for advancing

inclusive climate resilience and ensuring that Nigeria's climate transition benefits women, girls, and other marginalized groups.

Ultimately, the NAPGCC has reached a crossroads between continuity and transformation. The evidence demonstrates that maintaining the status quo will likely perpetuate fragmented interventions and unrealized aspirations. By contrast, leveraging current climate policy reforms to institutionalize and resource the NAPGCC could transform it from a statement of intent into a practical framework for delivering equitable and effective climate action. The decisions taken in the coming years will determine whether the Plan remains a promise on paper or becomes a catalyst for gender-responsive climate governance in Nigeria.

3.0. Strategic Priorities for Accelerating Gender-Responsive Climate Action

The assessment demonstrates that Nigeria's challenge is not the absence of policies on gender and climate change, but the persistent gap between policy commitments and implementation. Closing this gap requires a shift from fragmented, project-based interventions to a well-coordinated, adequately financed, and accountable system for gender-responsive climate action. The following six strategic pillars provide a roadmap for strengthening implementation and maximizing the impact of the next phase of the NAPGCC.

Pillar 1: Strengthen Policy Leadership and Institutional Coordination

Effective implementation requires strong institutional leadership, clear mandates, and coordinated action across climate, gender, planning, and finance institutions. A renewed NAPGCC should be aligned with national climate frameworks, supported by a strengthened Gender and Climate Change Desk, and backed by formal coordination mechanisms that ensure gender-responsive climate action is integrated into sectoral planning and decision-making processes.

Pillar 2: Institutionalize Sustainable Financing

The absence of dedicated financing remains the most significant barrier to implementation. Sustainable progress will require dedicated budget allocations, gender-responsive climate budgeting, and transparent systems for tracking climate finance. Such measures will strengthen national ownership, reduce dependence on external funding, and ensure adequate resources for initiatives that enhance the resilience and livelihoods of women and vulnerable groups.

Pillar 3: Build Institutional Capacity and Technical Expertise

Effective implementation depends on the ability of institutions to translate policy into action. Priority should therefore be given to strengthening capacities in gender analysis, climate finance, planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting. Continuous training, knowledge-sharing, and the integration of gender and climate change into civil service and academic curricula will help build a sustainable base of expertise across all levels of government.

Pillar 4: Strengthen Evidence, Monitoring, and Accountability

Weak monitoring systems and the limited availability of sex-disaggregated and intersectional data undermine accountability and evidence-based decision-making. A robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework, supported by standardized indicators, strengthened data systems, and regular performance reporting, is essential for tracking progress, measuring outcomes, and demonstrating impact.

Pillar 5: Accelerate Sub-National Implementation and Inclusive Participation

Because climate impacts are experienced locally, state and community-level implementation must be prioritized. Tailored support should be provided to states based on their readiness and capacity, while strengthening local coordination structures and ensuring meaningful participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, traditional institutions, and community-based organizations. This will promote locally driven solutions, accountability, and peer learning across states.

Pillar 6: Mainstream Gender Across Climate and Development Frameworks

The implementation of NDC 3.0, the National Adaptation Plan, and other climate initiatives presents an opportunity to position the NAPGCC as Nigeria's principal framework for gender-responsive climate action. Integrating gender commitments across key sectors, aligning reporting systems, and ensuring that climate investments are assessed against both resilience and gender equality objectives will enhance policy coherence and development impact.

Together, these six pillars provide a practical framework for transforming the NAPGCC from a policy commitment into an operational mechanism that delivers inclusive, accountable, and sustainable climate action for women and vulnerable groups across Nigeria.

4. Conclusion

Nigeria's NAPGCC has established a compelling vision for inclusive and equitable climate action. However, the assessment demonstrates that the transition from policy commitment to implementation remains incomplete. The evidence points to a clear need for stronger institutional leadership, sustainable financing, enhanced capacity, and more robust accountability mechanisms.

The next phase of the NAPGCC should therefore focus on institutionalization rather than policy expansion. By strengthening leadership and coordination, mobilizing sustainable financing, building technical capacity, improving accountability, accelerating sub-national implementation, and mainstreaming gender across climate and development frameworks, Nigeria can transform the NAPGCC from a policy aspiration into a practical instrument for climate resilience and sustainable development.

The decisions taken over the next few years will be critical. A continuation of current approaches risk leaving the NAPGCC as an underutilized framework with unrealized potential. Conversely, decisive action to implement the recommendations outlined in this brief can help ensure that climate policies and investments deliver tangible benefits for women, girls, and marginalized communities while strengthening Nigeria's overall climate resilience. Moving from promise to practice is therefore not only a matter of gender equality; it is essential for achieving effective, inclusive, and sustainable climate action.

Acknowledgement

This Policy Brief has been prepared with inspiration from the report of the assessment of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (NAPGCC 2021-2025) for Nigeria. The assessment was conducted by Women Environmental Programme (WEP), in collaboration with the Department of Climate Change, Federal Ministry of Environment, with financial support from Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF), through its Global Ecofeminist Climate Action Fund (GECAF); and the European Union, through the project - WomenPower2030: Feminists Accelerate Action for Sustainable Development.

References

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (2023). *Introduction to gender and climate change*. <https://unfccc.int/gender>

United Nations Environment Programme. (2023). *Gender and climate action*. <https://www.unep.org/topics/gender/gender-and-climate-action>

United Nations Secretary-General. (2022). *Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes* (E/CN.6/2022/3). United Nations. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956348>

UN Women. (2025, April 21). *How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected>

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (2025). *Belém gender action plan and gender-responsive climate action*. <https://unfccc.int/>