

# RENDERING GENDER VISIBLE IN CLIMATE FINANCE

*What can current gender markers tell us?*

Gabriela Alberola, Ruth Carlitz and Tessa Tutschka

Policy Brief 2026: 1  
27 October 2026

## Why look at gender in climate finance?

**Climate change has gendered impacts.** Differences in access to resources, decision-making power, livelihoods, and household responsibilities shape exposure to climate risks and the capacity to respond. Gendered roles and social relations also influence participation in climate action and whose knowledge and priorities are reflected in decision-making.

Gender is increasingly visible in climate policy and finance. Providers reporting to the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the main forum for bilateral aid donors, use the **Gender Equality Policy Marker** to classify whether gender equality is not targeted, a **significant**, or a **principal** objective. Yet there is still limited evidence on where gender-tagged climate finance goes, what it funds, and how it relates to gender inequality and recipient-country priorities.

To examine these questions, we analyze **climate-related development finance commitments<sup>1</sup> to 53 African countries** between 2000 and 2023, combining OECD Climate-Related Development Finance data<sup>2</sup> with the WEDO's Gender Climate Tracker<sup>3</sup> and the UNDP Gender Inequality Index<sup>4</sup>.

## Gender-tagged climate finance has grown sharply

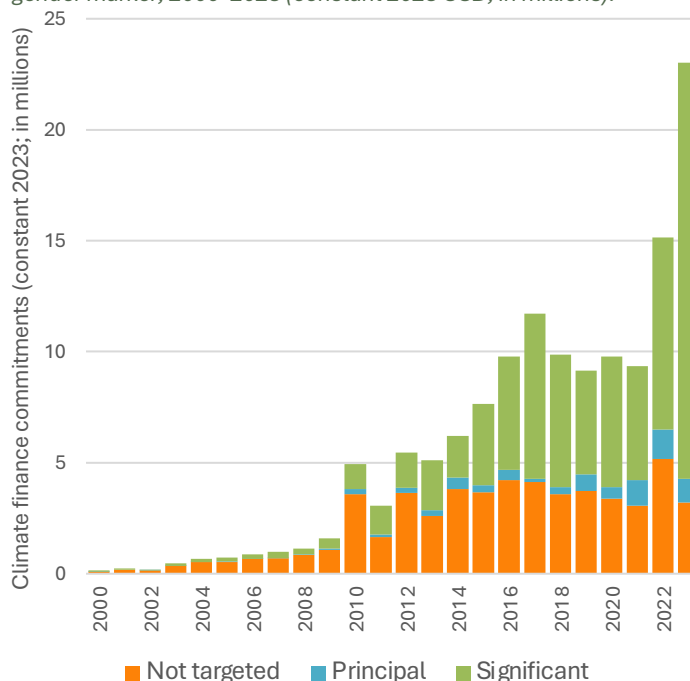
Climate finance commitments to African countries increased substantially after 2010. Gender-tagged finance also rose, but growth was driven mainly by **“significant”** commitments, where gender equality is an important goal but not the main reason for the activity, rather than **“principal”** commitments, where it is central to the project's design and expected results.

Looking more closely at the **100 largest principal-tagged projects** shows that these commitments are not confined to stand-alone gender projects. Together, they account for approximately **USD 4.1 billion** and include **major investments in transport, water management, infrastructure, renewable energy and financial services**. This suggests that gender objectives are being incorporated into mainstream climate and development investments, although the available finance data provide limited information on how gender objectives shape implementation or outcomes.

## KEY MESSAGES

1. **Gender-tagged finance has grown sharply since 2010**, driven primarily by the “significant” category
2. **Gender-tagged finance is more adaptation-focused and grant-financed**, while non-targeted finance leans toward mitigation and debt.
3. **The 100 largest “principal” projects (≈USD 4.1 billion) are mostly mainstream infrastructure and financial-sector investments**; not standalone gender projects.
4. **Higher gender inequality in recipient countries is associated with larger shares of gender-tagged finance**, but stronger gender priorities in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) does not predict gender-responsive finance.
5. Existing **gender markers provide a useful basis for tracking finance**, but they provide limited evidence on implementation and outcomes.

Figure 1. Climate finance commitments to 53 African countries by gender marker, 2000–2023 (constant 2023 USD; in millions).



1 We focus on commitments because providers assign the gender marker at the commitment stage, when reporting to the OECD Creditor Reporting System. Commitments therefore sit closest to the decision to apply the tag.

2 The OECD publishes the [Climate-Related Development Finance \(CRDF\) dataset](#) (2025) annually and covers official development finance activities tagged as climate-related via the Rio marker methodology, including provider, recipient, sector, and policy-marker fields.

3 The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)'s [Gender Climate Tracker \(GCT\) dataset](#) (n.d.) records gender mandates adopted in UNFCCC negotiations, women's participation as climate delegates, and gender references in countries' NDCs.

4 The UNDP's [Gender Inequality Index \(GII\)](#) (n.d.) is a composite measure of gender-based disadvantage across reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation.

## Where does gender-tagged finance go, and what appears to shape its distribution?

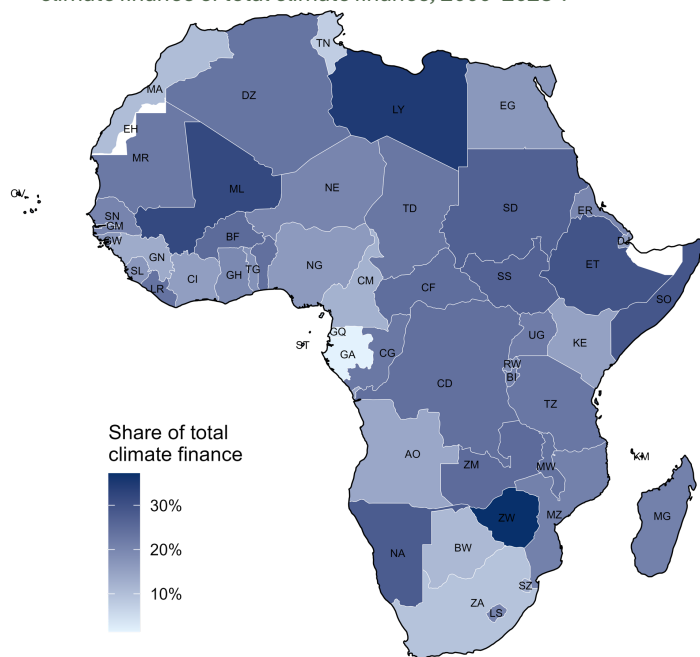
Gender-tagged climate finance is unevenly distributed across African countries, and the pattern changes depending on how the distribution is measured. Countries receiving relatively large absolute commitments do not necessarily receive the largest amounts per capita or the highest shares of gender-responsive finance within their overall climate-finance portfolios.

Recipient-country conditions also shape the picture. Countries with higher levels of gender inequality tend to receive larger shares of gender-tagged climate finance. This could be consistent with finance being directed to where gender-responsive action is most needed, although the analysis does not establish why this relationship occurs.

By contrast, stronger gender priorities in national climate plans do not correspond with greater commitments of relevant finance. Gender references have become more frequent in African NDCs, but countries with stronger gender references do not appear to benefit from a larger subsequent increase in gender-responsive finance.

NDCs are only one expression of recipient-country priorities; other institutional and sectoral factors may influence both climate planning and finance allocations.

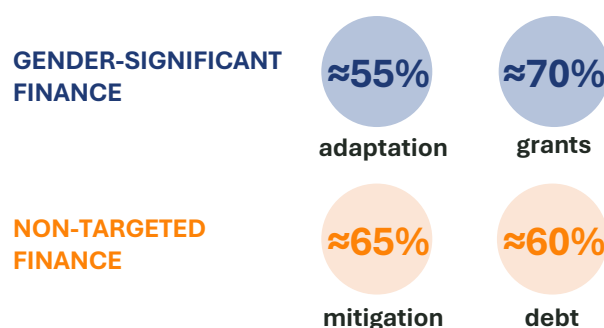
Figure 2. Geographic distribution of the share of gender-responsive climate finance of total climate finance, 2000–2023<sup>5</sup>.



## How is gender-tagged climate finance distributed across sectors and financing instruments?

Gender-tagged finance differs from non-targeted finance in both its sectoral focus and financing instruments. Gender-significant finance is more concentrated in adaptation, while non-targeted finance leans more towards mitigation. Significant- and principal-tagged finance are also more commonly provided as grants, whereas non-targeted finance relies more heavily on debt.

These patterns suggest that gender tagging is associated with particular types of climate activities and financing instruments. The aggregate data do not establish why these differences arise and may reflect variation across sectors, providers, recipient portfolios, or tagging practices.



## What can current gender markers tell us?

The Gender Equality Policy Marker provides a useful basis for comparing reported gender objectives across climate-finance commitments. It allows us to identify changes over time, differences across countries, and patterns in the sectors and financial instruments associated with gender-tagged finance.

At the same time, the marker captures reported objectives rather than implementation or outcomes. On its own, it cannot show how gender considerations shape project design, whose priorities are reflected, who participates or benefits, or whether reported commitments lead to changes in gender-related outcomes.

## What remains to be understood?

The findings point to a need for closer examination of what gender tags capture at project level. This includes how gender objectives are interpreted across sectors, how they are reflected in project design and implementation, and how reported commitments relate to recipient-country priorities and outcomes. **Understanding what sits behind the marker is central to interpreting progress in gender-responsive climate finance.**

<sup>5</sup> Areas shown in white are those for which no data are available. Borders are based on [Natural Earth](#) data, accessed via the *rnaturalearth* R package, and are shown for analytical purposes only. Territorial designations do not imply endorsement of claims regarding disputed territories.