

# SECOND RWANDA CONFERENCE ON GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE (RCGCC) REPORT

Elevating Evidence into Action: A Gender - Responsive Climate Policy Dialogue

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## ORGANIZERS



CENTER for CLIMATE JUSTICE

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**Contents**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... i

1. BACKGROUND ..... 1

2. OUTCOME AREAS ..... 1

    2.1. Area 1: Research → Policy Interface ..... 1

    2.2. Area 2: GESI & NDC 3.0 ..... 2

    2.3. Area 3: Gender-Responsive Climate Finance..... 4

    2.4. Area 4: Inclusive Climate-Resilient Agriculture and Circular Solutions ..... 5

    2.5. Area 5: Community Resilience & Leadership ..... 6

3. THE CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUÉ AS THE POLICY ANCHOR ..... 6

4. IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK EXPLAINED ..... 7

5. CONCLUSION ..... 8

**List of Figures**

Figure 1. Evidence → Policy → Implementation pathway for gender-responsive climate action. .... 2

Figure 2. Structure of GESI Index and its integration into NDC 3.0 planning and monitoring systems. .... 3

Figure 3. Gender-responsive climate finance flow - from funds to community impact. .... 4

Figure 4. Inclusive climate-resilient agriculture and circular solutions pathway..... 5

Figure 5. Community resilience and leadership pathway for gender-responsive climate action. .... 6

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Rwanda Conference on Gender and Climate Change (RCGCC 2025) was convened as a strategic response to a central national challenge: Rwanda has strong gender and climate policies, yet their translation into coordinated, inclusive, and measurable action remains uneven. Anchored in Rwanda's preparation of NDC 3.0 and the finalization of the Climate Change Gender Action Plan (CCGAP), the conference was intentionally organized to move beyond dialogue and toward implementation. It brought together government institutions, civil society, development partners, financial actors, academia, and community representatives to position gender equality not as a cross-cutting principle, but as a core performance standard for climate effectiveness, resilience, and sustainability.

RCGCC 2025 was underpinned by a coherent set of outcome areas that collectively establish a national pathway from evidence to impact. These include strengthening the research; policy-science interface gap through institutionalized use of gender-disaggregated and citizen-driven data; embedding Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) as a flagship pillar of NDC 3.0 through tools such as the GESI Index and Simulation Tool; advancing gender-responsive climate finance that is accessible, accountable, and empowering; promoting inclusive climate-resilient agriculture and innovative circular solutions that correct structural barriers; and positioning communities, particularly women and youth, as leaders of today and future climate resilience rather than beneficiaries of policy. Together, these outcomes demonstrate a shift from fragmented initiatives toward a unified, data-driven, and people-centered climate governance model.

The most powerful achievement of RCGCC 2025 is the Conference Communiqué, which functions as the policy anchor of this report and transforms conference dialogue into an operational accountability framework. By clearly defining challenges, priority actions, responsible actors, and desired outcomes across government, civil society, development partners, and financial institutions, the Communiqué establishes a durable follow-up framework/mechanism that connects national climate policy, development planning, and community-level action under a single, coherent, and gender-responsive system. This report therefore serves not as a record of proceedings, but as an implementation guide that enables Rwanda to translate ambition into practice and accountability into measurable progress toward a just, inclusive, and climate-resilient future.

## 1. BACKGROUND

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Rwanda Conference on Gender and Climate Change (RCGCC 2025) was convened in response to a clear policy need identified in both national strategies and the opening messages of Day One: Rwanda possesses strong gender and climate frameworks, yet their translation into coordinated, inclusive, and measurable action remains uneven. The conference background was grounded in the recognition that climate impacts are not gender neutral and that women, youth, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable communities experience disproportionate risks while also holding critical knowledge and leadership potential. Day One opening remarks reinforced that advancing climate policy without advancing gender equality is both ineffective and unsustainable, setting a vision that climate and gender justice must progress together.

“Gender equality must be a pillar of Rwanda’s climate response. Our policies must reflect their interconnection, realities and contributions of women, youth, and communities on the frontlines.” - Ag. DG Thadée Twagirimana, MoE

The core objective of RCGCC 2025 was to bridge the gap between the research-based evidence and policy gap, and the implementation by transforming gender-climate research and community knowledge into actionable policy pathways. This objective is aligned directly with Rwanda’s preparation of NDC 3.0 and the finalization of the Climate Change Gender Action Plan (CCGAP), positioning the conference as a strategic input platform rather than a standalone event. By convening policymakers, researchers, civil society, development partners, financial institutions, and community actors, the conference sought to strengthen institutional coordination, improve the use of gender-disaggregated and citizen-driven data, and promote tools that support accountability, such as the GESI Index and its associated simulation mechanisms.

RCGCC 2025 was therefore positioned as a policy-shaping dialogue that supports Rwanda’s climate governance architecture, particularly NDC 3.0 implementation and CCGAP operationalization. Its vision, reflected in both the conference design and the opening sessions, was to elevate gender equality from a cross-cutting principle to a measurable driver of climate effectiveness. By aligning its purpose with national priorities and global commitments under the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, the conference played a catalyst role for a more inclusive, evidence-driven, and action-oriented climate response in Rwanda.

## 2. OUTCOME AREAS

### 2.1. Area 1: Research → Policy Interface

RCGCC 2025 identified the research-policy interface gap which is a critical leverage point for strengthening gender-responsive climate governance in Rwanda. Although Rwanda generates a strong gender and climate evidence, participants emphasized that research findings do not consistently translate into policy design, budgeting, and implementation. Barriers include limited use of gender-disaggregated and citizen-generated data, weak coordination mechanism between researchers and policymakers, and the absence of institutionalized framework for transforming complex research outputs into practical, policy-ready tools. As highlighted during Day One discussions, evidence only becomes transformative when it is accessible, timely, and directly informs decision-making processes.

RCGCC 2025 highlighted that evidence only becomes transformative when it is systematically translated into policy decisions and implementation practice. Gender-disaggregated data, citizen-driven evidence, and research outputs must be used to sharpen structured GESI tools, such as the GESI Index and the AI-Powered GESI Simulation Tool, to become actionable policy inputs for NDC 3.0 and the CCGAP. This pathway ensures that

research does not remain descriptive, but actively shapes budgets, programs, and investments that deliver measurable gender-responsive climate outcomes (Figure 1).

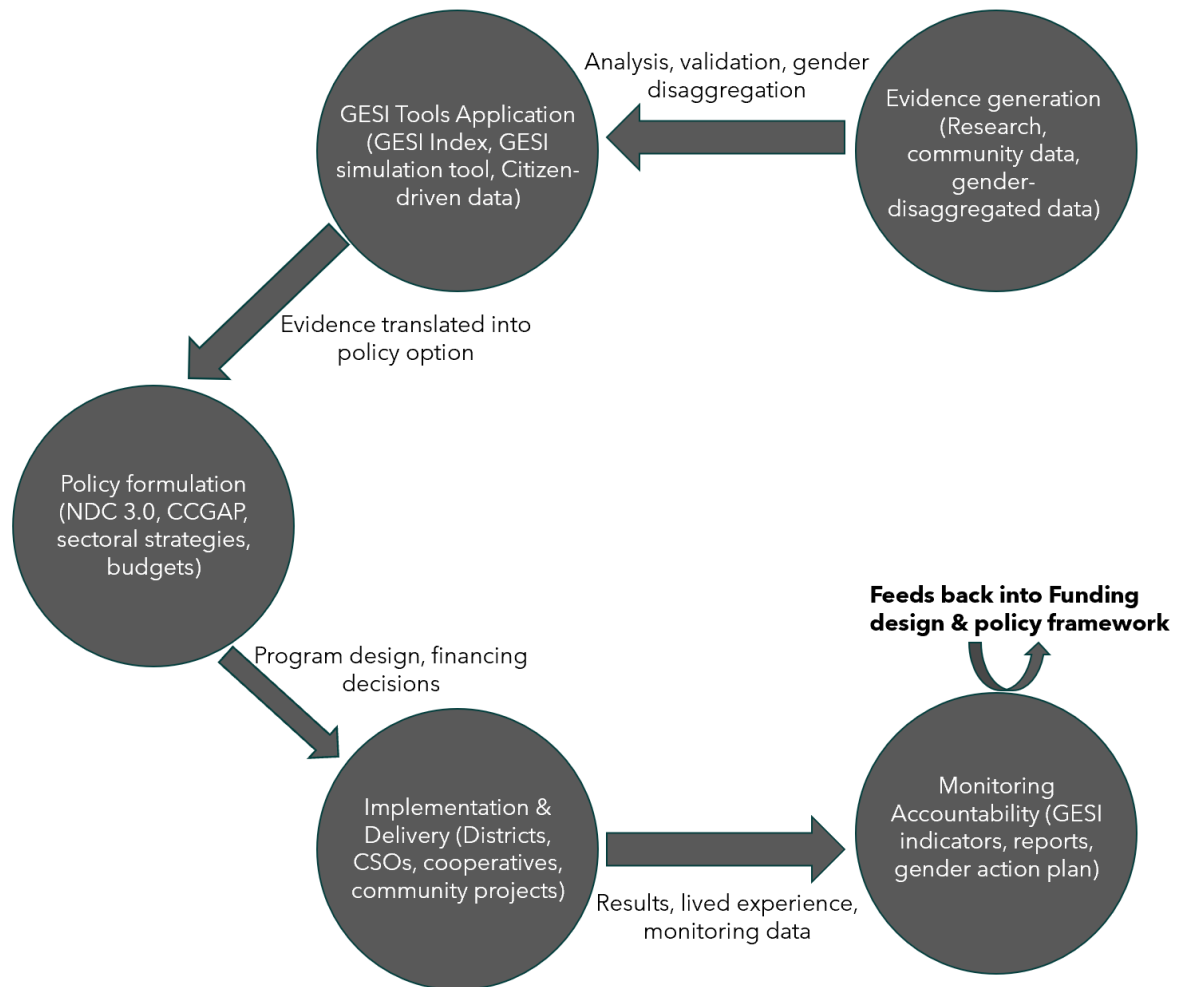


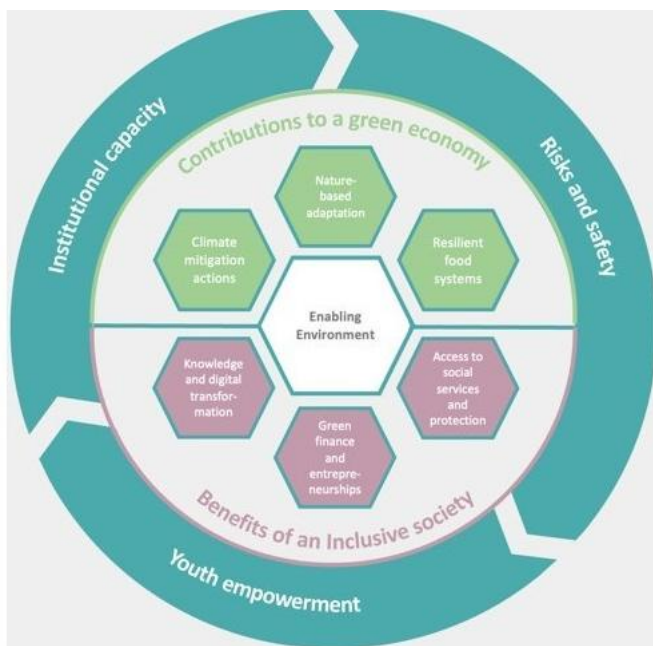
Figure 1. Evidence → Policy → Implementation pathway for gender-responsive climate action.

This outcome area repositioned research not as an academic exercise, but as a strategic driver of inclusive climate action. By strengthening data systems, simplifying communication of findings, and creating sustained platforms for collaboration, RCGCC 2025 defined a pathway through which evidence can systematically inform policy, financing, and community-level implementation, ensuring that gender equality becomes an operational standard rather than a policy aspiration.

## 2.2. Area 2: GESI & NDC 3.0

RCGCC 2025 reaffirmed that Rwanda’s NDC 3.0 must function not only as a climate commitment document, but as a gender-responsive cornerstone to implement framework that translates inclusion into measurable impact & outcomes. Participants emphasized that while gender equality is referenced in national climate policies and interventions, its operationalization across planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring remains uneven. The conference underscored that Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) as a core performance dimension of NDC 3.0, are essential for ensuring that climate action benefits women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other underserved vulnerable groups in practice, not only in principle.

The GESI Index and the AI-powered GESI Simulation Tool presentation marked a major step toward institutionalizing accountability within NDC 3.0 implementation (Figure 2). As



presented by GGGI during the conference, Rwanda was shown to have made significant progress while still facing gaps in areas such as climate mitigation actions, digital transformation, and women’s participation in technical sectors. The GESI Index and Simulation tool launched by GGGI and REMA will serve in enhancing integration of GESI in Climate Policy, and enabling institutions to track and report, identify gaps, and make informed decisions. Furthermore, the tool will contribute to improving the NDC MRV systems by providing insights on disparities, risks,

and opportunities for designing inclusive climate actions, and beyond. GGGI Rwanda highlighted that the most recent GESI Index score was 69.7% in 2024.

These tools were recognized as transformative because they enable evidence-based scenario planning, allowing policymakers to compare business-as-usual and NDC-aligned pathways, and make the socio-economic impacts of climate investments visible. Their integration into REMA systems and their alignment with sectoral planning processes position Rwanda as a regional leader in data-driven, gender-responsive climate governance.

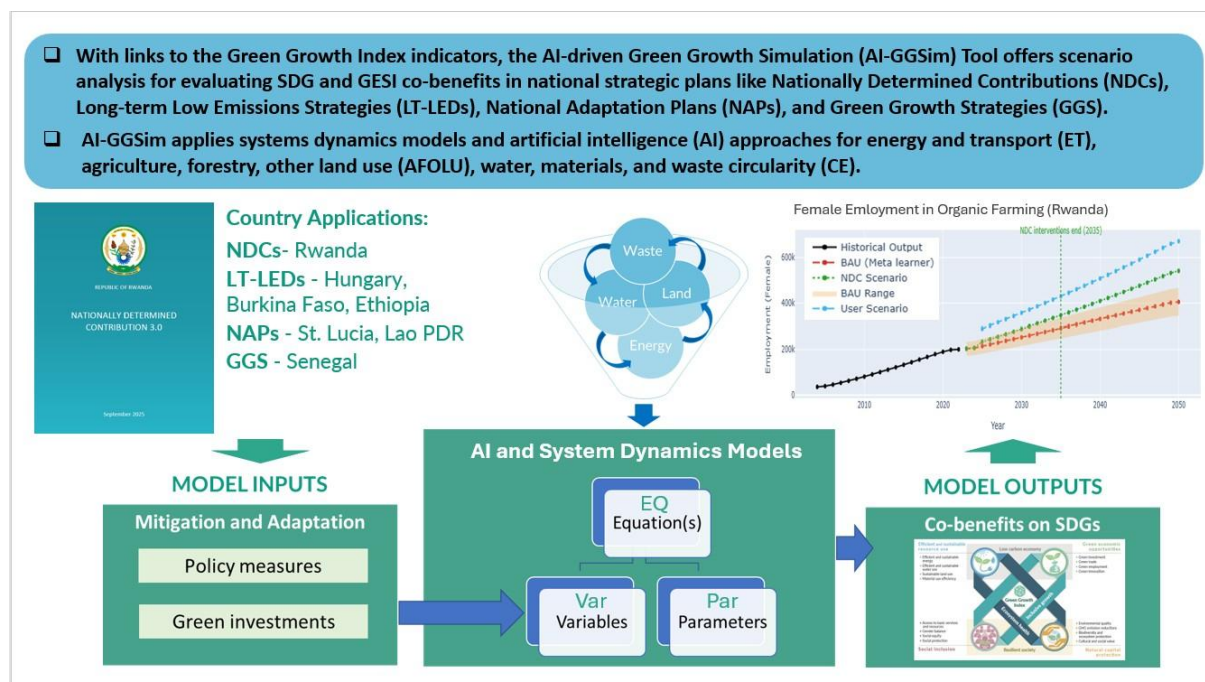


Figure 2. Structure of GESI Index and its integration into NDC 3.0 planning and monitoring systems.

This outcome area established that GESI mainstreaming in NDC 3.0 is not a one-time exercise, but a continuous governance function. It requires strengthened gender-

disaggregated data systems, institutional capacity building, and clear accountability mechanisms within ministries and implementing agencies. By anchoring GESI tools directly within NDC 3.0 implementation, RCGCC 2025 elevated gender equality from a cross-cutting point of view to a measurable driver of climate effectiveness, resilience, and equity.

### 2.3. Area 3: Gender-Responsive Climate Finance

RCGCC 2025 emphasized that while Rwanda has developed strong climate finance mechanisms, access to these resources remains complicated, particularly for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and poor community-based organizations. Participants noted that structural barriers such as collateral requirements, complex application formats and procedures, limited financial literacy, and restrictive social norms continue to exclude many potential beneficiaries from climate investments. As a result, climate finance risks reinforcing existing inequalities unless inclusion is intentionally embedded into financing models, eligibility criteria, and monitoring systems. The conference therefore positioned gender-responsive climate finance as a prerequisite for achieving equitable and effective climate action under NDC 3.0 and the CCGAP.

The discussions highlighted the importance of building technical capacity of actors, strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) frameworks within national climate funds, private financial institutions, and donor-supported financing windows (Figure 3). Rwanda’s experience, particularly through mechanisms such as the Rwanda Green Fund, demonstrated that setting gender targets, requiring gender action plans, and conducting regular gender assessments can significantly improve accountability. However, participants stressed that numeric targets alone are insufficient. Climate finance systems must also simplify access procedures, support cooperative-based and community-centered financing models and invest in capacity building so that women and youth can design, manage, and scale climate solutions independently.

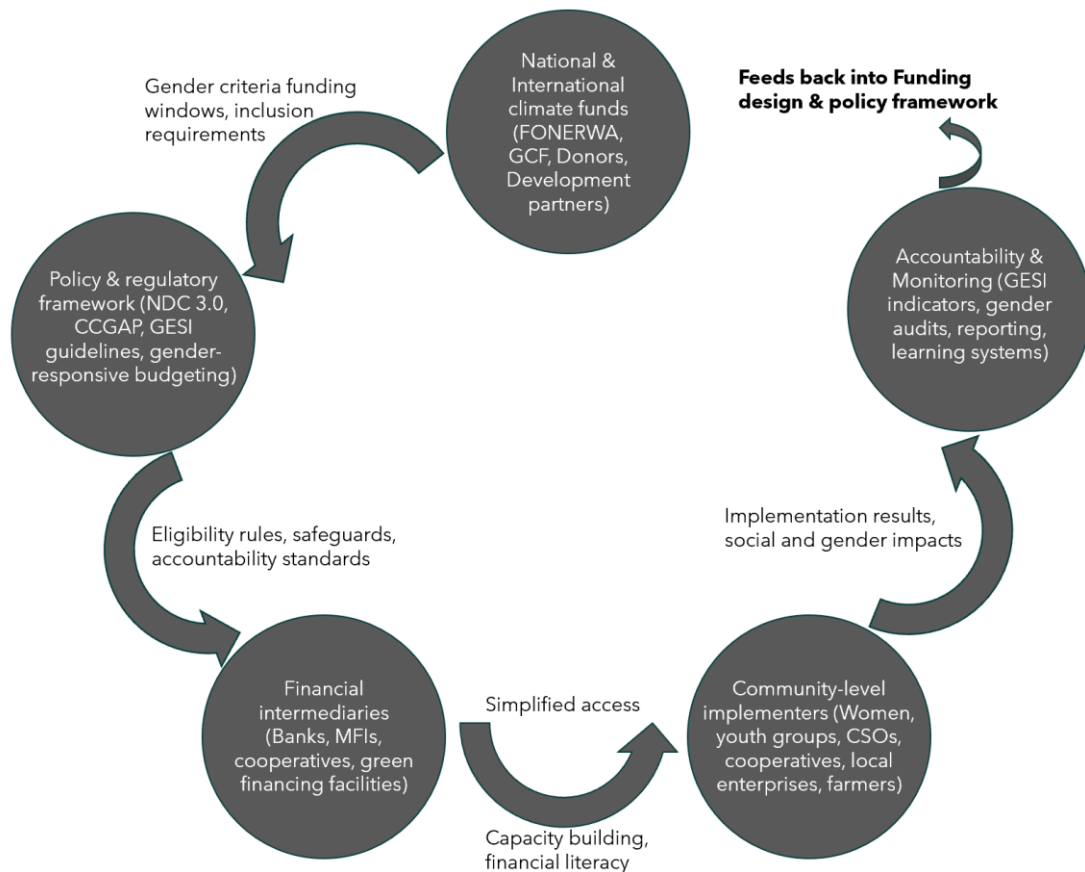


Figure 3. Gender-responsive climate finance flow - from funds to community impact.

This outcome established that gender-responsive climate finance is not only a funding issue, but a governance and empowerment issue. By aligning financial systems with the principles of inclusion, transparency, and accessibility, climate finance can become a driver of women’s economic empowerment, youth innovation, and community resilience. RCGCC 2025 therefore called for climate finance to move beyond resource mobilization and become a transformative engine, ensuring that those most affected by climate change are also those who shape and benefit from climate investment decisions.

**2.4. Area 4: Inclusive Climate-Resilient Agriculture and Circular Solutions**

RCGCC 2025 highlighted that climate-resilient agriculture and circular economy approaches are very crucial to Rwanda’s adaptation and food security agenda, but their success depends on intentional gender-responsive design. Evidence from women-led innovation, particularly in organic fertilizer production and sustainable farming systems, demonstrated that inclusive models can restore soil health, reduce environmental degradation, and strengthen rural socio-economic livelihoods. However, participants emphasized that affordability, certification systems, logistics, access to supply chain and markets remain major constraints, especially for women farmers and small-scale producers. Without the support needed, climate-smart solutions risk remaining inaccessible to those who need them most.

The conference further indicated that agricultural technologies and digital systems must integrate gender-disaggregated data to avoid reinforcing inequality (Figure 4). Climate information services, artificial intelligence, and satellite-based data are recognized as powerful tools, but only if they reflect women’s realities, workloads, and resource access. Participants pointed out that policies and agricultural programs must move beyond neutrality and actively correct structural barriers related to land ownership, decision-making power, training access, and financial inclusion.

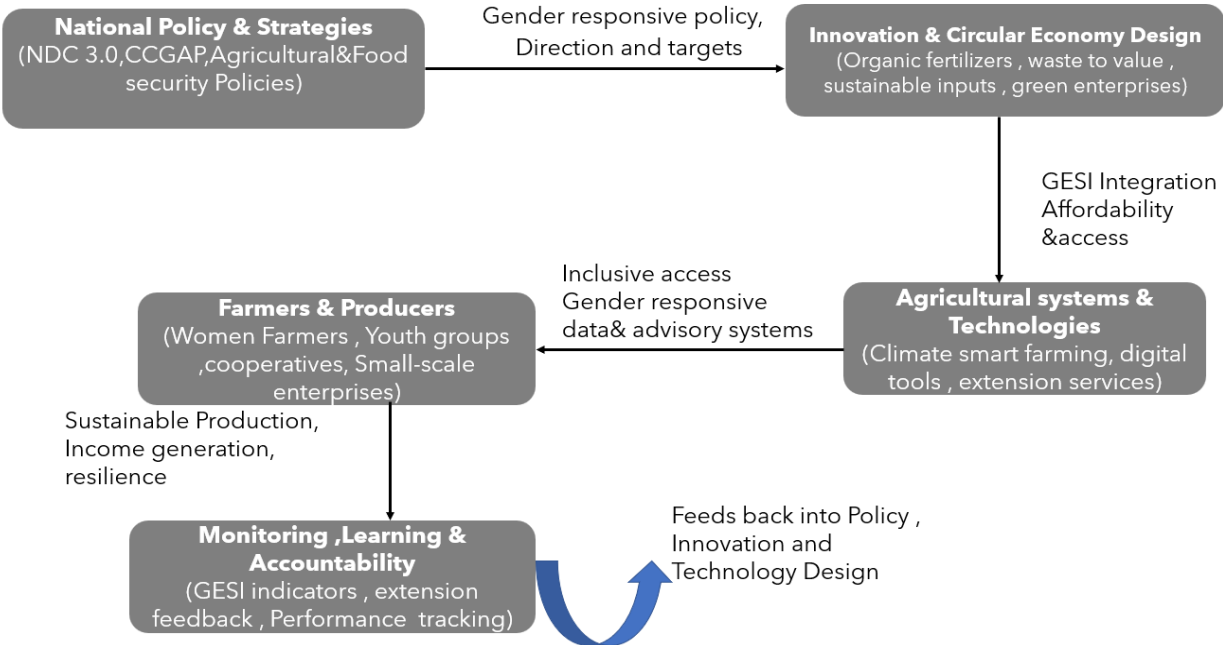


Figure 4. Inclusive climate-resilient agriculture and circular solutions pathway.

This outcome area positioned inclusive climate-resilient agriculture as both an environmental and social transformation pathway. By aligning agricultural policy, innovation systems, and financing mechanisms with GESI principles, Rwanda can ensure that women and youth are not only participants in climate adaptation, but leaders in building sustainable, resilient, and productive food systems.

## 2.5. Area 5: Community Resilience & Leadership

RCGCC 2025 affirmed that community based and grass root actors, particularly women and youth, are not passive beneficiaries of climate action but essential players in building community climate resilience. Evidence from women’s cooperatives and youth-led initiatives (e.g., KAJU Cooperative, IAMB Cooperative of Muhanga, Urungano Ndoti Initiative, and Loopa) demonstrated how locally driven solutions contribute to ecosystem restoration, food security, social cohesion, and livelihood stability. These experiences showed that community knowledge, when recognized and supported, provides practical and scalable responses to climate risks that national policies alone cannot deliver.

The conference emphasized that strengthening community resilience requires leveraging power and resources closer to local actors (Figure 5). Participants highlighted the need for accessible climate information, inclusive extension services, leadership development, and financing mechanisms that are designed around community realities. Women’s leadership in environmental restoration, cooperative management, and household resilience was recognized as a foundation for sustainable climate outcomes, while youth empowerment was seen as critical for long-term innovation, continuity, and national climate actions.

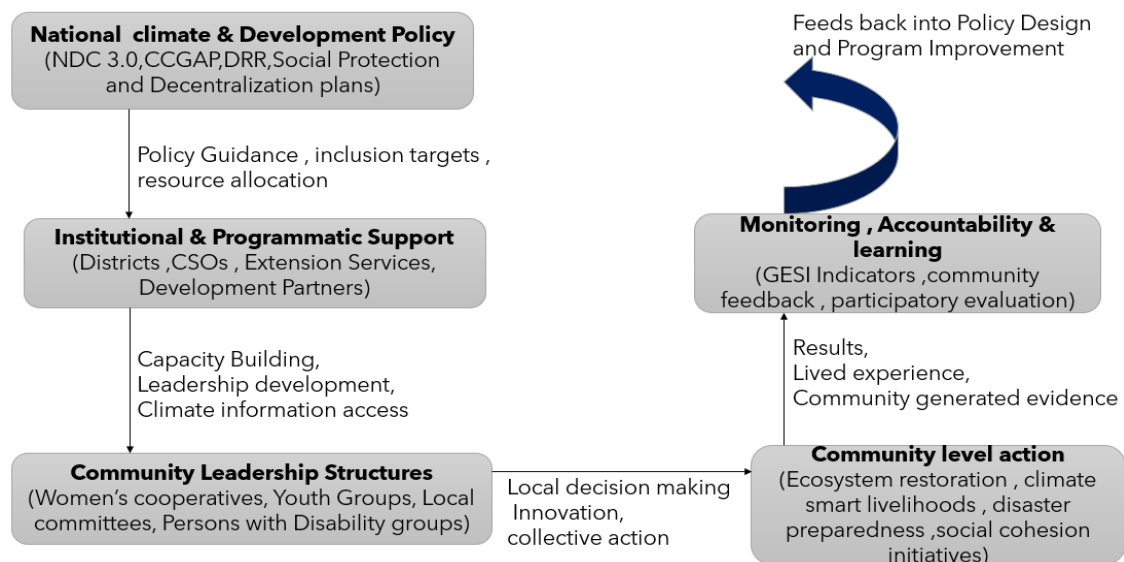


Figure 5. Community resilience and leadership pathway for gender-responsive climate action.

This outcome area positioned community resilience and leadership as the social engine of Rwanda’s climate response. By investing in grassroots community capacity, recognizing lived experience as evidence, and strengthening pathways between communities and institutions, RCGCC 2025 reinforced that inclusive climate governance must be built from the ground (bottom up and community centered approach) can ensure lasting and equitable impact.

## 3. THE CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUÉ AS THE POLICY ANCHOR

The Conference Communiqué stands as crucial eye opening and policy instrument emerging from RCGCC 2025 and represents the most impactful outcome of the conference. Unlike descriptive conference reports, the Communiqué translates dialogue into a structured roadmap that clearly defines challenges, priority actions, responsible actors, and desired outcomes. It institutionalizes the principle of “elevating evidence into action” by converting research findings, community realities, and policy discussions into a shared accountability framework. As such, the Communiqué is not an annex to this report, but its

strategic backbone, providing direction, coherence, and legitimacy to all proposed outcomes and follow-up actions.

What makes the Communiqué particularly powerful is its actor-based structure. By organizing recommendations around four key stakeholder groups; policymakers, civil society and communities, donors and development partners, and financial service providers, it clarifies responsibility and ownership. This design moves Rwanda's gender and climate agenda away from generalized commitments toward operational accountability. Each stakeholder group is assigned concrete roles in strengthening the research-policy interface, embedding GESI in NDC 3.0 implementation, advancing inclusive climate finance, supporting climate-resilient agriculture, and expanding access to resilient infrastructure and services. The Communiqué therefore functions as a governance tool that aligns institutional mandates with practical delivery mechanisms.

Positioning the Communiqué as the policy anchor elevates this report from a narrative document to an implementation guide. It creates a reference point against which progress can be measured, partnerships coordinated, and resources mobilized. By grounding all conference outcomes within the Communiqué's framework, RCGCC 2025 established a durable framework/mechanism (Figure 6) for follow-up that connects national climate policy, development planning, and community-level action under a single, coherent, and gender-responsive accountability structure.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK EXPLAINED**

The implementation and accountability framework operationalizes the RCGCC 2025 vision by transforming the Conference Communiqué into a living governance mechanism that links national policy, development planning, and community action through continuous, gender-responsive feedback (Figure 6). At the policy level, institutions responsible for NDC 3.0 and the CCGAP provide strategic direction, set targets, and define national priorities. These are translated into sectoral plans, budgets, and climate finance instruments where GESI principles are embedded through tools such as the GESI Index, the GESI Simulation Tool, gender action plans, and gender-responsive budgeting. This ensures that climate investments are not only technically sound, but also socially inclusive and measurable in terms of gender outcomes.

At the implementation level, resources, programs, and technical support flow to districts, civil society organizations, cooperatives, and community-based initiatives, where climate action is delivered in practice. Here, communities generate citizen-driven data, lived evidence, and implementation feedback that capture how policies and investments affect women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. This evidence is systematically fed back into monitoring systems through GESI indicators, annual assessments, and institutional reporting mechanisms. In this way, accountability is not limited to compliance but becomes a learning process that continuously improves policy relevance, program design, and financing effectiveness.

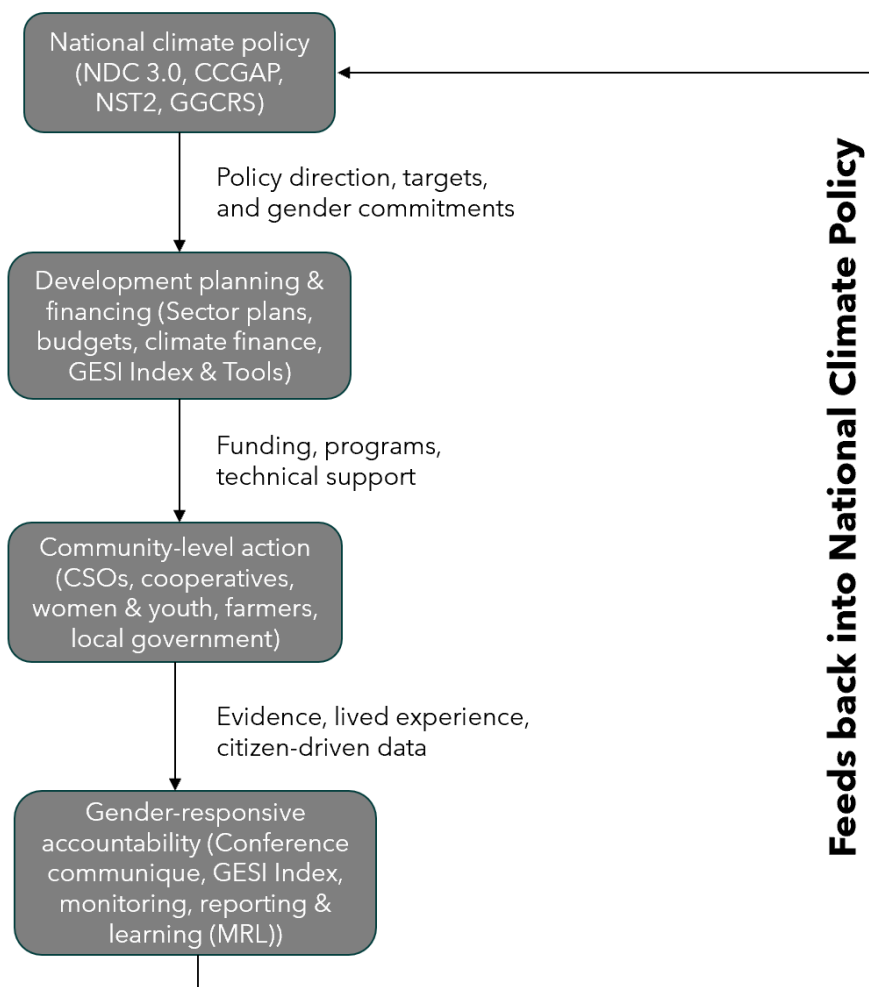


Figure 6. RCGCC 2025 gender-responsive accountability and implementation framework linking policy, planning, community action, and feedback.

What makes this framework best-in-class is its integration of accountability, evidence, and participation into a single operational system. The Conference Communiqué functions as the central coordination gear and accountability reference, clarifying who is responsible for what? what must be delivered, and how progress is measured. By embedding gender responsiveness across the full cycle; from policy formulation to financing, from implementation to evaluation, RCGCC 2025 established a model where gender equality is no longer a parallel objective, but a core performance standard of Rwanda’s climate governance. This framework positions the report as an implementation guide that institutions can directly use to track progress, strengthen coordination, mobilize partnerships, and ensure that climate action delivers tangible and equitable impact.

## 5. CONCLUSION

RCGCC 2025 marked another point of departure and extra mile in Rwanda’s journey toward gender-responsive climate governance by shifting the national conversation from commitment to execution. The conference demonstrated that Rwanda is no longer challenged by the absence of policy frameworks or evidence, but by the need to boost transformative actions in coordinated, inclusive, and measurable way. By anchoring its outcomes in the Conference Communiqué and operationalizing them through a clear implementation and accountability framework, RCGCC 2025 elevated gender equality from a guiding principle to a performance standard for climate governance.

What distinguishes this conference is not only the strength of its dialogue, but the durability of its follow-up architecture. The integration of NDC 3.0, the CCGAP, GESI tools, climate finance systems, and community-level action into a single accountability cycle establishes a model of governance that is strategic, participatory, and results-oriented. It ensures that evidence is not only generated but used; that policies are not only adopted but implemented inclusively; and that communities are not only consulted but empowered enough to become leaders of active climate resilience players.

RCGCC 2025 therefore stands as a benchmark for how national climate platforms can deliver transformative impact. It positions Rwanda as not only national but also regional leading country in translating gender-climate evidence into action through institutional coherence, inclusive financing, and community-centered implementation. The legacy of this conference lies in its ability to turn ambition into practice and accountability into progress, ensuring that Rwanda's climate future is not only resilient, but just, inclusive, and sustainable.