MANSA

Dala Africa

AFRICA RESEARCH & IMPACT NETWORK

Webinar Outcome Document.

The Health, Gender and Climate Nexus in Africa



Date
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Time
1:00pm GMT

Platform
Zoom

Contributors



Zuzana Brixiova Schwidrowski
Director of Socio-Economic Development, UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)



Naome Chimbetete
Ex Commissioner Zimbabwe Gender Commission



Jessica Mwanzia
Head of Climate Finance and Gender Justice, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)



Charles Tonui
Policy, Partnerships and Engagement Lead, Africa Research and Impact Network (ARIN)



Bridget Mugambe
Programmes & Networking Coordinator Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)



Margaret Mutesi
Managing Director,
Mansa

1. Executive Summary

On 29th October 2026, Mansa Africa, in partnership with Dala Group and the Africa Research and Impact Network (ARIN) convened a webinar titled “The Health, Gender and Climate Nexus in Africa”.

Serving as the inaugural session of a five-part series, the webinar explored the intersections of climate change, health and gender equality on the African continent. The discussions examined the compounding impacts of these crises, with a specific focus on women’s health, unpaid care work, access to climate finance, community-led knowledge, and evidence-informed policy. A diverse panel of experts, representing international institutions, national gender commissions, climate justice movements, and food sovereignty networks, emphasised how climate-related shocks are not gender-neutral. Instead, they exacerbate existing inequalities, disrupt essential health services, increase domestic burdens, and threaten the livelihoods of women and marginalised communities who remain largely excluded from decision-making spaces.

A key takeaway from the discussion was the urgent need to dismantle siloed approaches; climate, health, and gender must be integrated as interconnected policy and financing priorities. Building effective, resilient responses will require gender-responsive data, adequately funded policies, direct-access climate finance, and robust accountability mechanisms. Crucially, these interventions must be paired with the meaningful participation of local communities at every stage, starting from design and implementation to evaluation



2. Purpose of the discussion

- Explore how climate-related risks affect health, gender equality, care responsibilities and livelihoods.
- Identify gaps in data, policy design, budgeting and climate finance that limit effective responses.
- Highlight community-led and locally grounded approaches to adaptation and resilience.
- Identify priorities to inform policy engagement, programming and the remaining webinars.

3. Overall Outcome

The webinar highlighted the need to address the gendered impacts of climate change on health, livelihoods and unpaid care work. It called for better gender-disaggregated data, accessible climate finance, and policies that reflect the experiences of affected communities. Panelists also emphasised the importance of recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work, and ensuring that gender commitments are backed by budgets and measurable results.

Other emerging outcomes

- Greater clarity on how climate shocks intensify existing gender inequalities, especially through health risks, safety concerns and unpaid care work.
- Recognition that gaps in gender-specific and community-level data weaken policy design, targeting and evaluation.
- Stronger emphasis on the accessibility and impact of climate finance not only the amount pledged or mobilised.
- Greater visibility for community knowledge, agroecology and locally appropriate approaches to food and climate resilience.
- A call for integrated planning, budgeting and monitoring that connects local priorities to national policy decisions.
- An emphasis on accountability: commitments need budgets, baselines, responsible institutions and measurable outcomes.

4. Key Findings and Discussion Outcomes

4.1 Climate change compounds gendered health and care burdens

Speakers described climate change not as a neutral environmental phenomenon, but as a potent 'threat multiplier' that disproportionately impacts women and girls. Extreme weather events such as prolonged droughts, devastating floods, and severe heatwaves exacerbate systemic inequalities in public health, physical safety, and resource access.

When healthcare infrastructure is compromised, care demands do not vanish; instead, they shift heavily into the household, where women and girls already bear a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work. Furthermore, climate-induced displacement and disruptions to sexual, reproductive, and maternal health services drastically elevate health and safety risks. Panelists also emphasised that the psychological toll of these compounding crises remains severely underaddressed, highlighting women's mental health as a critical, yet overlooked, frontier in climate response

The discussion highlighted gender-based violence (GBV) as a critical priority for climate and health policies, particularly as climate-induced events exacerbate household and community vulnerabilities. Crucially, climate adaptation strategies must not rely on women's unpaid care work to compensate for gaps in public services, infrastructure and institutional support.

4.2 Gender-responsive policies need better data and evidence

Zuzana Brixiova Schwidrowski highlighted critical gaps in gender-specific data and health research, noting that current studies frequently fail to account for women's distinct physiological, social, and economic vulnerabilities. Building on this, Jessica Mwanzia emphasised the necessity of intersectional data disaggregation by sex, age, disability, geography, and other vulnerability metrics to clearly identify who benefits from climate investments and which groups remain underserved. Panelists also urged caution, advising against presenting speculative or sensitive information in areas where reliable, verified data are unavailable. To address these data gaps, the panel outlined the following urgent priorities:

- **Strengthen data ecosystems:** Enhance the collection, quality, accessibility, and ethical use of gender-specific data across all sectors.
- **Deploy disaggregated indicators:** Use granular indicators to track resource allocation and systematically evaluate whether interventions are delivering equitable outcomes.

- **Acknowledge evidence gaps openly:** Identify and document data limitations openly rather than filling analytical gaps with unsubstantiated assumptions.
- **Bridge research and action:** Correct research and monitoring to policy design, national budget allocations, and adaptive programming.

4.3 Climate finance must be adequate, accessible and accountable

Jessica Mwanzia argued that international climate finance architectures must align with Africa's case for climate justice by providing predictable, high-quality, and adequate resources, particularly grant-based funding for adaptation. She expressed concern over the growing reliance on debt-inducing loans and the complex barriers that prevent national institutions and community-led organisations from accessing funds. Furthermore, the panel stressed the critical distinction between "announced" funding and actual disbursements that reach frontline communities.

Zuzana Brixiova Schwidrowski also noted that severely constrained public resources and heavy debt-servicing burdens limit the fiscal space needed for transformative gender-responsive budgeting. In this context, innovative financing mechanisms, such as social or ESG bonds and debt-for-climate swaps, were highlighted as instruments worth exploring in appropriate local settings.

To build a more equitable and transparent financial architecture, the panel recommended the following actions:

- **Advocate for grant-based finance:** Advocate for predictable, adequate, and easily accessible climate finance, prioritising grants over loans for adaptation initiatives.
- **Build local financial capacity:** Strengthen the institutional capacity of national and local organisations to access, manage, and account for climate funds.
- **Track the funding lifecycle:** Establish transparent tracking mechanisms to monitor finance across distinct stages: pledges, approvals, disbursements, implementation, and final outcomes.
- **Measure gender-equitable impact:** Assess whether funded activities directly reach and improve the lives of women, girls, and other highly vulnerable groups.
- **Contextualise financial instruments:** Evaluate innovative financing mechanisms against local context, long-term affordability, and intended developmental outcomes.

4.4 Community knowledge and agroecology are important adaptation resources

Bridget Mugambe highlighted the profound uncertainty that shifting seasons, extreme weather events, and inadequate meteorological services pose for small-scale food producers across Africa. She presented agroecology as a highly accessible, nature-positive solution that links scientific innovation with farmers' indigenous knowledge and ecological practices. Examples presented included crop diversification, soil health restoration, and farmer-managed seed systems tailored to local conditions. The panel raised serious concerns regarding top-down climate and conservation initiatives that restrict community access to ancestral lands and resources without meaningful consultation or Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Participants highlighted concerns regarding agricultural policies that favour monoculture over diversified food systems. The cost and limited accessibility of synthetic fertilisers and hybrid seeds often make recommended practices difficult for smallholder farmers to adopt. Consequently, effective community-led adaptation must prioritize strengthening local markets, preserving indigenous seeds and championing food sovereignty.

To leverage local expertise and protect community rights, the discussion highlighted the need to:

- **Scale up agroecological practices:** Support and fund locally adapted, nature-positive agricultural practices to build climate and food-system resilience.
- **Democratise weather and climate information:** Improve small-scale producers' access to timely, accurate, and actionable meteorological data.
- Value indigenous knowledge systems: Recognise and integrate local and indigenous knowledge as equal partners to scientific evidence in adaptation planning.
- **Uphold free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC):** Guarantee that affected communities participate meaningfully in, and consent to, conservation and climate initiatives that impact their lands.
- **Monitor livelihood and nutrition impacts:** Track the direct effects of climate and conservation policies on local livelihoods, food security, nutrition, and resource access
- **Address practical barriers to adaptation:** Consider the costs of agricultural inputs, access to land and finance, gaps in relevant knowledge, and the accessibility of local markets when designing interventions for vulnerable households. .

4.5 Integrated monitoring must start with community priorities

Charles Tonui emphasised that while climate and health impacts are felt acutely at the community level, policy planning, budgeting, and evaluation remain siloed within sectors. He called for a shift toward co-producing evidence with local communities, allowing them to validate the priority indicators that shape local action and feed into sub-national and national planning. However, the panel noted that digital monitoring faces significant structural challenges, including poor connectivity, unreliable electricity, lack of devices, low digital literacy, and high infrastructure costs.

Beyond digital infrastructure, communities may face limited access to relevant climate information, financial constraints and land-related barriers that restrict their ability to act on adaptation advice. Monitoring and programme design should recognise these limitations rather than assume that recommended interventions are affordable or accessible to everyone.

To bridge these gaps and ensure local evidence drives national decision-making, the panel highlighted the following priorities:

- **Co-design MEL frameworks:** Collaborate with communities and local institutions to co-create Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning frameworks.
- **Develop cross-sectoral indicators:** Identify and track indicators that capture the intersections of climate risk, public health, and gender equality.
- **Adopt hybrid monitoring approaches:** Utilise both digital and non-digital methods to prevent the exclusion of remote, off-grid, or digitally disconnected communities.
- **Institutionalise feedback loops:** Establish robust feedback mechanisms to ensure community-generated evidence directly feeds into national budgets, policy reviews, and programme adaptations.

4.6 Commitments require budgets, responsibility and accountability

Commissioner Naome Chimbetete emphasised that high-level policy commitments frequently fail to translate into real impact when accountability for budgets, baselines, and developmental results remains unclear. She asserted that truly gender-responsive climate and health action requires explicit, unbroken links connecting policy priorities, financing allocations, operational responsibilities, and outcome measurement with governments taking the responsibility to ensure clear collaboration by actors.

To bridge the gap between political promise and tangible implementation, the Commissioner underscored the following institutional imperatives:

- **Establish clear institutional ownership:** Explicitly designate which institutions, agencies, or actors are responsible and accountable for specific commitments and outcomes to prevent overlapping of efforts or neglected mandates.

- **Align policies with budgets and baselines:** Directly link policy priorities to dedicated budget lines, verified baseline data, realistic timelines, and robust reporting frameworks.

- **Leverage monitoring for accountability and course correction:** Use real-time monitoring and evaluation findings to identify implementation gaps and demand accountability from duty-bearers, making timely programming adjustments where necessary

- **Institutionalise inclusive governance:** Systematically include women and frontline communities in every stage of programming, starting from the initial project design and implementation to final review and evaluation.

- **Strengthen social protection and shared responsibility:** Assess and enhance existing social safety nets to ensure they effectively help vulnerable households absorb climate shocks. Additionally, adaptation responsibilities must be shared across households, communities, institutions, and governments, rather than disproportionately burdening women.

5. Calls to Action

Drawing on the rich insights and frontline realities shared during the session, the panel put forward the following targeted calls to action to drive systemic, intersectional change across key stakeholder groups:

Governments and policymakers

- **Dismantle policy silos:** Integrate the gender-health-climate nexus as a unified, core priority within national budgets, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and broader national development strategies.

- **Implement transformative gender budgeting:** Transition from procedural, routine gender budgeting to gender-transformative budgeting that features dedicated, ring-fenced, and trackable financial allocations.

- **Empower national gender machineries:** Significantly strengthen the political mandate, technical capacity, and financial resources of national gender ministries and commissions, enabling them to lead and influence climate governance and decision-making spaces.

Multilateral institutions and climate finance bodies

- **Prioritise grant-based adaptation finance:** Shift the balance of international climate finance portfolio away from debt-inducing loans toward predictable, high-quality, grant-based funding, particularly for adaptation in the most climate-vulnerable African nations.

- **De-bureaucratise and localise funding access:** Create and expand simplified, direct-access funding windows tailored to the operational realities of community-based, and women-led organisations.

- **Institutionalise gender-responsive mandates:** Embed gender-responsiveness and social inclusion as mandatory, non-negotiable criteria for project design, eligibility, and performance monitoring across all climate finance instruments.

- **Finance health-sector resilience:** Ensure climate finance frameworks recognise health-sector adaptation needs and monitor whether funding improves access to relevant health services and protection for climate-affected communities.

Civil society and advocacy networks

- **Champion an indivisible agenda:** Maintain relentless advocacy for the climate-health-gender nexus as an indivisible policy package, actively resisting and dismantling silos in state policy and donor funding.

- **Amplify grassroots evidence:** Document, package, and disseminate proof-of-concept evidence of successful, community-led adaptation models to facilitate their scaling, replication, and financing.

- **Enforce accountability on global commitments:** Hold national governments and international partners accountable to their commitments under global frameworks through reporting and public advocacy.

Research and data communities

- **Invest in localised data:** Allocate resources to generate high-quality, sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data that captures the nuanced, compounding realities of the climate-health-gender nexus at local levels.

- **Co-design research agendas:** Shift towards co-designing research agendas directly with frontline communities, ensuring women are recognised as active co-producers of knowledge rather than passive subjects of study.

Private sector and philanthropy

- **Promote investments towards gender matters:** Direct patient, risk-tolerant capital and philanthropic grants toward gender-responsive agroecology, community-led health resilience, and climate-resilient care infrastructure.

- **Adopt non-debt burdening financing models:** Avoid debt-heavy financing mechanisms that exacerbate national debt burdens or bypass local institutional structures

6. Conclusion

The inaugural webinar emphasised that addressing Africa's climate crisis requires a fundamental shift away from fragmented, siloed interventions and toward systemic integration and collaboration. An effective, resilient response must confront the compounding realities of how climate shocks disrupt public health, deepen gender inequalities, escalate unpaid care burdens, and threaten local livelihoods.

To translate this vision into action, future policies and investments must be grounded in granular, intersectional data, backed by predictable and accessible finance, co-designed with frontline communities, and be supported through institutional accountability. Ultimately, addressing the climate-health-gender nexus must be a prerequisite for achieving sustainable and equitable climate development across Africa.

For inquiries : contact@mansamedia.africa

watch the webinar stream here.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyLCHAXx90s

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