

# **BEYOND THE FINANCE GAP: BUILDING ENDURING CAPACITY FOR AFRICA'S NDC FINANCING**


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## **KEY MESSAGES**

 **Africa's NDC finance gap reflects more than insufficient capital.** While the scale of unmet financing needs is substantial, the deeper constraint lies in the lack of institutional preparedness and technical capacity. Without the systems and expertise required to access, structure, and manage climate finance, additional capital alone will not close the implementation gap.

 **Institutional readiness and capacity strongly shapes climate finance allocation.** Climate finance remains concentrated in countries with stronger governance systems, credible regulatory frameworks, and demonstrated project execution capacity, systematically sidelining capacity-constrained states regardless of need.

 **Capacity deficits are systemic and interlinked.** Challenges extend beyond individual skills to fragmented coordination across ministries, weak MRV systems, limited project pipeline development, and underdeveloped financial sector literacy. These institutional weaknesses reinforce one another and constrain climate finance mobilisation at scale.

 **Existing capacity-building provision is fragmented, supply-driven and insufficiently embedded in domestic systems.** Although programmes have expanded, many remain short-term, supply-driven, and externally designed. Limited institutional anchoring and weak integration into national governance structures undermine long-term impact and knowledge retention

 **Bridging the NDC implementation gap requires institutionalised and sequenced capacity pathways.** Capacity building must move beyond ad hoc training towards structured, nationally embedded strategies that align individual skill development with institutional reform. Integrating capacity milestones into NDC investment planning and strengthening domestic governance architectures are essential to unlocking sustainable climate finance.

## BACKGROUND

Climate change poses an existential threat to Africa's development, exacting a disproportionate toll on a continent responsible for less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. In response, African nations have articulated ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. However, translating these commitments into action is paralysed by a critical finance gap. The continent requires approximately USD 2.8 trillion through 2030, yet current flows meet a mere 23% of estimated annual needs, with the most vulnerable nations receiving only a fraction of available resources (AfDB, 2023; CPI, 2024).

Conventional analysis often stops at quantifying this shortfall, framing it as a problem of insufficient global capital. This policy brief argues that such a view is incomplete. Africa's climate finance gap is, at its core, a knowledge and institutional systems gap. The fundamental constraint is not only the volume of finance, but the widespread deficit in the technical expertise, governance structures, and coordinated institutions needed to effectively access, structure, deploy, and monitor climate investments at scale. These systemic weaknesses manifest as an inability to strategically prioritize nationally appropriate climate actions, develop bankable project pipelines, navigate complex donor requirements, mobilize domestic capital, and negotiate equitable international deals, leaving countries as passive recipients of fragmented aid rather than active architects of their climate futures.

Therefore, this policy brief moves the conversation beyond the finance gap to highlight the underlying systemic issues by addressing the question: *How do knowledge and institutional system gaps constrain Africa's ability to finance its NDCs, and how can strategic institutional preparedness and capacity-building catalyse public and private climate finance?* We examine how institutional readiness and capacity building can serve as the critical catalyst. The transformation of knowledge

and institutional capacity enables African countries to systematically unlock the finance required to implement their NDCs, fostering resilient, low-carbon development anchored in national sovereignty and long-term sustainability.

## BEYOND THE FUNDING GAP

While the above-highlighted NDC finance deficit demands attention, it represents a symptom, not the cause, of the NDC implementation crisis. The financial shortfalls described above rest on inter alia public-private imbalance, grant dependency, limited use of innovative financial instruments, underdeveloped domestic financial sectors, and misaligned national systems and global architecture which share a common underlying determinant: *pervasive institutional and technical capacity deficits* that prevent African countries from accessing, structuring, absorbing, deploying, and accounting for NDC finance. Africa's NDC finance gap is therefore also a *knowledge and institutional system gap*. Coupled with the political economy of funding and path dependencies, efforts to address these deficits have narrowed the problem to limited technical knowledge to support bankable initiatives. Yet, the challenge is systemic coupled with the political economy of climate finance across governance levels, necessitating a rethinking of capacity building efforts.

For instance, the maldistribution of existing climate finance provides the clearest evidence that systematic, not just financial, constraints are at play. The extreme concentration of flows, where ten countries receive 46% of climate finance while thirty share only 10%, cannot be explained by differences in climate vulnerability or ambition alone (Gallagher et al., 2024; AU & UNDP, 2024; CPI, 2024). This pattern is, in essence, a market response to perceived institutional risk and capacity. International public donors and private investors alike channel resources to environments where institutional readiness indicators, such as established and stable government, strong contract enforcement mechanisms, financial sector sophistication, credible regulatory

frameworks, ability to meet report requirements e.g., social and environmental safeguards), and a history of project execution lower transaction costs and perceived risk (Convergence, 2024). Consequently, countries with weaker governance systems, underdeveloped domestic financial sectors (e.g., with lower sovereign credit ratings), and less developed technical bureaucracies are systematically sidelined, regardless of the severity of their climate change needs.

This systematic sidelining is reinforced by a parallel deficit in actionable knowledge, such as the technical capacity to produce standardized feasibility studies, bankable project proposals, verifiable impact metrics, and monitoring capabilities, that funds and investors require as a minimum entry ticket for sustainable investments. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle where a lack of capacity limits access to finance, which in turn starves the very institutions that need strengthening. Critically, capacity building efforts have historically targeted narrow technical skills rather than the underlying governance deficits, power relations, and political economy dynamics that structure access to finance. Deeper issues e.g., how institutional fragmentation, competing ministerial mandates, and strategic interests shape investment decisions, remain poorly understood and largely untouched by conventional support. Reorienting future capacity building, therefore, requires situating interventions within this wider political economy and targeting strategic institutional opportunities that can fundamentally reshape how governance, risk, and power determine finance flows.

Beyond access, effective financial management is crippled by domestic governance systems strained by scarce resources. The core challenge is not simply bureaucratic fragmentation, but the intensified conflict of interests that emerges when tight budgets force zero-sum choices between vital national priorities (Maket et al, 2026), as African countries face multiple development priorities including climate, food security, health and wellbeing, economies, and ecosystems (Burke, 2018; Makomere & Mbeva, 2018). Historically, NDCs led by environment ministries often remained disconnected from the core

budgetary and planning functions of ministries of finance, energy, and agriculture (NDC Partnership, 2021). Each ministry's legitimate mandate e.g., for fiscal stability, energy security, or food productivity can translate into political resistance to climate reallocation when new funding is not evident (NDC Partnership, 2021).

This dynamic can make it challenging to develop a unified national climate investment plan, as institutions often operate within established mandates, data systems, and priority frameworks that are partly aligned. Without the capacity for high-level policy coordination and mandated collaboration, climate action remains a peripheral agenda, undermining the coherent, cross-sectoral strategies that large-scale finance requires. Therefore, the capacity deficit here is also political and managerial, including the ability to align competing ministerial interests, negotiate trade-offs, and create unified national investment pipelines. Yet conventional capacity building has largely missed this political-managerial dimension, focusing instead on technical skills like proposal writing or financial modelling while neglecting the negotiation and strategic coordination competencies required to navigate inter-ministerial contestation. This oversight explains why fragmentation persists despite years of investment; reorienting capacity building to explicitly target political-managerial skills including brokering agreements, building coalitions, framing climate as a solution to multiple priorities, is essential for transforming climate action from a peripheral agenda to a core national priority.

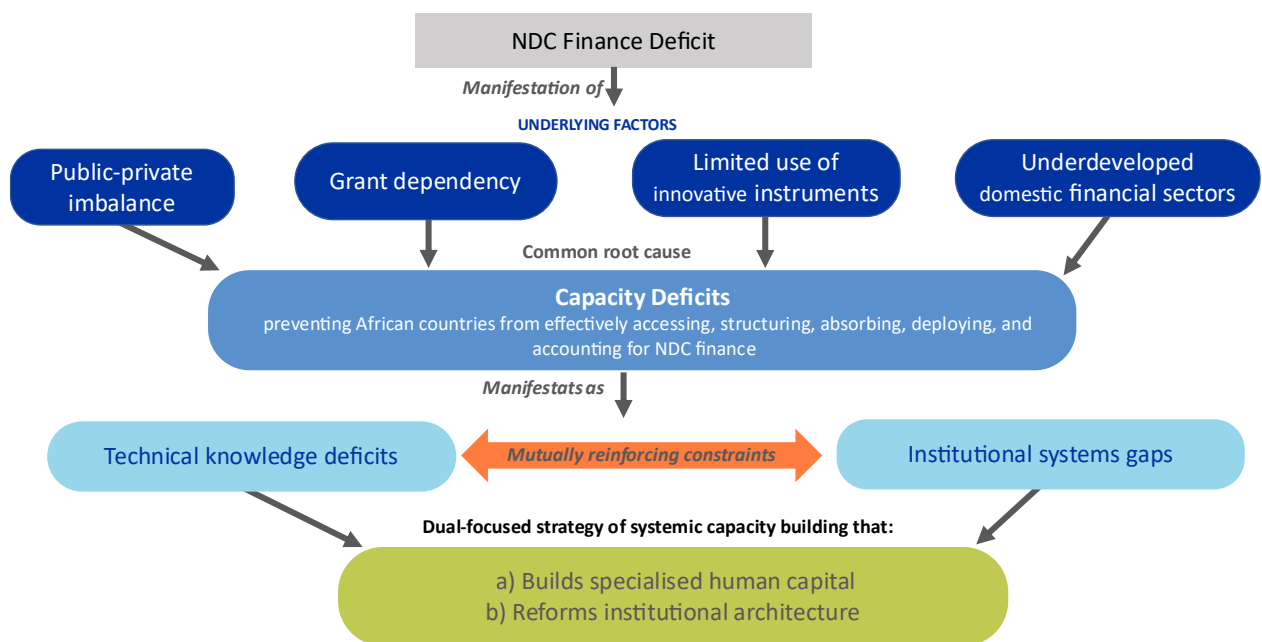
Furthermore, climate finance instruments also reveal a bias that disadvantages capacity-constrained contexts. Innovations like blended finance (e.g., risk tranching) and green bonds, while promising, demand sophisticated legal, regulatory, and financial expertise to structure (Akinyi, et al., 2026). Their complexity often necessitates expensive international intermediaries, including higher capital requirements. This erodes development benefits and fails to build domestic skills. More critically, these instruments are inherently designed around the risk-return logic of commercial markets, favoring large-scale, revenue-generating

mitigation projects like renewable energy plants. This technical and financial bias systematically marginalizes adaptation projects, which are often smaller, geographically dispersed, and focused on public goods like ecosystem restoration or community resilience. Such an imbalance is fundamentally misaligned with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, which seeks to align financial flows with low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways rather than prioritizing short-term profit maximization in already market-ready investment opportunities (Zamarioli et al., 2021). Structuring, monitoring, and verifying such investments requires fundamentally different capacities, particularly in assessing socio-ecological resilience and valuing non-market co-benefits, which remain underdeveloped despite adaptation being Africa's overwhelming priority. As a result, adaptation finance remains chronically scarce as standardized financial instruments are poorly suited to these requirements (Convergence, 2024). Finally, weak institutional capacity fuels an environment of distrust and governance risk that deters investments. In contexts where oversight is limited and finance can become susceptible to

elite capture, political patronage in project allocation, and corruption (Wang & Njangang, 2025).

Anticipating these risks, investors and donors impose even more stringent fiduciary controls and reporting requirements, generating compliance burdens that overstretched institutions struggle to meet (GCF, 2024). These dynamic transforms an initial capacity constraint into a self-reinforcing governance failure: institutions lack both the integrated digital systems (institutional) and the specialized reporting expertise (knowledge) required to meet these external compliance demands, reinforcing negative risk perceptions and justifying the continued concentration of funds in 'safer' destinations. Building trust therefore constitutes a core capacity challenge, dependent on transparent public financial management systems, robust audit functions, and the sustained civil society engagement as accountability mechanisms because these are elements of a strong institutional ecosystem that must be deliberately constructed rather than assumed to emerge organically.

**Figure 1: Africa's NDC Implementation Challenge**



Source: Authors.

Therefore, the NDC finance gap reflects two mutually reinforcing constraints: deficits in technical knowledge and weaknesses in institutional systems and governance. Consequently, bridging Africa's NDC implementation gap requires a dual-focused strategy that simultaneously builds the specialized human capital needed to navigate complex NDC finance and reforms the institutional architectures that determine whether this expertise can be leveraged for the public good. This frames capacity building from ad-hoc training towards a strategic, systemic intervention aimed at transforming both the skills and the structures of Africa's climate finance governance.

## WHY CAPACITY STILL LIMITS CLIMATE FINANCE

Building on the literature and practical evidence that identify persistent technical and institutional gaps in climate-related capacity development, Ansaram and Grüning (2026) adopt a multi-method approach to better understand the concrete barriers that hinder closing these gaps and to generate empirically grounded insights into how capacity development can be more effectively designed and operationalised. The study carried out a systematic assessment of 54 African NDCs V2.0, expert consultations, and evaluation of over 60 capacity-building programmes and 10 in-depth case studies provides empirical validation of the theoretical argument on the gaps. Capacity deficits are both widespread and poorly diagnosed, existing interventions systematically fail to address root causes, and the persistent gap between supply and demand reflects fundamental misalignment in how capacity is conceptualized and delivered (APRI, 2024).

**Pervasive but unspecified constraints:** Forty-six African countries (85%) explicitly condition their NDC implementation on international capacity-building support. The fulfilment of these conditional pledges relies heavily on access to financial resources, technology transfers, technical cooperation, and capacity-building support (UNFCCC, 2022). Yet most fail to articulate how identified constraints relate to specific climate finance functions, such as project

development and structuring, fiduciary compliance, monitoring and reporting or private capital mobilization. This diagnostic deficit itself constitutes a knowledge gap: countries cannot specify which technical competencies, data infrastructures, or governance arrangements impede access to climate finance. The inability to translate 'capacity constraints' into actionable institutional reforms prevents targeted intervention design and perpetuates reliance on standardised readiness support that fails to address country-specific bottlenecks.

### **Systemic rather than technical deficits:**

Capacity gaps extend far beyond individual skills to encompass six interrelated institutional failures: (1) fragmented coordination across ministries and government levels; (2) absent or non-functional MRV systems and climate data platforms; (3) limited financial sector literacy regarding innovative instruments; (4) weak project pipeline development capacity; (5) absence of mechanisms for knowledge retention or institutional memory; and (6) systematic exclusion of subnational governments, SMEs, civil society, women, youth, and frontline communities from capacity interventions despite their central role to implementation. These are not isolated deficiencies but manifestations of broken institutional architectures. Where integrated data platforms do not exist, trained individuals cannot produce the standardized feasibility studies or emissions baseline, or resilience metrics required by climate funds, donors or investors. Where ministries or agencies designated to coordinate climate commitments lack budgetary authority or coordination mandates with finance and planning ministries, negotiation skills cannot compensate for structural decision-making failures. In such contexts, institutional systems themselves constrain climate finance governance regardless of individual expertise.

### **Supply-driven, fragmented, and unsustainable provision:**

Despite the proliferation of over 60 active programmes dedicated to climate finance, capacity-building remains characterized by donor-driven design, project-based delivery, and weak embedded systems. Interventions typically operate as short-term, stand-alone interventions

disconnected from national training institutions, civil service systems, or domestic capacity development strategies. They are predominantly designed and delivered by Global North institutions with minimal African co-ownership and concentrate on central government actors while ignoring subnational and non-state stakeholders. Programmes overwhelmingly prioritize individual skill transfer over systemic institutional strengthening, resulting in a perpetual churn of trained individuals working within dysfunctional environments. When personnel exit government or shift roles, expertise is lost because it was never institutionalized in organizational procedures, legal frameworks, or domestic capacity development architectures. Training workshops cannot substitute for inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms, or budgetary processes that determine whether acquired knowledge can be applied at scale.

**Accessibility and inclusion as structural barriers:** The exclusionary architecture of capacity provision actively prevents the very actors essential to NDC implementation from participating. This exclusion manifests in different pathways including institutional coverage, language and delivery models. Institutional fragmentations in the NDC finance governance at the national level are often not accounted for in capacity building initiatives. Most efforts have focused on technical actors such as climate change directorates, project developers among others involved in project development and less focus on actors governing the funding mobilization and access such as Planning Ministries, Multilateral Banks, the Presidency among others. This in most cases creates mismatch, unconsolidated efforts and weakened opportunity to collectively mobilise. Capacity building efforts should go beyond the procedural requirements of resource mobilisation and integrate wider political economy understanding including power relations among departments, sectors and Ministries.

Language applied in delivering capacity building is critical. With 96.7% of courses delivered exclusively in English, other non English-speaking practitioners are categorically excluded. While it is neither realistic nor commercially viable to offer

professional training free of charge and free resources are often undervalued the lack of transparency around programme costs remains a significant barrier: 34.4% of programmes refuse to disclose their fees, creating uncertainty that disproportionately deters resource-constrained applicants. Prerequisite requirements are often designed to ensure that limited capacity-building resources are directed toward participants who can engage with technically complex material. However, their application can have exclusionary effects. 72.1% demand unstated "experience," without clearly defining what this entails. In practice, this may privilege candidates with institutional affiliation, employer endorsement, established professional networks, or prior exposure to finance and economics, criteria that are more readily met by centrally positioned, degree-holding professionals. Nearly 40% of programmes target intermediate-level learners, implicitly assuming baseline knowledge in finance or economics that many frontline implementers do not possess. This can position climate finance capacity-building as a specialized, expert field, less accessible to subnational officials, civil society actors, women, youth, and early-career practitioners. Presuming baseline finance or economics competence that frontline implementers lack, reinforcing capacity-building as an "expert field" accessible only to anglophone, degree-holding, centrally-positioned elites.

The growing dominance of online delivery models further compounds these barriers. While digital learning can expand reach and reduce provider costs, many programmes rely heavily on fully online formats without incorporating blended approaches suited to connectivity constraints, bandwidth limitations, or uneven digital literacy across regions. In contexts where stable internet access remains unreliable, particularly at subnational and district levels, this model systematically excludes practitioners directly responsible for implementation.

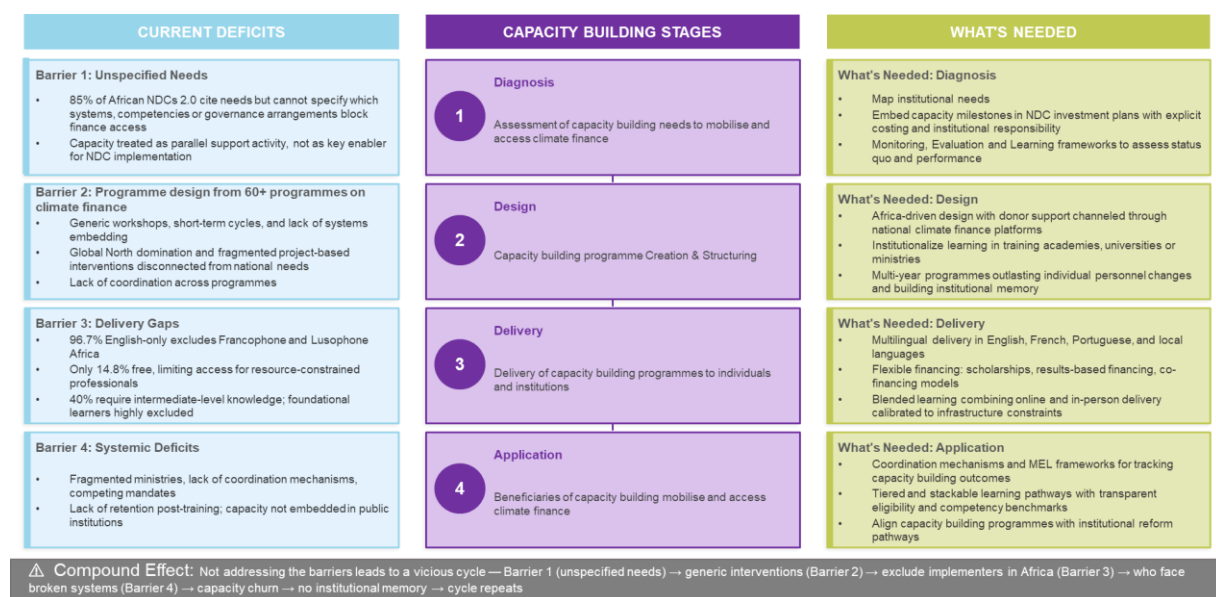
While such targeting may be justified by the technical nature of the subject matter, limited transparency around eligibility criteria can create structural barriers to entry. As a result, practitioners working at district level, engaging

communities, or implementing adaptation interventions remain underrepresented within the broader capacity ecosystem intended to enable their work on climate finance implementation. This risks concentrating expertise at central levels, while implementation responsibilities are often decentralized. The outcome is a reinforcing dynamic: scaling capacity requires access to finance, yet mobilizing and managing finance effectively depends on sufficiently distributed implementation capacity. Addressing this tension may require clearer prerequisite frameworks, tiered learning pathways, and deliberate inclusion strategies to better align technical training with on-the-ground needs, as illustrated in the figure below.

Beyond individual-level access barriers, these exclusionary dynamics are embedded within broader patterns of institutional fragmentation. Current capacity-building models often prioritise technical actors involved in project preparation, such as line ministries or climate units, while overlooking institutions that govern public finance and funding allocation, including Ministries of Finance or Treasury, Parliament, national development banks, and financial regulators. This

selective targeting can create mismatches between those trained to develop proposals and those responsible for budget approval, fiscal oversight, or financial risk management. As a result, efforts to strengthen technical project development capacity may not translate into improved funding mobilisation or governance. In many contexts, this reinforces existing path dependencies, donor-driven silos, and sectoral fragmentation, weakening opportunities for coordinated, system-wide approaches to climate finance. Inclusion challenges therefore extend beyond procedural access requirements to the political economy of funding governance and the institutional incentives shaping climate finance decision-making. Against this backdrop of institutional fragmentation and exclusionary capacity models, the NDC Finance Fellowship Programme (NDC-FFP), implemented by the African Research and Impact Network (ARIN) in partnership with the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management and supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), provides an instructive example of how donor-financed capacity building can be structured to enhance coherence, ownership, and practical relevance,

**Figure 2: Capacity building barriers and needs**



Source: Authors.

addressing several limitations commonly observed in fragmented capacity-building initiatives. While the programme does not directly address institutional reform, it responds to persistent weaknesses in conventional capacity-

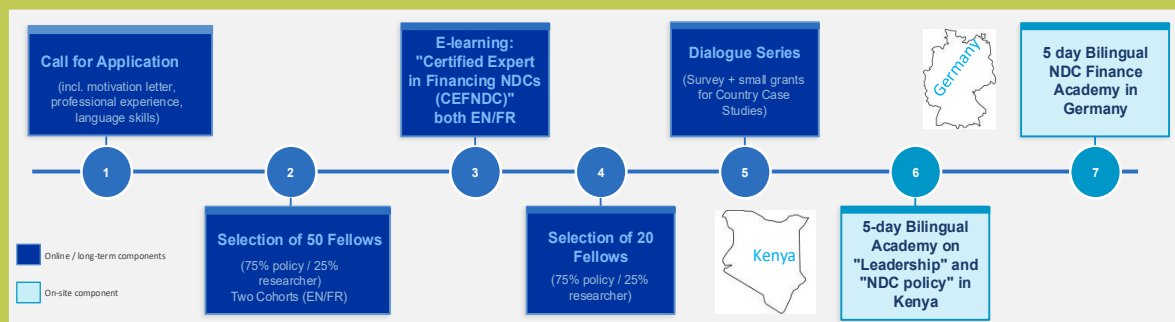
building approaches, including accessibility, blended-learning Africa-driven, South-North cooperation, multilingual delivery, medium-term program and impact on individual, institutional and systemic level.

### Example: NDC Finance Fellowship Programme

The NDC-FFP aims to strengthen technical expertise, leadership skills, and regional peer networks among early-career Sub-Saharan African researchers and policymakers engaged in climate finance and NDC implementation. The programme is grounded in the observation that, in many sub-Saharan African contexts, scarce capacity-building resources are often dispersed across short-term interventions, while capable individuals within relevant institutions remain isolated and lack opportunities for sustained peer exchange and leadership development. A defining feature of the NDC-FFP is its sequenced, blended-learning model (see Figure 3), combining bilingual English-French delivery to manage resource constraints while enabling peer exchange across linguistic and institutional contexts.

The programme's two-stage design begins with cost-free e-learning, providing 100 participants foundational knowledge in NDC finance while identifying those with sustained motivation and analytical capacity. The learning platform was designed to account for connectivity constraints, bandwidth limitations, and uneven digital literacy, featuring downloadable content, asynchronous learning modules, and minimal bandwidth requirements to ensure accessibility across diverse contexts. A selected cohort then progresses to intensive in-person components, leadership academies, applied case studies, and structured peer exchange. Fellows consistently highlighted this second phase as critical for deep learning and collaboration, enabling sustained dialogue across regions, disciplines, and language groups. These interactions reduced professional isolation, strengthened leadership skills, and supported translation of technical knowledge into practice through shared problem-solving and comparative reflection on NDC finance challenges

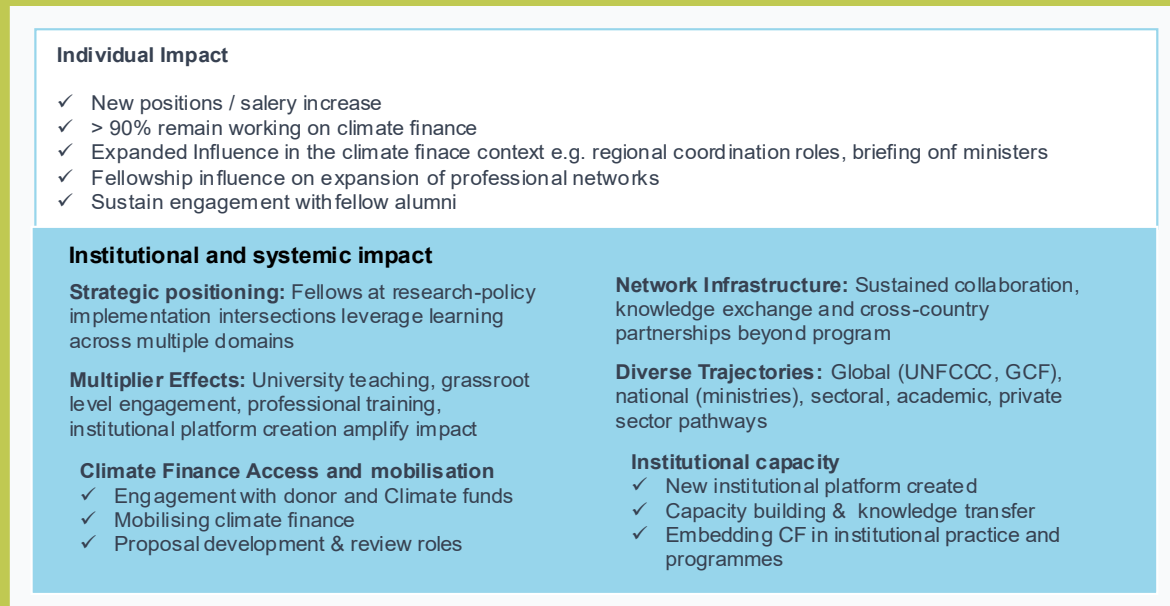
Figure 3: Design of the NDC FFP Capacity building programme



Impact evaluation of the programme demonstrates impact across individual, institutional, and systemic levels (Figure 4). Over 90% of fellows remain working on climate finance, with many advancing to positions of expanded influence including regional coordination roles and ministerial briefings. Applications of fellowship learning contributed to broader systemic effects, including influence on climate policy processes, mobilization of climate finance, and the strengthening of institutional frameworks. Fellows positioned at research-policy intersections leverage learning across

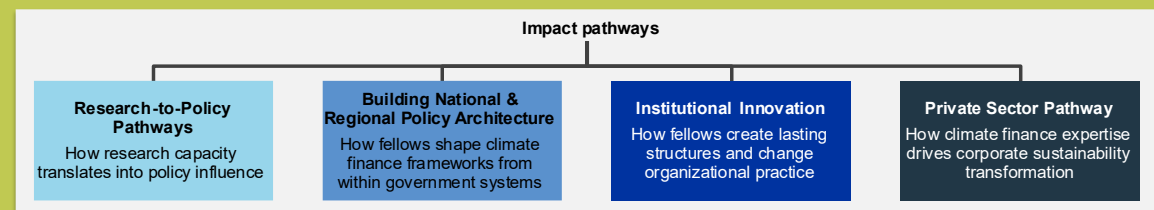
multiple domains, creating multiplier effects through university teaching, grassroots engagement, and institutional platform creation that amplify impact beyond individual contributions.

**Figure 4: Impact on individual, institutional and systemic level**



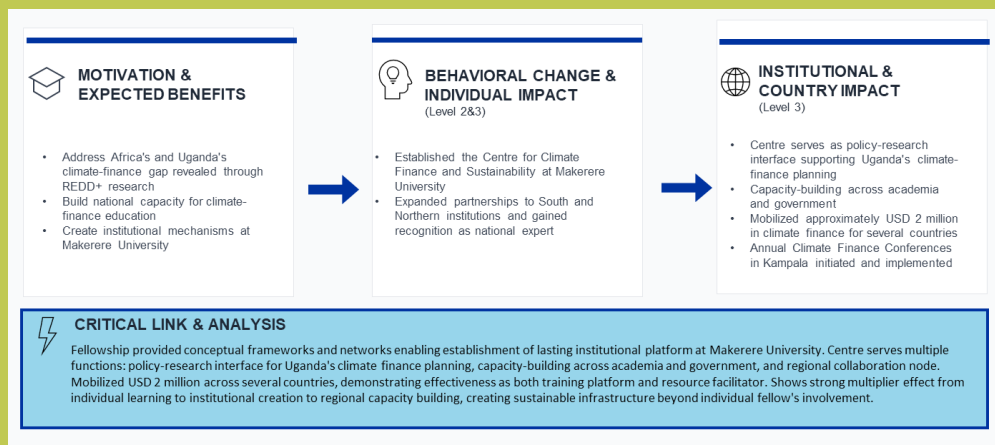
As depicted in Figure 5, capacity development translates into impact through four distinct pathways. Research-to-policy pathways show how research capacity cascades into global climate finance architecture. Building national and regional policy architecture demonstrates how fellows embed within government systems to shape adaptation plans, NDC frameworks, and regional coordination. Institutional innovation pathways examine fellows who establish new platforms or transform existing organizations. Private sector pathways show how climate finance expertise drives corporate sustainability leadership aligned with Paris Agreement targets. Together, these illustrate the often non-linear progression from individual learning to broader institutional and systemic effects.

**Figure 5: Four exemplary impact pathways**



The fellow's trajectory (Figure 6) illustrates one example of a coherent contribution pathway from motivation to institutional impact. Recognizing Uganda's climate finance gap through REDD+ research, the fellow consolidated expertise through the NDC-FFP and leveraged fellowship-enabled networks to establish the Centre for Climate Finance and Sustainability (CCFS) at Makerere University. The CCFS serves as a policy-research interface supporting Uganda's climate-finance planning, provides capacity-building across academia and government, and has mobilized approximately USD 2 million in climate finance across several countries while hosting annual Climate Finance Conferences in Uganda.

**Figure 6: Institutionalizing Climate Finance Capacity – An Impact Pathway**



*These impact pathways underscore the NDC-FFP's core assumption: strengthening participants' technical and leadership capacity can contribute to systemic improvements in climate planning. Rather than resolving structural constraints in isolation, the fellowships illustrate how strategically positioned individuals can serve as catalysts for institutional and systemic change when equipped with relevant skills, networks, and long-term orientation.*

Source: Peters, S. and C. Grüning (2026)

## RETHINKING CAPACITY BUILDING

Bridging Africa's NDC finance gap requires moving beyond a narrow framing of climate finance as a question of mobilising additional resources. The central challenge is not only how much finance is available, but whether national governance systems can plan, coordinate, absorb, allocate, deploy, and account for that finance effectively. NDC financing is therefore fundamentally about strengthening the systems that govern money, including public financial management frameworks, regulatory environments, institutional mandates, and accountability structures.



Capacity building must consequently shift from ad hoc training interventions toward structured, system-level institutional preparedness strategies embedded within national governance architectures. Evidence from both NDC analysis and evaluation of capacity building programmes demonstrates that while individual technical competencies improve, systemic transformation

remains constrained where capacity efforts are not institutionalised, politically anchored, and embedded in domestic reform processes.

Moreover, different forms of capacity serve distinct functions within climate finance mobilisation. Technical capacity may enable access to readiness funding and improve compliance with international requirements. However, large-scale resource mobilisation depends on institutional capacity, including fiduciary systems, pipeline development, and budget integration, and on system-level reforms that reduce policy and regulatory risk, strengthen coordination, and improve investment predictability. Without attention to these broader governance conditions, technical training alone cannot unlock sustained climate finance flows.

The four recommendations below reflect this systemic logic. The first two address the strategic and programmatic foundations: embedding capacity within national NDC investment plans,

and building the national learning ecosystems required for implementation. The third addresses how donor support must be anchored in, rather than bypass, these national systems. The fourth closes the loop by embedding monitoring and evaluation within national capacity pathways, linking learning directly to finance mobilisation outcomes. Within each recommendation, actions


are distinguished as  near-term entry points,  medium-term institutionalisation measures, or long-term system integration reforms. Ensuring coherence and alignment across these short-, medium-, and long-term measures is essential to prevent fragmentation, duplication, and the inefficient use of scarce financial and administrative resources.


**Figure 6: Four interconnected recommendations for systemic change**




Source: Authors

**INTEGRATE CAPACITY PATHWAYS INTO NDC IMPLEMENTATION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGIES** Capacity development should be treated as a core operational component of climate finance mobilisation, rather than a parallel or incidental support activity. It is not as a by-product of implementation but as a structural enabler of climate finance mobilisation. Embedding capacity milestones, including institutional benchmarks, alongside mitigation and adaptation targets within NDC investment plans is therefore critical. Absorptive capacity ultimately determines the effectiveness of climate finance and the credibility of investment pipelines.

 **Explicitly costing, sequencing, and assigning institutional responsibility** for climate finance capacity milestones within NDC investment plans (e.g., operational MRV systems, climate finance units in ministries of finance, accredited national entities, strengthened public investment appraisal systems).


 **Distinguishing clearly between individual skills, institutional capacity, and system-level capabilities** to ensure reforms address structural coordination failures, weak fiduciary systems, regulatory uncertainty, and fragmented mandates and not only technical knowledge gaps.


 **Embed public investments in individual capacity development on climate finance within broader institutional reform pathways** (such as university curricula), ensuring alignment with national climate finance strategies, public investment management systems, and budgetary processes.


 **Articulating domestically anchored capacity retention strategies**, including civil service reform alignment and institutional career pathways, to reduce dependency on external consultants and parallel project units.

## **BUILD NATIONAL LEARNING ECOSYSTEMS ALIGNED WITH NDC IMPLEMENTATION**

Fellowships and mid-career training programmes generate strong individual learning outcomes and are often effective for building technical knowledge. However, large-scale climate finance mobilisation requires institutional anchoring, risk governance capacity. However, large-scale climate finance mobilisation requires institutional anchoring, broader inclusion across levels of implementation and coordinated capacity development implementation across levels of government and sectors. Current models often reflect necessary trade-offs between depth and reach, immersion and scalability, elite expertise and broad access. These trade-offs must be more deliberately aligned with national capacity milestones embedded in NDC frameworks and climate finance strategies.


 **Develop tiered and stackable learning pathways with transparent eligibility criteria and clearly defined competency benchmarks**, potentially supported through modular or micro-credential approaches aligned with NDC implementation milestones and national capacity frameworks.

 **Extend capacity-building initiatives beyond central institutions** to subnational and non-state actors critical to NDC implementation, with delivery models calibrated to constraints and aligned with national capacity milestones.

 **Public investments in individual capacity development should be embedded within institutional reform pathways**, ensuring alignment with national climate finance and NDC implementation priorities.

 **Support South-led, structured South–South partnerships, complemented by strategically aligned North–South cooperation**, between universities, training institutes, African climate funds, MRV units, finance ministries, and international peer institutions to facilitate mutual learning, technical exchange, and long-term institutional strengthening.

 **Support the development of national climate finance learning ecosystems**, including country platforms or coordination forums that connect individual training programmes, public institutions, academia, and reform processes. Such platforms would enable continuous professional development, cross-programme knowledge exchange, and sustained institutional application of expertise beyond isolated capacity-building interventions.

 **Recognise climate finance capacity development as a long-term investment** requiring diversified financing approaches, including co-financing and institutional sponsorship models, to ensure both inclusivity, retention and financial sustainability.

## INTEGRATE CAPACITY PATHWAYS INTO NDC IMPLEMENTATION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

Donor engagement should reinforce, rather than bypass - national institutional ecosystems. While readiness funding often prioritises technical compliance, sustained mobilisation of climate finance requires institutional strengthening embedded in domestic governance systems. Aligning donor support with national reform timelines and institutional development cycles, including through multi-year financing horizons, would improve coherence, ownership, and long-term effectiveness.

**Channel capacity-building support through national climate finance platforms or institutional hubs** (e.g., country platforms, training centres, universities), rather than fragmented project-based interventions, to reduce duplication and strengthen institutional embedding.

**Prioritise embedding readiness funding within public institutions**, including ministries, treasuries, national climate funds, universities, and civil service training systems,

to ensure knowledge retention and reduce turnover-related losses.

**Foster long-term strategic partnerships that extend beyond individual project cycles**, drawing on models such as the Resilience and Adaptation Mainstreaming Program (RAMP). Longer-term engagement provides the predictability, trust and institutional learning necessary for systemic capacity development rather than short-term technical assistance.

## EMBED MONITORING AND EVALUATION WITHIN NATIONAL CAPACITY PATHWAY

Capacity-building investments in climate finance should be assessed in relation to their contribution to national climate goals or advancing NDC implementation milestones. Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) must frameworks therefore be embedded within a broader ecosystem of national capacity building ecosystems and linked directly to finance mobilisation outcomes.

**MEL with transparent and measurable learning objectives** should be treated as a core design feature, not an administrative afterthought vulnerable to funding cuts, given its central role in assessing whether capacity building translates into sustained climate finance readiness.

**Align MEL frameworks with national climate finance plans and NDC implementation cycles** from the outset, rather than treating evaluation as an ex-post programme requirement.

**Publicly document and share lessons across initiatives and institutions** to reduce fragmentation and strengthen collective learning within national climate finance ecosystems.

**Assess whether capacity investments contribute to sustained climate finance readiness**, increased climate finance inflows and domestic resource mobilisation, linking learning directly to finance mobilisation outcomes rather than short-term training metrics.

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