



**RISE UP
TOGETHER**

**Lessons at the
Intersection of
Climate and Gender**

*Insights from 530+ Organizations
and Movement Leaders*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

April 2026

Key Insights at a Glance

Climate change is already reshaping daily life for women and girls around the world – not as a future risk, but as a present and compounding reality. Across five focus countries, and in conversation with globally focused organizations working across regions, our research mapping 500+ organizations and interviews with 35 movement leaders reveals consistent patterns in how climate and gender justice intersect in practice:

- **Climate change impacts are deeply gendered, reflecting the inextricable link between climate and gender justice.** Interviewees consistently highlighted how environmental disruption intensifies existing inequalities, increasing time burdens, limiting access to resources and services, and constraining women's agency and participation in decision-making.
- **Evidence gaps are limiting influence and investment.** Leaders emphasized that while lived experience is rich, a lack of accessible, rigorous data – particularly disaggregated by gender and age – constrains their ability to influence policy and attract sustained funding.
- **The ecosystem is active but fragmented.** Many organizations working at the intersection of climate and gender operate independently, limiting opportunities for coordination, shared learning, and collective impact.
- **Gender-responsive climate work remains underfunded and undervalued.** Despite clear evidence that climate impacts are shaped by existing inequalities, only a small share of climate finance is directed toward advancing gender equality, creating a disconnect between need and investment.
- **Intersectional, community-led approaches are critical to building long-term resilience.** Across regions, leaders pointed to Indigenous knowledge, local governance structures, and sustained organizing as essential to developing climate solutions that are durable, equitable, and rooted in community realities.

Introduction and Approach

Rise Up Together conducted a three-month listening and learning journey in early 2026 with climate movement leaders, practitioners, and civil society organizations across five focus countries, alongside globally focused organizations working across regions. Our team mapped 502 organizations working at the intersection of climate and gender justice across India, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and the United States, and interviewed 35 movement leaders representing grassroots organizations, youth-led networks, civil society groups, and global funders.

These insights will inform Rise Up Together’s future leadership and advocacy training by centering the lived realities of local leaders and communities, strengthening connections with movements, and shaping long-term, systems-oriented climate justice programming.

Environmental degradation driven by increasing temperatures, unreliable and extreme weather cycles, as well as oil extraction, gas flaring, clear-cutting, water pollution, and other harmful practices, has significantly disrupted livelihoods, deepened poverty, and increased displacement. These impacts are not experienced equally. Interviewees consistently highlighted the deeply gendered nature of climate change impacts. Women are identified as among the most severely affected, due to their central roles in food production, water and fuel collection, caregiving, and household management. When harvests fail, water sources dry up, or livelihoods are disrupted, everyone, especially women, must work harder and longer to fill the gaps, often at significant cost to their own health, wellbeing, education, and economic opportunity. Heat stress affects those living in precarious housing with limited access to water, ventilation, or cooling. Those dependent on informal or street-based livelihoods face trade-offs between health and income.

Yet despite their vital role in communities, women remain largely invisible in formal systems, rarely recognized as farmers and excluded from community governance structures, government programs, credit services, emergency relief planning, and decision-making spaces - constraining both their agency and community resilience.

Our research highlights the critical role of grassroots and community-based organizations in mobilizing communities, raising awareness, and advancing policy change. Their proximity to communities enables them to identify and respond to emerging challenges in meaningful ways, while a rise in youth-led movements reflects growing engagement among younger populations who increasingly see climate justice as central to their futures.

These findings inform the recommendations that follow, outlining pathways to strengthen coordination, expand support, and advance gender-responsive climate action in pursuit of a more just and equitable future for all.

“We need to move beyond a narrow, issue-specific approach and build a broader understanding. Climate and gender are interconnected and require a multi-sectoral lens rather than isolated solutions.”
— Non-profit leader, India

What We Already Know

Climate change is accelerating global inequality and disproportionately impacting women and girls:

- An estimated 4 out of 5 people displaced by the impacts of climate change are women and girls. ([UNICEF, 2021](#))
- Climate change is projected to increase rates of gender-based violence, and before the end of the century, 1 in 10 cases of intimate partner violence will be linked to climate change. ([Spotlight Initiative, 2025](#))
- Climate change could push ~130 million people into extreme poverty by 2030. ([World Bank, 2022](#))
- 2.3 billion people live in water-stressed countries, with women responsible for water collection in 80% of households. ([UN Women, 2024](#))
- Only an estimated 3% of bilateral climate finance directly advances gender equality, ignoring the disproportionate impacts on women and girls. ([Climate Finance Shadow Report, 2025](#))

Recommendations from the Field

The civil society organizations interviewed showed deep local expertise, but also noted constraints due to fragmentation, data gaps, limited policy access, and insufficient funding. Our findings point to the need for coordinated, cross-sector approaches. The recommendations that follow outline pathways to strengthen local leadership and advance gender-responsive climate action.

1. Strengthen Coordination and Close Evidence Gaps

Climate movements are already advancing effective and scalable solutions in areas such as agroecology, food sovereignty, and decentralized energy systems. However, these approaches often lack accessible, rigorous evidence needed to attract large-scale funding and policy support.

Strengthening data collection, including gender- and age-disaggregated data, and investing in robust evaluation of initiatives such as green job training, renewable energy adoption, and community-led resilience efforts will be critical to advancing sustained climate solutions. These efforts must center the lived experiences of women, girls, and gender-diverse people in frontline communities to ensure solutions are both equitable and impactful.

“There is still a big gap in gender and climate data, even though communities have lived experiences that could inform policy.”

— Non-profit leader, Kenya

Organizations must align across advocacy efforts to maximize collective impact. Stronger data systems, local research, and participatory practices will increase credibility and engagement with decision-makers. Without a shared agenda or coordinated approach, advocacy efforts risk being diluted, duplicated, or contradictory, creating confusion among communities and reducing overall pressure on policymakers to advance meaningful solutions.

2. Increase Flexible, Long-Term Funding for Gender-Responsive and Community-Led Work

Philanthropy can strengthen climate action by increasing investments in advocacy and movement building. Funding should support community-led policy development and implementation, participatory research, evidence generation, and storytelling. Sustained investment will strengthen accountability and support long-term systems change.

“Short-term funding is a big challenge – most projects run for one to three years, but advocacy requires long-term engagement.”

— Non-profit leader, Kenya

Funders need to reduce administrative barriers, simplify reporting, and offer technical assistance and organizational development. Women’s funds and intermediary organizations can play a catalytic role in supporting this process by facilitating connections between grassroots leaders and donors, strengthening civil society capacity, mitigating funders’ administrative burdens, and advocating for more equitable and accessible financing mechanisms.

3. Expand Access to Policymaking and Decision-Making Spaces

Structured opportunities for dialogue between civil society and policymakers are essential. These platforms should prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and continuity, moving beyond one-off consultations.

More than half of the leaders interviewed highlighted the need for stronger accountability mechanisms and meaningful inclusion of grassroots voices in policy design and implementation.

4. Strengthen Evidence, Advocacy, and Narrative Power

Effective communication and storytelling amplify the voices of climate and gender justice advocates. Organizations need clear, evidence-based policy messages supported by compelling narratives that resonate with policymakers and funders.

Powerful digital advocacy and targeted media engagement can influence public discourse and allow advocates to participate in climate processes and decision-making spaces by sharing the voices, experiences, and solutions of frontline communities.

5. Center Indigenous and Local Knowledge in Climate Solutions

Climate solutions are most effective when they build on the knowledge, practices, and lived experiences of communities. Indigenous and local knowledge offer pathways to sustainable resource management, climate adaptation, and resilience.

Indigenous people and their knowledge systems must be recognized, respected, and meaningfully integrated into formal climate policy, programming, and financing mechanisms.

6. Shift Power to Community Institutions and Collective Leadership

Climate justice depends on shifting power, resources, and decision-making to communities. Community-based institutions such as development committees, forest management groups, water user associations, pastoralist councils, and women's collectives all play a critical role in proposing climate solutions that work.

Intermediary organizations can help strengthen these efforts by supporting community organizations to navigate funders' requirements, access key resources to advance their agendas, and elevate organizational capacity in areas such as fundraising, communications, and other self-identified priorities.

When institutions like community conservancies in Kenya, farmer and pastoralist associations in Nigeria, and community-based natural resource management groups in South Africa are inclusive of women and diverse genders, well-resourced, and community-led, they strengthen local leadership and result in impactful decision-making.

7. Prioritize Safety, Wellbeing, and Protection of Climate Advocates

Shifting power and advancing climate and gender justice can expose advocates to risks including political backlash and threats to personal safety. Safeguarding wellbeing is central to effective and ethical programming.

Organizations must invest in risk assessments, security protocols, and digital safety training. This is particularly important for women, youth, Indigenous leaders, and LGBTQI+ advocates who often face heightened and intersecting risks.

Conclusion

The sample of movement leaders and organizations mapped through this listening and learning process reflects a climate justice landscape with strong local leadership, knowledge, and engagement, with civil society organizations advancing solutions despite significant resource and structural constraints. Our findings underscore that resilience is built not only through immediate responses to climate shocks, but through sustained organizing, learning, and collective action – particularly when women and gender-diverse leaders are centered and supported. Because climate impacts are deeply gendered, addressing these realities requires a shift in how power, resources, and decision-making are distributed, recognizing climate change as a systems issue shaped by inequality and livelihoods. Civil society organizations are critical to driving this shift, and intermediary organizations are well-positioned to play a catalytic role by strengthening coordination, building capacity, and supporting gender-responsive climate advocacy.

About Rise Up Together

Rise Up Together partners with women, girls, and allies who are transforming their communities and countries as part of a global movement for justice and equity. We improve education, health, economic opportunity, and climate outcomes by building power with local leaders and organizations to create a better future for all. Rise Up Together works with leaders in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and the United States to create a future where all people can thrive. Since 2009, Rise Up Together’s powerful network of over 1,000 leaders has successfully advocated for 246 new and improved laws and policies, positively impacting more than 251 million people around the world (as of 2025).

 www.riseuptogether.org

 Rise Up Together

 @riseuptogether.org

  @RiseUpForGirls