



**RISE UP
TOGETHER**

for gender justice everywhere

Lessons at the Intersection of Climate and Gender

*Insights from 530+ Organizations
and Movement Leaders*

Spring 2026

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Introduction

Climate change is a lived global reality that is reshaping livelihoods, disrupting social systems, and deepening inequality – particularly for women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people. Yet despite how widespread environmental shocks have become, their impacts are not experienced equally. Women and girls, who play central roles in food production, water and fuel collection, caregiving, and household management, face compounded burdens while remaining largely excluded from formal systems and decision-making spaces that shape climate responses. Rise Up Together has increasingly engaged with these dynamics over the past several years through our work partnering with local leaders and organizations that are advancing community-led solutions to improve education, health, and economic opportunities for women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people.

Beginning in 2023, Rise Up Together launched our “planting seeds on climate” pilot initiative – learning from grassroots leaders and partners about how climate change affects their communities and making targeted learning investments in gender-responsive climate advocacy. This pilot gave our team the opportunity to conduct climate landscape mapping, engage with leaders working across climate-related sectors, integrate climate content into our advocacy training curriculum, and make targeted early investments in climate-linked advocacy strategies led by Rise Up Leaders and partner organizations. With an intermediary model anchored in long-term partnership and capacity strengthening, Rise Up Together has supported grassroots leaders and organizations to expand advocacy capacity, access broader networks and resources, and engage more effectively in the systems and decision-making spaces that shape long-term climate and gender justice outcomes. This groundwork deepened our understanding of how climate and gender intersect in practice and positioned our team to engage more intentionally in this space. Through this pilot initiative, we heard clearly from Rise Up Leaders and partners that they have long been navigating the challenges of climate change and are already developing promising, locally rooted solutions within their own communities.

Building on this pilot, 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. The findings presented in this report reflect insights from that journey and are intended to inform future program design, strategic partnerships, and investments. They also point to a broader imperative – advancing climate solutions that are locally grounded, gender equitable, and responsive to the lived realities of those most affected in pursuit of a more just and sustainable 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

Key Research Insights

Key takeaways from this listening and learning journey include the following:

- **Climate change impacts are deeply gendered, reflecting the inextricable link between climate and gender justice.** Interviewees consistently highlighted how environmental disruption intensifies existing gender 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 to advance climate and gender justice 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 gender 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.

Methodology

This report draws on a three-month listening and learning journey conducted from January to March 2026 by Rise Up Together's country-based teams. During this process, we prioritized deep listening and intentional learning, both with our existing partners and networks, and with a focus on building relationships with new leaders, organizations, and movement partners. We set out to learn from climate justice leaders and organizations who have long been part of this movement to better understand local needs across contexts, learn from existing approaches, and identify opportunities for partnership and collaboration. **The findings presented in this report were guided by the following questions:**

- What are the dominant climate justice issues and policy entry points in each focus country, and how are they currently intersecting (or not) with gender justice efforts?
- Who are the key actors (civil society, grassroots movements, coalitions, networks, government allies) shaping climate advocacy at national and state levels, especially those integrating a gender-responsive lens that we would want to include in a cohort?
- What roles can globally focused international climate justice actors play in supporting local gender justice leaders, and where is philanthropic support currently concentrated?

This listening and learning journey combined desk-based research and qualitative data collection to better understand the climate and gender justice landscapes across five focus countries - India, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and the United States - alongside perspectives from globally focused organizations operating across regions.

Our global team mapped a total of 502 organizations working at the intersection of climate justice and gender justice (see Fig. 1). Country teams researched relevant climate data sources and legal frameworks impacting climate change, including global reports by the United Nations, the World Bank, and relevant country-specific policy frameworks, like India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and Nigeria's Climate Change Act of 2021. The global team also mapped organizational focus areas and the roles and contributions organizations are making across the climate justice ecosystem - including influencing policy, generating and using evidence, educating and mobilizing communities, and strengthening movement-building efforts - in order to understand how different actors contribute to climate and gender justice outcomes and where gaps, overlaps, and opportunities for coordination exist.

In addition to this desk research, we conducted 35 in-depth interviews with leaders from a

diverse cross-section of civil society organizations, including grassroots community groups, youth-led initiatives, women-focused organizations, international non-governmental organizations, intermediary funders, and global climate actors. Interviews explored four thematic areas: community-level climate impacts; organizational strengths and constraints; coordination and collaboration dynamics; and the integration of gender into climate advocacy.

These 45-60 minute conversations consistently framed climate change not as a standalone environmental issue, but as a lived reality embedded in struggles over land, water, livelihoods, safety, and dignity. This synthesis builds from listening to identifying patterns, and from patterns to informing strategic priorities for action, investment, and partnership.

Fig. 1 Organizations Landscaped

Country	NGOs Mapped	Interviews Conducted
India	340	8
Kenya	67	5
Nigeria	38	10
South Africa	25	7
United States/Global	32	5
TOTALS	502	35

Context: Climate Change as a Lived and Gendered Reality

Across all geographies, one of the most consistent themes from our interviews is that climate change is a pervasive reality at the community level that uniquely impacts the lives of women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people. Interviewees described a range of environmental challenges - including flooding, drought, oil pollution, gas flaring, desertification, extreme heat, and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns - that are directly affecting livelihoods, migration, and social stability, most especially in marginalized communities.

At the same time, communities are not passive in the face of these challenges. Across contexts, leaders described locally grounded responses rooted in collective action and Indigenous and local knowledge systems. These approaches include agroecological farming practices, water conservation and governance systems, forest protection and regeneration, informal savings groups, and livelihood strategies tied to shared resources such as forests, grazing lands, and water bodies. These natural commons serve as critical buffers during times of climate stress, particularly for pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities. However, they are increasingly under threat due to environmental degradation, privatization, and competing policy priorities. Without coordinated government action, accessible climate finance, and robust social protection systems, the adaptive capacity of these communities will continue to erode.

Across all interviews, respondents consistently emphasized the deeply gendered nature of climate change impacts. Many described how women are among those most affected due to their central roles in food production, water and fuel collection, caregiving, and household management. When harvests fail or water sources diminish, women must work longer hours to secure basic needs, often at significant cost to their health, education, and economic opportunities. At the same time, structural inequalities - including limited land rights, restricted access to credit and financial services, lower levels of formal education, and social norms that constrain mobility and participation - limit women's, girls', and gender-nonconforming people's ability to adapt to or recover from climate shocks.

Despite their essential role in sustaining households and communities, women remain largely invisible in formal systems. Interviewees highlighted how women are often not recognized as farmers and are excluded from governance structures, government programs, credit systems, land ownership, emergency relief planning, and decision-making spaces. These exclusions not only constrain women's agency but also weaken broader community resilience. In situations of displacement due to climate disasters, these challenges are further intensified; as a result, women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people face increased risks of violence, reduced access to health care and sanitation, and the loss of social support systems.

At the same time, there is growing recognition across the climate justice ecosystem that gender must be centered in climate advocacy. All interviewees recognized this urgent need and some are already working at the intersection of gender and climate, beginning to adopt intersectional and “multisolving” approaches that recognize how climate impacts are shaped by overlapping forces such as age, caste, ethnicity, race, class, sexual identity, and geography. These approaches highlight that advancing climate justice requires addressing the structural inequities that shape both vulnerability and response. Nonetheless, many interviewees acknowledged that there is still significant room for climate justice organizations to more fully center gender in their solutions, and that some have only begun to integrate this focus. They highlighted the need to deepen and more consistently operationalize a gender lens across their climate advocacy efforts, expand opportunities to amplify women’s voices, strengthen gender-inclusive participation in decision-making, and challenge existing power dynamics.

“Even in disaster response, inclusion remains a major gap. Trans persons are often not recognized in implementation – people still ask ‘where do you belong?’ In moments of crisis, questions of gender and caste continue to determine access to safety and support.”
— Non-profit leader, India

Global data reinforces these findings:

- An estimated 4 out of 5 people displaced by the impacts of climate change are women and girls. ([UNICEF, 2021](#))
- Climate change is expected to increase rates of gender-based violence, and 1 in 10 cases of intimate partner violence are projected to be linked to climate change. ([Spotlight Initiative, 2025](#))
- Climate change could push approximately 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](#))

Addressing climate change therefore requires more than technical solutions. It demands an understanding of how environmental, social, and economic systems intersect - and how gender inequality shapes both vulnerability and response.

The Climate Justice Ecosystem: Strengths, Gaps, and Barriers

Our research found that across geographies, the climate justice landscape is characterized by strong engagement from civil society organizations that are deeply embedded in communities and actively engaged in addressing the multidimensional impacts of climate change. While national and international actors play crucial roles by partnering to implement key policies and mobilize resources, grassroots organizations are often at the forefront of efforts to translate advocacy into tangible community-level changes that have the potential for long-term sustainability and scaling.

A defining strength of the climate justice ecosystem is the depth of local knowledge and trust held by grassroots and community-based organizations. Many interviewees have long-standing relationships with communities they serve, enabling them to design and implement interventions that are highly responsive to local realities. Across interviews, leaders described a strong culture of activism, awareness-building, and community engagement, using tools such as storytelling, citizen journalism, and digital platforms to elevate lived experiences and drive advocacy. Existing partnerships, coalitions, and informal networks further reflect a willingness to collaborate and provide a foundation for more coordinated action.

Several important dynamics are shaping the evolution of the climate justice ecosystem. There has been a notable rise in youth-led climate movements, reflecting growing engagement among younger populations who increasingly see climate justice as central to their futures. 40% of organizations interviewed are youth-focused, working with young people under the age of 29 to advance climate resilience and adaptation through education, movement building, leadership development, and advocacy.

Gender-focused organizations represent another critical pillar of the ecosystem. These actors are working to ensure that the voices and experiences of women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people are centered in climate conversations, bridging environmental advocacy and gender rights in ways that many other actors have yet to fully adopt.

Despite these strengths, the ecosystem remains fragmented and siloed. Movement leaders reflected on how non-profits often operate independently, focused on their

specific population and with limited coordination or alignment of strategies with other organizations. Without a shared agenda or coordinated approach, advocacy efforts risk being diluted, duplicated, or even contradicting one another, reducing the overall pressure on policymakers and creating confusion among communities. Many interviewees emphasized that without stronger mechanisms for coordination and shared platforms for collaboration, the full potential of the climate justice ecosystem cannot be realized.

Several systemic barriers further constrain impact. Data and evidence gaps limit organizations' ability to document climate impacts, demonstrate effectiveness, and influence policy or funding decisions - particularly in the absence of reliable, gender-disaggregated data. More than half of organizations interviewed reported significant difficulties in engaging government institutions at both federal and state levels, citing issues such as limited transparency, bureaucratic inefficiencies, restricted access to information, and a lack of formal mechanisms for civil society engagement. These constraints weaken accountability mechanisms, reduce the leverage of advocacy initiatives, and make it difficult for community voices to reach and effectively influence decision-making spaces. Financial constraints are also pervasive, with grassroots organizations - despite being closest to affected communities and often most effective at reaching them - facing the greatest barriers to accessing funding. Existing financing mechanisms, whether from bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, or domestic philanthropies, are frequently inaccessible to small and medium-sized organizations due to complex application processes, rigorous due diligence requirements, and institutional bias toward partnering with larger, more established entities.

“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

These challenges are compounded by broader systemic issues. Climate-related challenges - across water, land, agriculture, livelihoods, forests, and gender - are deeply interconnected yet are often addressed in sectoral silos. Governance systems, policy frameworks, and funding mechanisms rarely reflect this complexity, resulting in fragmented and inequitable responses. As a result, climate policies do not consistently translate into meaningful outcomes for the most affected communities; local knowledge systems remain undervalued, and effective solutions to a multi-layered crisis go underfunded and underscaled. Underlying these challenges are broader development models that prioritize extraction and industrial expansion, often at the cost of ecological sustainability and community livelihoods.

Taken together, these dynamics point to a central tension within the ecosystem: strong local leadership and proven community-driven solutions exist, but structural barriers related to coordination, data, funding, and power limit their ability to scale and influence systems-level change.

Opportunities for Strengthening the Ecosystem

Amid these challenges, interviewees identified clear and compelling opportunities to strengthen the climate justice ecosystem. Across contexts, interviewees demonstrated a strong willingness to collaborate, even in the absence of formal structures or dedicated resources. Existing networks provide a foundation for more coordinated and strategic approaches to advocacy, enabling actors to leverage complementary expertise, expand geographic reach, and align messaging to amplify collective impact.

There is also significant demand for capacity strengthening. Nearly 85% of organizations interviewed expressed interest in building skills in areas such as data collection and management, evidence-based advocacy, climate finance literacy, and strategic communication. Targeted intermediary support in these areas – including training, coaching, and technical assistance – represents a high-impact opportunity to enhance organizational effectiveness, strengthen policy influence, and bridge the gap between local leaders, decisionmakers, and funders. Ensuring that these efforts are accessible to grassroots and women-led organizations will be critical to advancing equitable outcomes.

Simultaneously, growing momentum around gender and climate integration presents a timely opportunity. As more actors recognize that climate action cannot be effective without addressing structural inequality, there is increasing space to advance more transformative, gender-responsive approaches and build a critical mass of leaders, organizations, and networks championing this work.

Finally, shifts in the global climate finance landscape offer new potential pathways for resourcing local efforts. Increasing commitments to channel funding to frontline communities in the Global South has the potential to create opportunities for civil society organizations to scale their work, provided they are able to navigate funding systems and demonstrate impact. 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.

Recommendations

While civil society organizations interviewed demonstrated deep local expertise, they also highlighted the constraints they face, including 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-nonconforming people in frontline communities to ensure solutions are both equitable and impactful.

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. Trusted intermediary organizations can support this alignment by connecting actors across geographies and sectors, strengthening shared data and evidence systems, and facilitating more coordinated and strategic approaches to advocacy. By bridging fragmented efforts, elevating community-driven solutions, and connecting grassroots leaders with funders, intermediaries can help scale impact by aligning local action with national and global policy and funding systems.

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

Interviewees noted the need for funders to reduce administrative barriers, simplify reporting, and offer technical assistance and organizational development. Given the existing limitations of institutional philanthropy, advocates emphasized not only the need for funding but also intermediary support to access funding opportunities, build organizational capacity, and engage in policy spaces.

3. Expand Access to Policymaking and Decision-Making Spaces

Structured opportunities for dialogue between grassroots leaders, civil society actors, 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.

Potential mechanisms for opening decision-making processes include multi-stakeholder forums that facilitate dialogue across sectors, as well as standing civil society advisory councils within government institutions, such as South Africa’s National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), which can create more sustained channels for influence on policy design and review. Participatory policy labs also offer opportunities for civil society organizations and policymakers to jointly develop, test, and refine climate solutions grounded in both evidence and lived experience. These approaches can help shift decision-making power toward communities while strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of climate policy response.

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. For example, videos like the one featuring local leader [Ekai Nabenyio](#), co-sponsored by the [Global Greengrants Fund](#), combine lived experience with clear advocacy pathways, while podcasts, community radio, and other storytelling platforms remain critical tools for education, mobilization, and movement-building.

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. For example, traditional water management and rainwater harvesting systems, including the paar reservoirs of Rajasthan in India and the zai pits of northern Nigeria, offer important models for scalable and sustainable climate adaptation in rural communities.

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.

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.

That said, interviewees noted that existing power imbalances, mutual distrust, and competition often limit the ability of community-led groups to set agendas and access the resources needed to advance their own solutions. Intermediary organizations can support this shift by strengthening community organizations' ability to navigate entrenched hierarchies, access key resources to advance their agendas, and develop organizational capacity in areas such as fundraising, communications, and other self-identified priorities. Intermediaries that provide technical assistance can also support organizations to elevate locally led agenda-setting and networking community institutions with other legitimate actors in climate decision-making spaces.

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, threats to personal safety, and violence. Safeguarding safety and wellbeing is central to effective and ethical programming.

Organizations working on climate justice should take these risks seriously, and partner with specialized organizations such as [CyberPeace](#) in India or [YIAGA Africa](#) to learn about how best to mitigate threats and 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.

The Path Forward

The findings from this listening and learning journey reflect both the strength and urgency of this moment: strong local leadership, deep contextual knowledge, and a growing movement of civil society organizations advancing climate and gender justice solutions despite significant structural constraints. Across geographies, resilience is not built through short-term responses alone, but through sustained organizing, collective action, and long-term investment in community leadership – particularly when women, girls, and gender-nonconforming leaders are centered and supported.

At the same time, this research highlights a clear set of gaps that continue to limit the ecosystem’s ability to scale and drive systemic change. Fragmentation across actors reduces collective impact. Gaps in data and evidence constrain policy influence and funding access. Grassroots and women-led organizations – despite being closest to affected communities – face persistent barriers to accessing flexible, long-term financing and decision-making space. These challenges are not isolated; they are rooted in broader systems that remain fragmented, under-resourced, and insufficiently responsive to the lived realities of women, girls, and gender-diverse populations.

Addressing these challenges requires more than direct investment. While funding community-based organizations is essential, many of the barriers identified in this report – including access to resources, policy influence, coordination, and evidence generation – cannot be overcome through funding alone. They require sustained support to strengthen leadership, build advocacy capacity, navigate systems, and connect local solutions to broader decision-making and resource flows.

Rise Up Together

As we assess the key gaps and opportunities identified by this research, we believe that Rise Up Together can play a critical role in advancing gender and climate justice. Rise Up Together does not operate as a traditional funder or implementer, but rather as a bridge –

supporting grassroots leaders and organizations while connecting them to the resources, networks, and decision-making spaces needed to scale their work. We invest in leadership and advocacy capacity, equipping local leaders and organizations with the advocacy training, tools, strategies, and networks needed to move from community-level solutions to systems-level change. Through our Leadership and Advocacy Accelerator, we strengthen leaders' ability to generate and use evidence, build coalitions, shape policy agendas, and secure resources - while providing funding and technical assistance to support their work to advance gender equity.

Our approach has the potential to directly address some of the ecosystem's core constraints, namely by building coordination where fragmentation exists, strengthening evidence where data gaps persist, and expanding communication to strengthen engagement with decision-makers. When designed effectively, intermediary organizations can support and strengthen civil society. Without this connective and capacity-building layer, many community-led solutions remain localized, under-resourced, and unable to influence the systems that shape long-term outcomes.

What distinguishes Rise Up Together is our ability to bridge levels of change. We work at the intersections of grassroots leadership and policy influence, connecting community-driven solutions to state, national, and global systems. Our global network of leaders enables cross-country learning and collective momentum, while our long-term partnerships ensure that impact is sustained beyond individual projects or funding cycles. Rather than imposing solutions, we intentionally amplify and scale advocacy agendas defined by grassroots leaders and communities themselves - strengthening the capacity of leaders and organizations to navigate complex systems and drive durable change. In a landscape where solutions already exist but struggle to scale, our model offers a clear pathway forward: building power with local leaders and organizations to transform systems from within.

Building on years of partnership with local leaders and organizations and our growing body of work at the nexus of climate and gender justice, Rise Up Together can play a catalytic role in strengthening coordination across the ecosystem, expanding access to funding and policy spaces, and advancing gender-responsive climate advocacy. With the right investments and partnerships, this work will amplify existing solutions, support grassroots leaders and organizations to align around shared goals, and contribute to a more cohesive, equitable, and effective climate justice movement.

Geographic Insights: Country Deep Dives

The following country-level insights provide additional context on how climate and gender dynamics are experienced across the different geographies included in this research. While the findings in this report reflect shared patterns across contexts, these snapshots highlight the specific challenges, opportunities, and priorities identified by movement leaders and organizations in each country.

India

Extensive research and landscape mapping across 340 organizations in India focused on the states of Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Rajasthan, while also capturing key climate actors across the country. Seven of the eight interviews conducted with climate movement leaders in India explicitly focused on the intersection of climate change and gender. Across interviews, leaders consistently emphasized that women play central roles in agriculture, water management, and forest-based livelihoods, yet remain largely unrecognized and excluded from land ownership and decision-making structures.

In Jharkhand for example, leaders described how tribal women depend heavily on forests in ways that are both regenerative and climate-resilient. However, large-scale mining, industrial corridors, and infrastructure expansion are increasingly restricting access to these resources, pushing communities into great economic and environmental vulnerability. Interviewees also highlighted how climate impacts are shaped by overlapping inequalities: women from marginalized castes and religious communities face compounded risks during heat waves and water scarcity, with one leader noting that anemic women in water-stressed areas are particularly vulnerable to extreme heat.

Key dynamics:

- Recurring drought and groundwater overuse driving emphasis on agroecology, water budgeting, and watershed development in Maharashtra
- Forest degradation in Jharkhand reducing access to forest produce - including food, fuel, and medicinal plants - and undermining tribal livelihoods
- Water scarcity prompting renewed reliance on traditional systems such as stepwells and deep well structures in Rajasthan
- Low rates of land ownership among women limiting access to government schemes, credit, and agricultural services
- Strengthening of community institutions - including self-help groups, forest management groups, and water use associations - as critical pathways for shifting decision-making power and enabling women's participation

Kenya

Landscape mapping of 67 organizations and interviews with five movement leaders highlighted structural barriers related to climate finance, civic space, and participation in decision-making across Kenya. Leaders emphasized that Kenya's low- and middle-income country status limits access to international climate funding for civil society organizations, while existing financing is increasingly directed toward small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the private sector, such as those working in the carbon markets, solar farm development, or financial services. While SMEs contribute to implementation, interviewees noted that these market-driven approaches often prioritize return on investment and have limited impact on long-term climate justice outcomes or policy change.

Leaders also described a shrinking civic space, with reduced opportunities for meaningful civil society participation in both national and global climate processes, including limited access to accreditation for international forums. Across interviews, climate impacts were closely tied to resource scarcity, particularly water and land, with increasing conflict in pastoralist regions and heightened vulnerability in informal settlements.

Key dynamics:

- Limited access to climate finance for civil society organizations, with funding flows increasingly favoring private sector actors
- Absence of gender-disaggregated climate data, constraining advocacy and policy engagement
- Increasing conflict over water and grazing land in northern and eastern Kenya
- Climate vulnerability in informal settlements, including extreme heat stress and limited infrastructure
- Coastal ecosystem degradation, including mangrove and fisheries loss, affecting livelihoods and resilience

Nigeria

Across Nigeria, our team mapped 38 organizations and conducted interviews with ten movement leaders, revealing a dynamic but highly fragmented ecosystem of civil society, grassroots, and international organizations, particularly in the Niger Delta. Across all actors, leaders identified a lack of coordination and alignment as a major barrier to effective advocacy, alongside persistent gaps in data and documentation of climate impacts at the community level.

Environmental degradation is a defining feature of the Nigerian context. In northern states, desertification has contributed to the loss of agricultural and fishing livelihoods, with women - who make up approximately 80% of subsistence farmers ([People's Gazette Limited](#)) - disproportionately affected. In other regions, flooding has driven large-scale displacement, with 1.4 million people displaced in 2022 alone ([IFRC](#)). Interviewees emphasized the gendered consequences of displacement, including lack of access to sanitation, maternal health care, and increased exposure to gender-based violence and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

In oil-producing regions, leaders highlighted the health impacts of environmental pollution, noting that women in communities affected by oil spills and gas flaring face higher risks of adverse pregnancy outcomes, including low birth weight and pre-term births ([Oghenetega et al.](#)).

Key dynamics:

- Severe environmental degradation from desertification, flooding, and oil pollution impacting livelihoods and health
- Gendered impacts of displacement, particularly in IDP settings
- Limited coordination across organizations, reducing advocacy effectiveness
- Weak data systems and documentation capacity constraining policy influence
- High dependence on subsistence agriculture, with women disproportionately affected by climate-related livelihood loss

South Africa

In South Africa, landscape mapping identified 25 organizations engaged in climate and gender justice, with seven interviews conducted to better understand the advocacy landscape and implementation challenges. Across the country, climate advocacy is strongly shaped by efforts to strengthen accountability for government programs and climate policy implementation. While formal mechanisms for civil society participation exist, leaders reported persistent challenges in accessing decision-makers and navigating limited transparency around climate funding and implementation processes.

Interviews highlighted the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration and capacity-building, particularly for women and rural communities, alongside the need to more effectively integrate Indigenous knowledge into climate solutions. Leaders also emphasized the complexity of the country's energy transition, noting that high dependence on coal and concentrated mineral resources creates both economic and political challenges.

Environmental degradation continues to affect agricultural livelihoods, with soil erosion – including the formation of dongas – pushing farming activities further from settlements. Mining-related pollution, including contamination of water sources, was also identified as a significant concern for frontline communities.

Key dynamics:

- Limited transparency and access to government decision-making processes
- Need for stronger multi-sectoral collaboration and capacity-building, particularly for women
- High reliance on coal complicating climate mitigation and transition efforts
- Environmental degradation from mining and soil erosion impacting livelihoods
- Growing emphasis on risk mapping, early warning systems, and community-based adaptation

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 to create a better future for all. Rise Up Together works with leaders and organizations 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 1,080 leaders has successfully advocated for 246 new and improved laws and policies that generated more than 251 million advocacy impacts around the world (as of 2025).

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