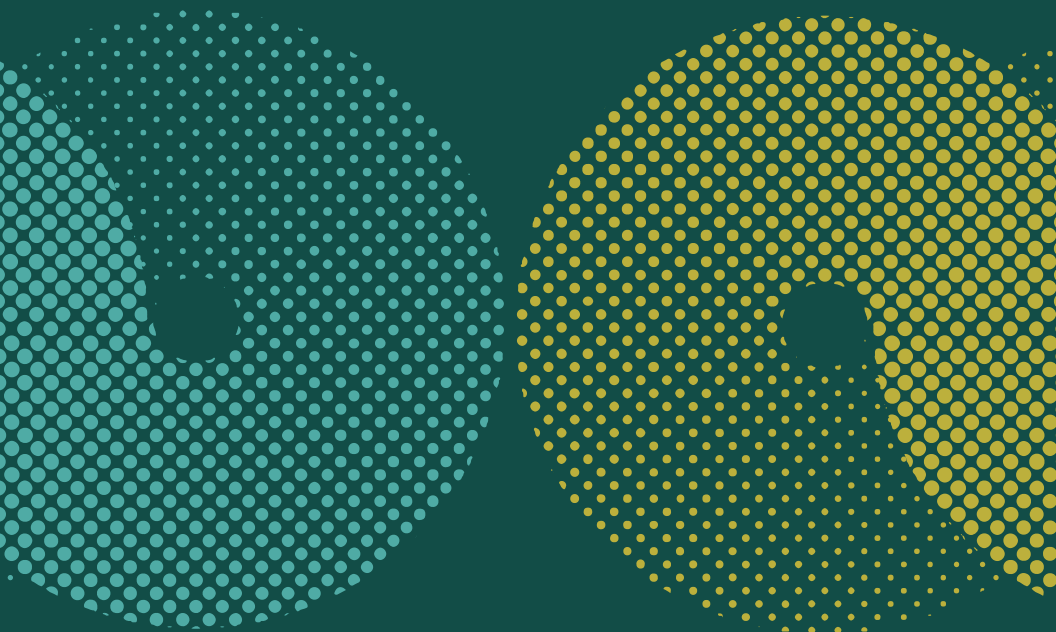




VITAL VOICES
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP



WOMEN AT THE HEART OF CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Stories, Strategies, and Solutions for Climate Resilience

About This Toolkit

This toolkit was created from Vital Voices' 2026 Climate Brief, Women-Led Climate Adaptation, which brings together research, recommendations, and case studies featuring women from the Vital Voices Global Network. The full brief offers a deeper look at the research and policy frameworks behind the solutions highlighted in this toolkit.

What makes this toolkit unique is that it is grounded in the lived experiences of women leaders from the Vital Voices Global Network. Through real-world case studies and firsthand perspectives, it showcases how women across regions are responding to climate challenges with innovative, locally driven solutions that strengthen community resilience.

Designed to show both why this work matters and how communities are already leading effective responses to climate change, the toolkit also provides practical actions readers can take to support and advance gender-responsive climate adaptation.

As you explore the stories and solutions included here, we encourage you to recognize and credit the women and communities whose leadership, expertise, and lived experience are driving this work forward. For additional case studies, research, and policy recommendations, explore the full 2026 Climate Brief, Women-Led Climate Adaptation.

About Vital Voices

We partner with women leaders who unite and inspire communities around the world. Through our global network, these leaders mentor the next generation and share their knowledge, experience, and influence to create lasting impact.

We believe that investing in one woman leader has a ripple effect that reaches thousands more. These leaders are not only driving change in their own communities, but also building pathways for others to follow.

Sustained change requires long-term commitment. We work alongside women leaders over many years, providing technical support, visibility, and partnerships to help them strengthen their leadership and continue advancing progress in their communities.



Valdelice Veron, Vital Voices 2022 Global Leadership Award Honoree

Women Are Leading Climate Resilience

Women are leading some of the most effective climate adaptation efforts around the world. Their work strengthens community resilience by advancing food security, protecting natural resources, and preparing communities for climate-related disasters.

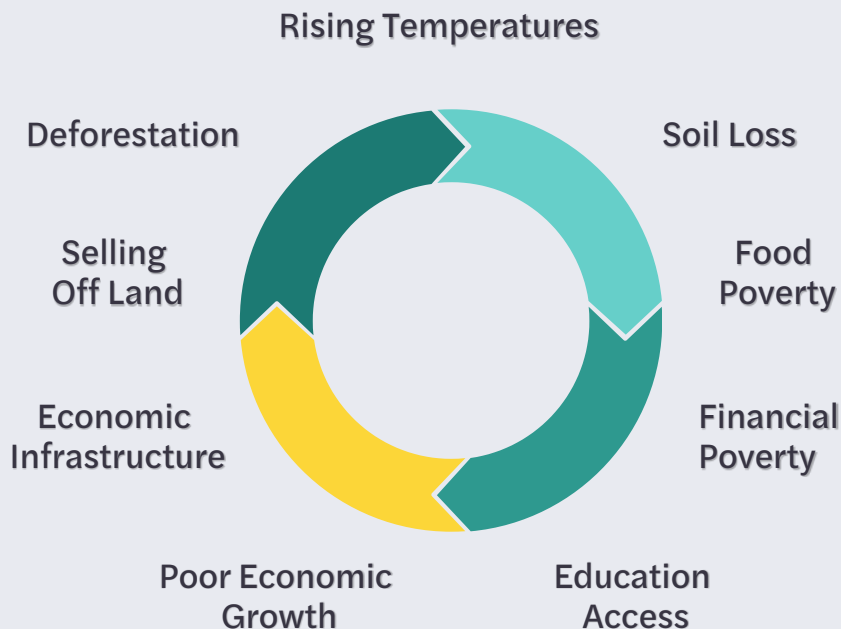
Yet Indigenous and rural women often face some of the most severe impacts of climate change while having limited access to funding, resources, and decision-making spaces. Closing this gap requires climate solutions that are gender-responsive, locally led, and grounded in human rights.

Investing in women-led climate adaptation strengthens entire communities, advances more equitable climate governance, and supports practical solutions for a changing climate.

This toolkit draws on the expertise and lived experiences of Vital Voices Network members in 40 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, and Oceania, offering a global perspective on how women are leading climate resilience in their communities.

Climate Change as an Interconnected System

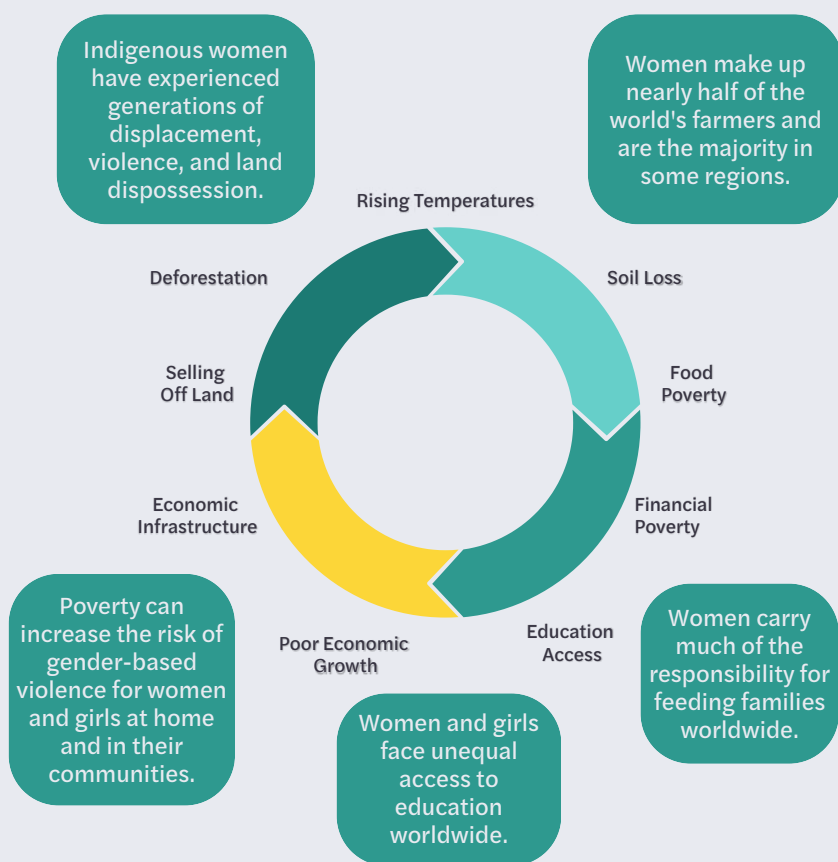
A helpful way to understand climate change is to view it as a system. Rather than seeing rising temperatures, deforestation, food insecurity, and pollution as separate issues, it is important to recognize how they are interconnected. This perspective reveals that climate change is not only an environmental challenge, but also a system of injustice that is closely linked to other social and economic inequalities.



Gendered Climate Impacts

Patriarchy is a system in which power and resources are often unequally distributed, limiting women's access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making. Climate change is closely connected to these inequalities, which can increase women's vulnerability to climate impacts.

Women often face barriers to education, economic opportunity, and leadership, yet they continue to lead innovative climate solutions in their communities. Addressing gender inequality is essential to building a more equitable and resilient future.



Recommendations for Advancing Women-Led Climate Adaptation

Explore the full 2026 Climate Brief, Women-Led Climate Adaptation, for additional recommendations, research, and case studies.

Strengthen Women's Leadership in Climate Governance

- Recognize women as leaders and agents of change in climate adaptation.
 - Ensure women's meaningful participation in climate decision-making and governance.
 - Integrate women-led adaptation across climate planning, policy, and implementation.
-

Remove Structural Barriers to Resilience

- Secure women's rights to land, water, and natural resources.
 - Invest in care infrastructure and essential services that enable women's participation in climate action.
 - Incorporate women's health, safety, and well-being into adaptation planning.
-

Increase Access to Climate Finance

- Expand access to funding, technology, and climate information for women-led initiatives.
- Establish dedicated financing mechanisms for women-led adaptation efforts.
- Align climate finance investments with gender-responsive adaptation goals.

Invest in Knowledge, Data, and Accountability

- Strengthen gender-responsive data collection and monitoring systems.
- Incorporate Indigenous, traditional, and local knowledge into adaptation planning.
- Build accountability mechanisms that measure progress and outcomes for women.

Advance Social Change and Inclusive Leadership

- Expand opportunities for women in climate-resilient livelihoods and green jobs.
 - Address harmful gender norms that limit participation and leadership.
 - Support women knowledge-keepers and cultural leaders who strengthen community resilience.
-



Case Study: Vital Voices Network Member Perspective

Ustawi Afrika, founded by Doreen Irungu, is a community-based organization working with women farmers in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands, including Kitui, Makueni, and Kajiado counties. The organization supports women as primary food producers and land stewards, strengthening climate-resilient food systems, nutrition, and sustainable livelihoods.

In these regions, climate change is driving severe and recurring challenges, including drought, erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, and soil degradation. These impacts have led to repeated crop failure, livestock losses, and declining soil fertility. Women-headed households are particularly affected, as women carry primary responsibility for food production and household nutrition while often having fewer resources to respond to climate shocks.

In response, women farmers supported by Ustawi Afrika are leading practical adaptation strategies. These include saving and using indigenous drought-resistant seeds, diversifying crops, restoring soil through composting and mulching, and improving water access through zai pits and sand dams, as well as adopting agroforestry and regenerative farming practices.

"WOMEN FARMERS ARE ALREADY LEADING CLIMATE ADAPTATION ON THE GROUND, BUT THEIR SOLUTIONS NEED INVESTMENT, RECOGNITION, AND SCALE TO REACH THEIR FULL IMPACT."



Ustawi Afrika's work is strengthened by long-term community trust, women-led farmer groups, partnerships with local governments and financial institutions, and access to small, flexible financing. However, barriers remain, including insecure land rights, limited access to finance, heavy unpaid care burdens, and exclusion from decision-making spaces.

This locally led approach demonstrates how women's leadership in agriculture strengthens both climate resilience and household food security. It also highlights the importance of investing directly in women-led initiatives to scale effective, community-based climate adaptation.

Explore the full 2026 Climate Brief, Women-Led Climate Adaptation, for additional case studies featuring:

- Namuwonge Zaitun (Uganda)
- Nicole Joseph-Chin (Caribbean)
- Habiba Ali (Northern Nigeria)
- Joana Bacallo (Philippines and Pakistan)
- Samantha Deane (Argentina and coastal Namibia)



Closing gender gaps in farm productivity and food systems could increase global GDP by nearly \$1 trillion and reduce the number of food-insecure people by 45 million, according to a 2023 FAO report.

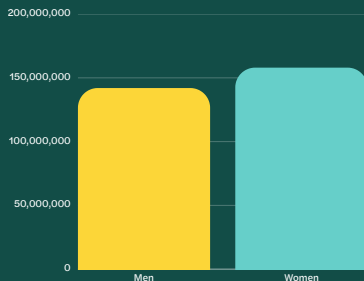
Climate Inequality

UN WOMEN SUGGESTS THAT BY 2050, CLIMATE CHANGE MAY FORCE 236 MILLION WOMEN AND GIRLS TO FACE FOOD INSECURITY

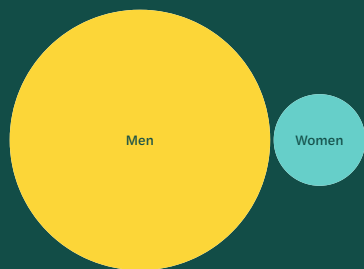
Climate change impacts are not evenly distributed. Those who are most affected are often those who contribute least to the problem, including women, especially Indigenous, low-income, and women of color. As key actors in food production and agriculture, women are often the first to experience the effects of soil degradation, food insecurity, and climate-related economic loss.

These impacts are intensified by existing inequalities. Climate change can deepen poverty, increase food insecurity, and heighten exposure to gender-based violence, while also limiting access to resources and support systems.

Despite this disproportionate burden, women remain underrepresented in climate decision-making at all levels. Strengthening their participation is essential to more equitable and effective climate action.



Roughly 158 million women and girls in the Global South are pushed into poverty as a result of climate change, exceeding the number of affected men and boys by 16 million.



In December 2023, only 15 of 133 world leaders at COP28, the United Nations climate conference, were women, representing less than 11 percent of participants.

A Message from Alyse Nelson

For more than two decades, Vital Voices has worked alongside women leaders who refuse to wait for permission to solve the problems in front of them. Nowhere is that spirit more visible than in the fight against climate change.

Women are not simply among the most affected by climate change — they are among the most effective at responding to it. Across our global network: Namuwonge Zaitun protects Uganda's rivers and groundwater while opening doors for women in environmental decision-making. Doreen Irungu helps Kenyan farmers revive indigenous seeds and regenerate soil so families can eat through drought. Joana Bacallo redesigns water systems in the Philippines and Pakistan so girls stay in school instead of walking miles for water. Samantha Deane defends forests in Argentina and kelp beds in Namibia. Nicole Joseph-Chin builds an "infrastructure of care" across the Caribbean for post-hurricane recovery. Habiba Ali powers women's businesses in northern Nigeria with clean energy, turning resilience into economic independence.

None of these women set out to become climate experts — they became leaders because their communities needed them to be. That is the story of women-led adaptation everywhere: leadership born of necessity, sustained by generational knowledge, and too often overlooked by the institutions that could scale it.

This brief shows that the legal architecture already exists — CEDAW, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework all support women's leadership in adaptation. What's missing isn't the mandate. It's the investment, access, and recognition to grow these solutions into systemic change.

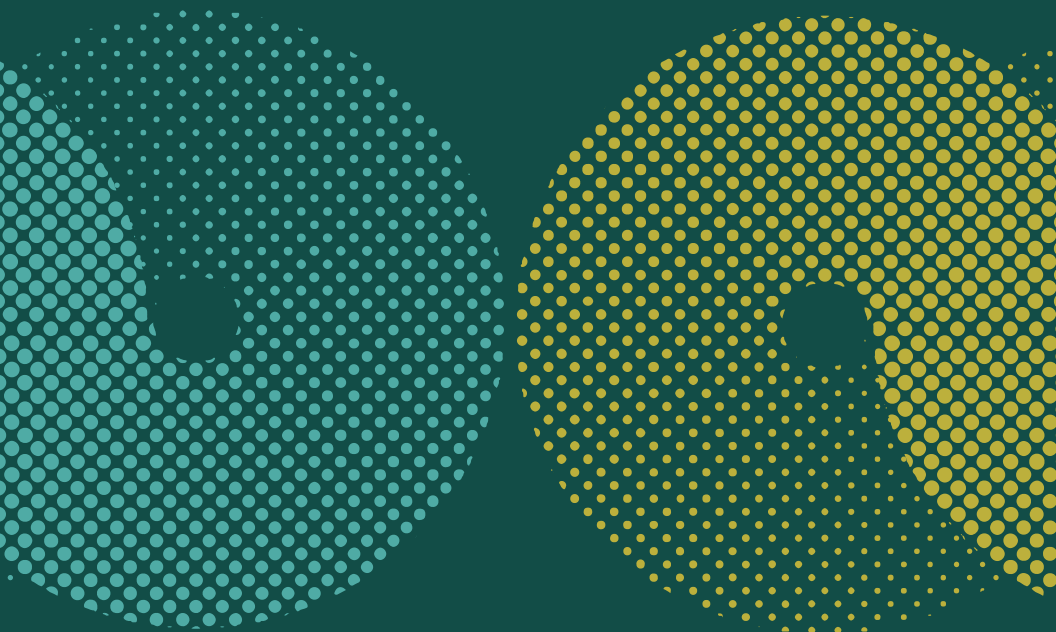
Closing this gap is not charity — it's strategy. When women lead, resilience follows: communities recover faster, resources are managed more sustainably, peace holds longer, corruption falls. A world serious about adapting to a warming planet must be equally serious about investing in the women already doing that work.

We lift up the leaders in this brief, and the many more like them, not as a call for future action alone — but as a record of what's already possible when women have the resources, rights, and recognition to lead.

Alyse Nelson
President & CEO, Vital Voices Global Partnership

Read More

Explore the full climate brief for a deeper look at the intersection of gender, climate adaptation, and human rights. Discover additional case studies featuring Vital Voices Network members, expanded analysis across key adaptation sectors, and a more comprehensive review of international policy frameworks and recommendations.



VITAL VOICES
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP