



WOMEN, NATURE, AND THE PATH OF CHANGE

When Women Lead in the Age of Climate Crisis

Field Experience of the EmPower II Program Women Research Institute Consortium



WOMEN, NATURE, AND THE PATH OF CHANGE
When Women Lead in the Age of Climate Crisis

Field Experience of the EmPower II Program
 Women Research Institute Consortium

2026

Acknowledgments

This book begins with voices that are seldom heard. The voices of women who walk farther each day to find clean water, who carry the burden of the climate crisis in their bodies and living spaces, and who have found ways to endure, to care, and to lead change. The stories of Warih in Dasan Geria, Matildis in Manggarai Barat, Monika in Lalong, and the many other women whose lives fill these pages remind us that knowledge about the climate crisis is not born solely in meeting rooms or policy documents. It grows from lived experience, carried with courage and persistence.

Women, Nature, and the Path of Change: When Women Lead in the Age of Climate Crisis is a collective undertaking to move the experiences and narratives of women from the margins to the center. It is not merely a program report, but a shared space in which to record, honor, and acknowledge women's leadership in responding to the climate crisis. This is a leadership that emerges quietly, without fanfare, yet leaves a real and lasting impact on communities and the environment around it.

Women Research Institute (WRI) extends its deepest gratitude to UN Women for the partnership that made the implementation of the EmPower II Program in Indonesia possible. This partnership opened an important space for the experiences of women at the grassroots level to be heard, recognized, and connected to broader policy processes. We also express our appreciation to the Governments of Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, and Switzerland for their resource support, which ensured that women's leadership practices in climate action could not only take place, but be documented and studied together through this book.

We wish to thank all members of the Women Research Institute Consortium: Gema Alam in West Nusa Tenggara, the Yayasan Komodo Indonesia Lestari (Yakines) in East Nusa Tenggara, and the Aceh Climate Change Initiative at Universitas Syiah Kuala in Aceh. The patient, committed, and contextually sensitive accompaniment they provided enabled women in supported communities to transform their lived experiences into knowledge, collective action, and meaningful leadership. The gender-responsive databases developed, the learning spaces opened, and the adaptation and mitigation practices nurtured together form an essential foundation for more just and equitable change.

We also thank the regional governments, village officials, and stakeholders in the communities supported by the EmPower II Program for opening spaces for dialogue and collaboration. Our deepest gratitude, however, goes to the women and village communities who generously shared their stories, their time, and their knowledge. Without the courage to speak and to share their experiences, this book would never have come into being.

We offer this book as a tribute to the women who, every day, tend to life in the midst of the climate crisis. May these pages be read not merely as a report or a study, but felt as a reminder that the path of change is being—and has been—opened by women.

Women Research Institute January 2026

Table of Content

Acknowledgments	3
About the Women Research Institute Consortium	6
List of Abbreviations	8
Introduction	10
Women and Climate Change: The Case for Urgency in RAN-GPI Implementation.....	
Departing from Field Experience: Women, Nature, and the Path of Change.....	11
Unveiling the Narrative of Women’s Leadership in Overcoming the Climate Crisis	13
Solutions to Climate Change Impacts Part 1: Water Scarcity and Declining Water Quality	
Providing Water through Boreholes and Solar-Powered Water Pumps.....	17
Spring Conservation	20
Solutions to Climate Change Impacts Part 2: Waste Management and Declining Food	
Production	23
Transforming Waste and Organic Matter into Organic Fertilizer	23
Community Seed Banks in Lalong and Golo Lewe Villages.....	28
Solutions to Climate Change Impacts Part 3: Declining Economic Resources	31
Strengthening Economic Capacity through Palm Sugar Production.....	31
Collective Savings and Loan Enterprise (UBSP): Strengthening the Collective Economy	32
Reflection: Women’s Leadership in Climate Action.....	34
Reading Climate Change Impacts through Gender-Responsive Baseline Data: Lessons	
from Aceh	36
Why Gender-Responsive Baseline Data Matters.....	36
Key Findings from the Baseline Data.....	38
What Can Be Done with Baseline Data	40
This Data is Not an End, but a Starting Point for Change.....	41
From Field Experience to Policy Dialogue.....	42
The Importance of the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI)	44
A Sociological Review of Women and Climate Change.....	44
Structural Inequality.....	44
Socioeconomic Impacts	44
Multidimensional Vulnerability	45
Extreme Heat as a New Social Risk.....	46
Women as Agents of Change	46
Addressing RAN-GPI Challenges: From Institutional Frameworks to Legal Certainty.....	47
RAN-GPI Challenges at the Policy and Institutional Level.....	47
RAN-GPI Challenges in Knowledge, Data, and Culture.....	48

Strengthening the Regulatory Framework: From Policy to Legal Certainty.....	48
Gender-Responsive Funding Support and Governance.....	49
Social Capital and International Commitments as Reinforcing Forces.....	49
Good Practices from Other Countries	50
The MEL Framework for the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change.....	51
Behind Every Statistic Is a Human Reality.....	51
RAN-GPI: An Opportunity for Transformative Change	52
Greater Scale Brings Greater Complexity.....	52
Data dan Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL).....	53
Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) for the RAN-GPI.....	53
Impact Domains and RAN-GPI Sectors.....	54
Reflections from the National Forum: The Importance of Economic Transformation,	56
Collaboration, and Financing Systems for Climate Justice	68
Closing	

About the Women Research Institute Consortium

The EmPower II Program is implemented through the Women Research Institute Consortium, a collaboration among a research organization, civil society organizations, and an academic institution with extensive experience in the fields of gender, environment, and social justice. The Consortium was built on the understanding that the climate crisis cannot be addressed in a sectoral manner; it demands an interdisciplinary and cross-regional approach that places women as central agents of change.

As Lead Consortium, Women Research Institute (WRI) is responsible for designing the program's conceptual framework, coordinating implementation across regions, and linking field-level experience to policy advocacy at the national level. WRI ensures that research, community accompaniment, and policy dialogue proceed in an integrated manner, so that the experiences of women at the grassroots can serve as both a knowledge base and the foundation for policy recommendations, including the strengthening of the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI).

At the local level, Gema Alam NTB supports women's groups in West Nusa Tenggara, particularly in West Lombok, Central Lombok, and East Lombok, in responding to the impacts of climate change through community-based water,

waste, food, and energy management. Gema Alam's extensive background in environmental work ensures that program interventions are firmly grounded in local socio-ecological contexts and promotes the growth of women's leadership at the village level.

In East Nusa Tenggara, Yakines supports women's groups in Manggarai Barat in culturally grounded climate adaptation practices based on local knowledge. Through spring conservation, the strengthening of local food systems, waste management, and collective economic activities, Yakines reinforces women's work as the foundation of community resilience and ecological sustainability.

From Aceh, the Aceh Climate Change Initiative (ACCI) at Universitas Syiah Kuala contributes through the development of gender-responsive climate change baseline data. ACCI's research approach deepens the understanding of women's vulnerabilities, capacities, and experiences in facing the climate crisis, while strengthening the analytical foundation for policy formulation and the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework.

Through this consortium, the EmPower II Program seeks to ensure that women's leadership in climate action is not only documented as good

practice, but recognized as knowledge and an essential foundation for more just and sustainable policy change.

About EmPower II

EmPower II (EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies – Phase II) is a partnership program of UN Women and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) that accelerates gender-responsive, human rights-based climate action across the Asia-Pacific region. The program begins from the reality that the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and disaster are not felt equally: women and marginalized groups often have lower access to information, resources, financing, and technology, making it harder for them to adapt and recover from crises.

EmPower was launched in 2018 and entered its second phase in 2023, with an expanded scope that includes Indonesia and the Philippines, supported by the Governments of Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, and Switzerland.

In Indonesia, EmPower II undertakes a range of interventions grounded in an understanding of climate vulnerability. Indonesia is among the countries most affected by extreme weather events; it faces a projected increase in average annual temperature of between 0.8°C and 1.4°C by around 2050; and as an archipelago nation, it is vulnerable to rising sea levels and has experienced

a growing number of disaster events. In addition, while women play a vital role in daily energy use, they remain significantly underrepresented in policy-making processes related to the energy and natural resources sectors.

Strategically, EmPower II promotes change through three outcomes:

Outcome 1: Stakeholders across the Asia-Pacific region strengthen their actions for gender-responsive climate adaptation and mitigation.

Outcome 2: Women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups are represented as key environmental actors in climate and disaster risk reduction decision-making.

Outcome 3: Women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups in the Asia-Pacific region engage in climate-resilient livelihoods.

List of Abbreviations

BPS

Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik)

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CSO

Civil Society Organization

EM4

Effective Microorganisms 4

ENDCs

Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FGD

Focus Group Discussion

GBV

GBV — Gender-Based Violence (KBG: Kekerasan Berbasis Gender)

KEHATI

Indonesian Biodiversity Foundation

KLHK

Ministry of Environment and Forestry

KPPPA

Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection

LWPG

Lima Work Programme on Gender (UNFCCC)

MEL

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

MHA

Indigenous Law Community (Masyarakat Hukum Adat)

Musrenbangdes

Village Development Planning Deliberation

NEK

Economic Value of Carbon

NPK

Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium

NTB

West Nusa Tenggara

NTT

East Nusa Tenggara

PLTU

Steam Power Plant

POC

Liquid Organic Fertilizer (Pupuk Organik Cair)

QuIP

Qualitative Impact Protocol

RAD-GPI

Regional Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change

RAN-GPI

National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change

REDD+

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

SDGs

Sustainable Development Goals
(Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan)

SKB

Joint Ministerial Decree (Surat Keputusan Bersama)

TPA

Final Waste Disposal Site

TPPO

Human Trafficking (Tindak Pidana Perdagangan Orang)

UBSP

Collective Savings and Loan Enterprise (Usaha Bersama Simpan Pinjam)

UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

UNFCCC

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNFPA

United Nations Population Fund

UN Women

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

WRI

Women Research Institute

Introduction

The impacts of climate change are not gender-neutral. Women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and people living in poverty are among the most vulnerable. UNDP (2010) documented that women and children face a risk of death up to 14 times higher than men in climate-related disaster situations. This is further compounded by patriarchal social structures: women's access to land remains below 20 percent, even as they contribute nearly 40 percent of labor in the agricultural sector (FAO, 2021; KPPPA & KLHK, 2024).

Climate change also carries implications for rising gender-based violence (GBV). A study by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA), UNFPA, and UN Women (2023) found that 80 percent of those displaced by extreme weather events and climate change are women, who face heightened exposure to sexual exploitation and human trafficking in displacement settings. Records from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan, 2020–2024) documented 58 cases of violence against women environmental defenders in areas affected by agrarian conflict, mining, and coastal degradation (WRI & LBH APIK, 2025).

In response to this complexity, the Government of Indonesia launched the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI) 2024–

2030 in March 2024. The RAN-GPI represents Indonesia's follow-through on its commitments under the UNFCCC's Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG), and places gender as a strategic issue across the sectors of health, food, clean water, disaster response, and energy transition (KPPPA & KLHK, 2024). However, the RAN-GPI currently carries only the status of a coordinative policy document. The absence of binding regulation has meant that implementation remains inconsistent across ministries, institutions, and regional governments.

Women and Climate Change: The Case for Urgency in RAN-GPI Implementation

At the community level, women face layered impacts arising from their social roles, domestic responsibilities, and limited access to resources and decision-making. These impacts are plainly visible in the daily lives of women, from the household to the public sphere.

Climate-driven water and food crises have increased women's burden, because they are the ones presumed responsible for meeting the family's basic needs. Women must work longer and harder to secure clean water, food, and healthcare for family members. At the same time, women's economic vulnerability deepens, particularly for those who depend on agriculture, small-scale fisheries, and natural resource-based

livelihoods that are highly sensitive to extreme weather and crop failure.

Climate change also amplifies health risks, particularly for women, pregnant women, and children. Poor water quality, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to nutritious food increase the risk of disease and malnutrition. In crisis and disaster situations, women face heightened risks of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual violence, which are often invisible within disaster response systems.

Despite bearing the heaviest burdens, women frequently encounter limited access to and voice in decision-making on climate policy, energy, and natural resource management. Women's perspectives and experiences have not been fully recognized as the basis for climate planning and budgeting. Moreover, women who serve as environmental defenders face risks of intimidation, criminalization, and social pressure when they advocate for their right to a healthy environment.

Departing from Field Experience: Women, Nature, and the Path of Change

For many women, climate change does not arrive as an abstract concept. It arrives as water that must be fetched from ever-greater distances, land that grows harder to cultivate, seasons that can no longer be predicted, and the weight of care work that grows heavier with each passing year, often without recognition, protection, or any seat at the decision-making table. In domestic spaces, in fields, along coastlines, and in forests,

women are frequently the first to feel the effects of the climate crisis, and the last to be released from adapting to it.

Yet behind this vulnerability lies a strength that too often escapes notice: women's leadership, rooted in lived experience, local knowledge, and collective work at the community level. *Women, Nature, and the Path of Change: When Women Lead in the Age of Climate Crisis* was assembled to record, celebrate, and open space for reflection on how women's leadership takes shape and grows in the face of the climate crisis. It documents the field experience of the EmPower II Program, implemented by UN Women and UNEP in collaboration with the Women Research Institute Consortium together with its local partners, Gema Alam in West Nusa Tenggara, Yakines in East Nusa Tenggara, and the Aceh Climate Change Initiative at Universitas Syiah Kuala in Aceh, over the period 2024–2026, with support from the Governments of Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, and Switzerland.

We present here not only stories, but interconnected knowledge and reflection, inviting readers to trace how concrete experiences at the local level are intertwined with the national policy framework, and how women's voices can—and should—become an integral part of just and sustainable climate governance.

The Field Experience section presents real stories from the communities in which the EmPower II Program worked. Here, readers are invited to see how women navigate layered ecological pressures while stepping into the role of change-makers: managing natural resources more

sustainably, building community solidarity, and negotiating space for leadership within social norms that do not always favor them.

To provide broader context, the book is supplemented by Gender and Climate Change Baseline Data. This section offers an initial picture of gender gaps, vulnerabilities, and women's capacities in the context of the climate crisis, as an analytical foundation for understanding why gender-responsive interventions are not merely a choice, but a necessity.

The book then summarizes a series of Roundtable Discussions that brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss the National Regulatory Framework on Gender and Climate Change. These discussions served as an important space in which to connect field experience with policy, to identify implementation challenges, and to open cross-sectoral dialogue about the respective roles of the state, civil society, and communities in advancing an inclusive climate justice agenda.

As a closing reflection and a call to action, the book presents a proposed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the implementation of the national gender and climate change regulation. This framework is designed to ensure that policy commitments do not remain on paper alone, but can be genuinely monitored, measured, and held accountable, with women and vulnerable groups placed at the center of change.

Through this combination of stories, data, policy dialogue, and a proposed framework, this book aspires to be a space for both reflection and inspiration, affirming that in the midst of an increasingly complex climate crisis, the path of change can—and is being—opened by women. From the community level to national policy, from daily lived experience to the structural agenda, women's leadership is not only possible; it is essential to a more just and sustainable future.

Women's Leadership in Climate Justice

1. Frontline Actors, Decision-Making, and Opportunities

Addressing climate change is extraordinarily complex. It is a problem that does not impact all groups equally. Climate change reveals and exacerbates pre-existing social tensions and pressures, making already vulnerable communities more vulnerable still. This is precisely why addressing climate change requires decisions that are driven by the experiences of those most affected: vulnerable communities and frontline actors.

Yet this is far from standard practice. Decisions are often made without consultation with those most impacted. And in instances where vulnerable groups are invited to voice their views or to occupy seats in decision-making spaces, their presence is frequently treated as ceremonial. Vulnerable groups and frontline actors such as women are also often systematically prevented from joining decision-making processes. Some community meetings are held late at night, during hours that certain communities consider inappropriate for women to be outside the home. Holding community meetings late at night also adds to the burden of women, who are typically expected to wake earliest to attend to household care duties.

Climate change lays bare the socioeconomic

pressures placed upon women; these can no longer be ignored. Climate justice demands decision-making that centers the experiences and voices of vulnerable groups and frontline actors. This has become common knowledge among those working on climate change, and within it lies an opportunity for women and other vulnerable groups to step into the critical moment now unfolding.

Women's Unique Position

Women represent both frontline actors and a vulnerable group. Indonesian society has broadly placed women as those responsible for all matters relating to life and domestic affairs. This means women are accountable for the health and wellbeing of the entire family unit. The tasks of collecting water, shopping for basic necessities, and caring for family members in need place women in the position of being—and becoming—the first to know when the negative effects of climate change arrive. Rising food prices and the costs of daily needs, rising prices and the scarcity of subsidized LPG and clean water, and declining family health are just a few examples of what women notice first.

Though most of the work that women do for their families and communities goes unnoticed and unpaid, the position women occupy offers a unique perspective. A perspective that, if

ignored in decision-making processes, will yield no transformative change at all. Women are the broadest category when speaking of intersectionality. The position of women is the intersection of multiple lines encompassing the full range of socioeconomic pressures that climate change places on a community.

Trickle-Up Disruption

Addressing climate change without explicit attention to justice will produce no genuine change. What will occur instead is a slow degradation, both of the earth we inhabit and the society we are building. Women's experience offers a kind of socioeconomic "litmus test" for those willing to listen. Rather than the trickle-down economics of the Reagan era, women's experience points to a real phenomenon of trickle-up disruption.

As an example: the more time and energy that rural women must devote to caring for ill family members, fetching water from distant sources, and coordinating relief efforts in the wake of hydrological climate events such as floods and landslides, the less time they have to contribute to income-generating activities, including helping on the family farm. If this continues, harvests will deteriorate and decline. If this occurs across a wide enough area, national-level decision-makers in Jakarta will find that food prices in the capital begin to rise sharply.

Investing in women's capacities, time, and energy is a foundational pillar in the pursuit of socioeconomic stability in Indonesia. Even when

decision-makers do not fully support and involve women as key actors in combating climate change, women continue to find alternative ways to advocate for themselves and their communities in the face of uncertainty.

The Dilemma

The burden that society places on women's shoulders is not merely additive; it is multiplicative. They are water collectors, food preparers, care workers, farm laborers, health caretakers, and much more, even before being asked now to serve as leaders and decision-makers. Simply telling women to lead and to make decisions is not a form of justice. For women to be effective decision-makers, they must have the time, the energy, and the capacity to do so.

If space is created for women to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes, they must also possess the capacity to contribute. We are now advocating for women to lead the response to climate change; yet women are often overlooked and excluded from educational and capacity-building opportunities. Women possess the knowledge to fight climate change by virtue of their lived experience; but they may not yet know how to use that knowledge effectively and to translate it into concrete action.

This is the dilemma. We want women's leadership because decisions should be made by centering the experiences of those most affected; yet we must also provide the space that these women need in order to lead. Providing space means not

only including women in decision-making forums, but equipping them with the tools necessary to contribute meaningfully without adding further burdens to their lives.

Investing in Women

Climate justice without women's leadership will end like a house built on a weak foundation: it will collapse. Climate change has progressed to a point at which it demands transformative change, not incremental repairs.

Transformative change begins with Women's Leadership. The first change must occur in how we view women in climate action. We need to invest in women so that they have the capacity, time, energy, and space to contribute meaningfully.

Unveiling the Narrative of Women's Leadership in Overcoming the Climate Crisis

In many regions, women are the group that first senses climate change, not because they are more vulnerable, but because they are the closest to the sources of life.

Yet for many years, these experiences were not positioned as knowledge. They remained personal stories, regarded as domestic matters, rarely entering village development planning. And yet those everyday experiences were documenting, in concrete terms, the impact of climate change on the depletion of resources and the declining quality of life. Stories such as water causing skin irritation, the heavy weight of buckets and jerry cans that must be carried further each day as water sources recede, the difficulty of obtaining clean water for family and livestock consumption, and palm sugar sap that sours more quickly than it used to, all reflect real environmental change.

These impacts do not merely generate waste problems and declining food production; they ultimately lead to a reduction or outright loss of

household income. Over the long term, these conditions affect health, particularly for pregnant women and children, from declining quality of pregnancy and childbirth to increased risks of stunting. Despite all of this, women's experience and knowledge of climate change and its layered impacts are frequently dismissed in decision-making processes and development planning.

This writing departs from an effort to demonstrate how women transform daily lived experience into a narrative of women's knowledge and the foundation of their leadership in adapting to and mitigating the climate change impacts they face.

The women's group initiative in Pandan Indah Village, Central Lombok, to provide access to clean water through renewable energy-based solutions as a form of climate change adaptation. (Photo: Gema Alam)



Solutions to Climate Change Impacts Part 1: Water Scarcity and Declining Water Quality

Water is an essential resource for life. It determines family health, regulates the rhythm of domestic work, and sustains livelihoods. But climate change, combined with landscape transformation and large-scale development, can fundamentally alter a community's relationship with water. Climate change can also make rainfall unpredictable, causing water scarcity during prolonged dry seasons as spring discharge diminishes, or even flash flooding when rainfall is so intense that the excess water cannot be channeled.

In the supported villages of West Nusa Tenggara

and East Nusa Tenggara, during extended dry seasons water does not disappear entirely; it is still present, but its quality deteriorates, its availability becomes unreliable, or it becomes difficult for communities to access. This situation has driven women not only to adapt in their daily lives, but to gradually build collective awareness and capacity to address water as a shared concern requiring collective solutions and village-level decision-making.

Providing Water through Boreholes and Solar-Powered Water Pumps

In Dasan Geria Village, West Lombok, water still flows, but its color and quality have changed since a river was diverted due to upstream construction. Cloudy water is still used for bathing and washing because there is no alternative. Women in the

village must filter water repeatedly, clean storage tanks more frequently, and ensure that family health is maintained. For years, this experience was never discussed in village forums. Water provision was understood as a technical matter, not as a fundamental necessity of life.



Mama Regina is preparing to plant water source conservation trees in Golo Lewe. Every small action by women creates a big impact for the environment. (Doc. Yakines)

From Embodied Experience to Women's Leadership in Village Water Governance.



Warah Astuti directly experiences the daily impacts of the water crisis. From this emerges the role of women in managing and sustaining water resources within the community. (Photo: Gema Alam)

With sadness, Warah Astuti explained: *'We still have to use murky water for bathing, washing, and cooking in the kitchen. We know it is not good for our health, and our children's growth and development are also affected.'*

The construction of the Meninting Dam altered the

upstream river flow, making clean water a scarce resource for residents of Geria Utara Hamlet, West Nusa Tenggara. The heaviest burden fell on women, including Warah, who had to filter the water repeatedly and reorganize the entire rhythm of domestic life.

This experience motivated Warah to become actively involved in the women's group supported by the EmPower Program. Through a process that included group formation, shared learning spaces, and participatory mapping of water quality changes, Warah and other women gained a safe space to share stories, transform daily experiences into knowledge, and connect them to the structural challenges of village-level development. In this process, water was no longer discussed merely as a technical issue, but as a matter of human dignity—demanding women's involvement in decision-making and community-based climate action.

Warah participated directly in mapping water sources and affected areas, in discussions with the village government, and in advocacy at the Village Development Planning Deliberation

(Musrenbangdes). She became one of the consistent women's voices advocating for clean water access on the basis of real experience. The outcome of this long process was the construction of a communal borehole now supplying clean water to dozens of homes in her village.

From a woman who had previously only "endured" the water crisis, Warah grew into a figure who ensures that women have a seat at the table in village water governance. This demonstrates that her leadership was born not from a formal title, but from the courage to turn bodily experience into the basis for decision-making.



The women's group held a meeting to formulate messages and proposals to be presented at the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes), ensuring that issues of water, renewable energy, and household food security are prioritized in village planning. (Photo: Gema Alam)

seasons. Women must walk nearly a kilometer carrying jerry cans and buckets from the remaining small river, or wait for water assistance that arrives unpredictably. Drought not only depletes natural resources; it also impoverishes women's time. Time that could be spent working in the fields, tending livestock, or engaging in other productive activities is consumed entirely by the search for water.

Change took hold when women in Dasan Geria Village began sharing their experiences and mapping the changes they had lived through. From informal gatherings at the hamlet level, women's experiences were gradually translated into collective knowledge. Participatory mapping of water sources and affected areas opened new space for women to speak in village planning processes, ultimately driving the construction of a communal borehole managed by the community together.

In Pandan Indah Village, Central Lombok, water disappears almost entirely during extended dry

In this situation, women in Pandan Indah began to re-read their environment through the accompaniment process of the EmPower Program. The sun, long associated with drought and suffering, was reframed as a source of energy potential. Through participatory mapping and facilitated group discussions, women were directly involved in planning the solar-powered water pump, from site selection to management and maintenance mechanisms. They were no longer merely water users; they became planners, supervisors, and custodians of the sustainability of the village water system as part of community-based climate adaptation.

In Dasan Geria and Pandan Indah, water became the entry point for women's leadership. From



Women, together with the community, take an active role in caring for the village spring—clearing reeds to ensure the water source remains protected for daily life." (Photo: Yakines)

experience previously pushed to the margins, women built legitimacy to be present, to speak, and to ensure that access to water was understood as a fundamental right, not merely a technical service.

Spring Conservation

For the people of Manggarai Barat, East Nusa Tenggara, springs hold profound spiritual significance and are honored through the tradition of *Luat Mata Wae*, a practice of protecting springs as a shared source of life. Caring for a spring is understood as a collective endeavor encompassing the protection of recharge areas, the planting of vegetation around water sources, the restriction of activities that could contaminate

or damage the spring, and the fair and sustainable management of water use by the community. Without active conservation of this kind, reduced rainfall caused by climate change raises the risk of drought and threatens the sustainability of water sources upon which village life depends.

Women are skilled in conducting regular observations of spring conditions and checking on flow rates. They note differences in water flow intensity compared to the previous three months, identify changes in water color, and detect signs of sediment shallowing the spring. Conservation activities begin with a thorough cleaning of the area surrounding the spring. Wild vegetation consisting of shrubs, weeds, and accumulated waste is cleared. Uncontrolled wild vegetation

can block water flow and accelerate the process of erosion.

Local knowledge is vital to the sustainability of natural resource management through tree planting and maintenance. Species that bind and filter water, including fig, *bancang*, *munting*, and areca palm, are planted in water catchment areas. Each month, group members conduct what is called "*pengokeran*," the Manggarai term for care that involves watering, clearing weeds from around roots, replacing dead trees, and ensuring that no animals cause damage.

Through the accompaniment of the EmPower Program, the spring conservation activities carried out by women's groups focus not only on technical aspects, but on strengthening women's leadership capacity and participation in natural resource governance. The processes of group formation, regular discussion, and accompaniment of conservation activities, including the protection of spring areas, vegetation planting, and the regulation of water use, have driven change at both the individual

and community levels. Women who previously lacked the confidence to speak in public forums now speak out in village meetings and lead spring management initiatives. In parallel, village heads and village officials have begun engaging women's groups as consultative partners before making decisions related to water and environmental management.

These changes have had a direct impact on daily life. Spring conservation and improved water management systems have brought clean water access closer and more reliable; some women report saving between one and two hours a day previously spent fetching water. That time can now be redirected toward productive activities, family care, or community participation. Witnessing these tangible benefits, a number of men in the village have begun participating in spring conservation activities, demonstrating that women's leadership in climate action can foster more inclusive and gender-equitable practices at the community level.

Hope That Grows Into Action

Ibu Matildis Samut leads the Tegi Momang women's group, rising as a pioneer of conservation in Lalong Village, West Manggarai District, East Nusa Tenggara.

"We women plant fig, banyan, bancang, and munting trees to bind the water of our mothers. We also plant

water-filtering trees such as areca palm, thorny pandanus, and taro around the springs and riverbanks. Every three months we perform Luat Mata Wae, the tradition of visiting the spring to check that the water still flows well. We women here can also protect our springs together." — Ibu Matildis Samut, leader of the Tegi Momang women's group, Lalong Village, West Manggarai



Amid the challenges of climate change, community members come together to protect springs—building hope for the sustainability of water sources for future generations. (Photo: WRI)

Although prolonged dry seasons often kill off young trees and reduce water flow, the spirit of the group remains undimmed. Ibu Matildis continues to remind her members:

“The effects may not be felt yet today, but this effort is a guarantee of clean water for our children and grandchildren.”

Women’s capacity to lead in facing the climate crisis is evident in their efforts to ensure clean water availability within the community. This capacity grows from the experience of daily life, from the courage to read environmental change, to share knowledge, and to organize collective action. Women’s participation in spring conservation not only strengthens the ecological

She consistently revives the collective spirit, making spring conservation a women’s movement in the village. Today, women’s voices are heard not only in the kitchen or in the fields, but also in the forest and along the river, as guardians of life for generations to come.

dimension; it also ensures the more equitable distribution of benefits for communities at the local level. Women are able to build sustainable water governance because they are the ones most affected by problems of water availability in everyday life.



Women in Rarang process organic waste and bioslurry into liquid and solid fertilizer, which is then used to support household food gardens. (Photo: Gema Alam)



Collaboration with the village government has become an important step in strengthening women’s initiatives in waste management and environmental sustainability. (Photo: Gema Alam)

Solutions to Climate Change Impacts Part 2: Waste Management and Declining Food Production

Waste is often regarded as a minor domestic concern. Yet waste is directly linked to environmental health, greenhouse gas emissions, and food security.



A participatory problem-mapping session under the EmPower Program: women from 11 hamlets identified waste issues and developed hamlet-based solutions. (Photo: Gema Alam)

Transforming Waste and Organic Matter into Organic Fertilizer

In Lantan Village, Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, the waste problem is felt most acutely in hamlets without access to waste collection services. Household waste accumulates, is burned, or is disposed of in rivers. Women must contend daily with the odors, the flies, and the associated health risks.

When women in Lantan Village began participating in mapping waste collection routes and hamlet-based waste disposal points, the entire village’s understanding of waste began to shift. Waste was no longer seen as a household matter, but as a collective challenge requiring a shared system.

In Rarang Village, East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, household waste mixed with livestock waste creates sanitation problems that directly affect women’s lives. Through learning and community organizing, women in Rarang

began converting livestock waste into biogas as a clean cooking energy source. This energy supports safer and more efficient household food processing while the biogas residue is used as organic fertilizer for household food gardens. This practice reduces workloads and household energy costs, cuts emissions, and improves the village's environmental health.

In Taman Ayu Village, West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, the community faces layered ecological pressures: livestock waste



The Equality Garden in Taman Ayu Village is collectively managed by women and the community, serving as a space for women to nurture plants, share knowledge, and meet common needs. (Photo: Gema Alam)

accumulating in the village, environmental pressure from large surrounding infrastructure including a steam power plant and a regional landfill, rising household energy costs, and a coastal area vulnerable to flooding and erosion. Livestock waste, previously a source of problems, is now collectively processed into biogas, while bioslurry (the nutrient-rich solid and liquid residue from biogas processing) is used as fertilizer for shared food gardens.



The communal biogas facility in Taman Ayu Village processes livestock waste into clean energy for shared community needs. (Photo: WRI)

In Lalong and Golo Lewu Villages, Manggarai Barat, East Nusa Tenggara, women have successfully addressed the waste problem by converting it into useful organic fertilizer. Through intensive accompaniment, women now produce six types of organic fertilizer and pesticide. They are capable of independently producing Bokashi

Fertilizer, EM4, Liquid Organic Fertilizer (POC), Organic KCl, Organic Fungicide, and Botanical Pesticide, using local materials such as straw, animal manure, wood ash, and medicinal plants. Production is carried out through a collective work ethic of mutual assistance, resulting in products that are equal to or better than commercially available alternatives.

Women possess local knowledge for utilizing rice bran, livestock manure, crop residues, wood ash, and other organic materials long considered waste. The separation of household waste, the processing of organic waste into fertilizer, and its use in household gardens connects environmental issues directly to family food security. Women are capable of transforming waste and local materials into high-quality organic fertilizer.

Learning and Growing Together: The Momang Koe Group

“For so long we depended on chemical fertilizers like Urea and NPK that were difficult to obtain and expensive. But limited water and increasing pest resistance became the main obstacles in cultivating rice and vegetables, and production declined dramatically as a result of climate change.” — Ibu Monika Lujum, Chair of the Momang Koe Group, Lalong Village, East Nusa Tenggara

Without giving up, Ibu Monika went from house to house inviting women to join the socialization effort. Her group now has 24 active women members who continue to develop organic farming together. She leads by concrete example, applying organic fertilizer and pesticides on her own land and demonstrating their effects firsthand.

After accompaniment, she is now able to produce organic fertilizer independently, up to 200 liters of liquid fertilizer and pesticide and 500 kg of bokashi per production run. Farming costs have fallen dramatically, from 2,775,000 rupiah to 600,000 rupiah per growing season, a saving of up to 78 percent.

“Now I no longer worry about chemical fertilizers. By producing our own organic fertilizer, farming costs have been reduced by up to 78 percent and the results are healthier for our family and the environment. EmPower has made us women brave enough to take part in climate action in our village.” — Ibu Monika Lujum



The Mandiri Farmers' Group produces organic fertilizer from local plants and livestock waste. Agricultural self-sufficiency begins with utilizing local resources—no longer relying on expensive chemical fertilizers. (Photo: Yakines)

The use of organic fertilizer produced by women's groups not only improves soil fertility and plant resistance to pests, but can also reduce farming costs by up to 60 percent, is environmentally friendly, and strengthens a resilient and sustainable agricultural system as part of women-led community climate action.

The practice of producing organic fertilizer also builds long-term resilience in agricultural systems against climate change through soil improvement, risk reduction, and farmers' ability to independently produce the agricultural inputs they need. This approach affirms women's leadership as an effective strategy for both food security and climate adaptation.

Through accompaniment in the production of organic fertilizers and pesticides, it has been demonstrated that women can become the primary drivers of climate action. With the right support, they not only master techniques, but also build networks, influence policy, and generate layered impact.

Village women are building the confidence to bring waste management issues to village forums and to influence the direction of planning. Through waste management, women are able to reduce agricultural management costs and increase agricultural production. Waste is no longer a problem; it has become an infrastructure for improving farming and for sustaining the energy, food, and health of the village.



Planting sorghum in Lalong Village—food diversification for resilience. Women lead the transformation from dependence on rice toward sustainable diversity in local food systems. (Photo: Yakines)

From Rice Dependence to Food Diversity

In the face of increasingly severe drought, Ibu Imakulata Jedia, Secretary of the Tani Mandiri Farmers' Group in Golo Lewe Village, East Nusa Tenggara, began returning to local foods that had been nearly forgotten. Through the accompaniment of the EmPower II Program, women in this village built an understanding of the risks of dependence on a single food commodity and the importance of local food security in the face of climate change.

“Before, my family was very dependent on rice.” — Ibu Imakulata Jedia

Through collective learning and homestead garden management, Ibu Imakulata developed a variety of local foods, including tubers, grains, and legumes, so that the family's diet became more diverse and adaptive. When the rice crop fails due to drought or flooding, the family still has food options. This change not only strengthens household food security, but also encourages women in the village to return to leading local food practices as part of community-based climate adaptation.



Women in Golo Lewe Village manage a local seed bank as an effort to safeguard food diversity and strengthen community resilience in the face of climate change. (Photo: WRI)

Community Seed Banks in Lalong and Golo Lewe Villages

Facing the threat of losing local varieties and increasing dependence on commercial seed, women's groups in several villages organized community seed storage systems. This system operates on a straightforward principle: members store a portion of their best harvested seeds in a traditional manner, and these seeds are available for borrowing by members who are short, with

the obligation of returning more after the next harvest.

Seed storage serves as more than a warehouse; it functions as an informal learning arena for testing the adaptation of varieties to climate change. Each growing season, members record the performance of the varieties they plant: how long a variety withstands drought, how well it performs when rainfall is below normal, and whether it is vulnerable to particular pests whose

populations are on the rise. This information is gathered and discussed at regular meetings, building a collective body of knowledge about the adaptive characteristics of each variety under changing climate conditions.

The establishment of individual seed granaries for ten local food varieties, including jumbang, leba, celok, wue, lusa, sela/jali-jali, mesak/sorghum, dewas, longa/sesame, and kundung, using traditional storage containers (teru, tatap, pengek, and roto), reflects a deep understanding of the importance of biodiversity and food sovereignty.

This system functions not only as a conservation mechanism but also as an economic buffer and a form of cultural preservation. Women who manage these seed granaries become guardians of genetic resources and traditional knowledge vital to climate adaptation.

When extreme drought strikes in a given year and many farmers lose all their seeds, the seed storage system becomes a safety net that prevents total dependence on external seed markets. Emergency seed distribution enables farmers to continue planting in the following season without having to purchase expensive commercial seed. The flexible repayment system, adjusted to actual harvest yields, ensures the sustainability of seed storage without burdening members who experience crop failure.

The challenge this seed bank still faces is limited infrastructure. Storage still relies on traditional granaries that are vulnerable to moisture conditions and pest infestation. Documentation of seed varieties is not yet systematically organized, relying on collective memory that could be lost if not formally recorded. Geographic access is also a barrier for more distant villages, limiting the scale of impact that can be achieved.

The Women's Food Forum: A Platform for Shared Learning

Women's groups in supported areas have established forums and learning practices that address, among other topics, food security and sustainable agriculture. These become vital spaces for sharing climate adaptation strategies.

In these forums, women not only discuss land and resource management practices, but also develop collective strategies. Knowledge exchange within the forum evolved from the mere sharing of experience into collective innovation. Women began experimenting with more flexible planting schedules, no longer following rigid traditional

patterns. Some tried planting earlier to avoid end-of-season drought; others planted later to make use of residual rainfall. Results were discussed, and successful strategies were adopted more widely. The spirit of "learning together, advancing together" became their guiding ethos.

In this process, women discovered new leadership spaces. No longer merely household managers, they became organic fertilizer producers, agricultural innovators, guardians of local crops and seeds, and decision-makers in farmers' groups. The forums also addressed agricultural productivity, including the expansion of individual members' vegetable production to meet market demand.

Solutions to Climate Change Impacts Part 3: Declining Economic Resources

Women face increasingly serious economic challenges. Climate change, bringing prolonged drought, unpredictable rainfall, and increasingly frequent crop failure, is worsening food insecurity and economic pressure on households. Against this backdrop, the cycle of customary ceremonies throughout the year in supported villages, including wedding ceremonies, funeral rites, and harvest rituals, adds an inescapable financial burden.

In this context, women who bear responsibility for providing food and ensuring family wellbeing

find themselves in a state of crisis. The climate crisis generates another crisis: the erosion of income sources as resources diminish due to drought, flooding, and crop failure.

Women need access to capital that is not only flexible, but that does not add to their economic vulnerability. Too often, women in search of capital are forced to borrow from moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates, further deepening their poverty and economic dependence. It is therefore essential to strengthen women's economic capacity, both through enterprises that generate income and by building collective economic strength.

Strengthening Economic Capacity through Palm Sugar Production

In Tetebatu Selatan Village, East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, women have long depended on the aren palm for their livelihoods. Changing weather conditions have caused palm sap to sour more quickly and production to decline, forcing many women to sell raw sap at lower prices.

Through collective reflection and mapping, women in Tetebatu Selatan began to reread the aren palm as more than an economic commodity. The aren came to be understood as a

conservation tree that protects water and soil, as well as an emblem of the village's food heritage and culture. The aren tree became a vehicle for reviving the collective memory of the relationship between women, food, and the environment.

From the domestic kitchen, this idea moved into the village's public sphere. Women began advocating for the preservation of aren palms and local food in village planning forums. The experience of processing palm sap became an argument for conservation, and women's economic activity was woven into a climate adaptation strategy grounded in culture.

Tending the Aren Palm, Tending the Village's Future



Women in South Tetebatu process palm sap (nira aren) through generations as a source of livelihood and a marker of the village's local food identity. (Photo: Gema Alam)

"The aren palm is part of our lives. For generations we have processed the sap into traditional sugar to support our family's economy. But climate change has slowly eroded our livelihoods here. The sap sours more quickly now, production has declined, and many women in our village are forced to sell raw sap at lower prices." — Huriati

Together with other women in Tetebatu Selatan, West Nusa Tenggara, Huriati formed a supported women's group in Keselet Aren hamlet. They did not only inventory the number of aren trees; they also opened discussions about climate vulnerability, sustainable management practices, and the future of the village. From the domestic kitchen, these ideas moved into the public sphere. The experience of processing sap became an argument for conservation and advocacy for local food.

Today, Huriati and other women speak confidently about the importance of preserving aren palms and local food in village forums. The aren has become the identity of an ecotourism village, a source of economic empowerment for women, and a culturally grounded climate adaptation strategy. Women have strengthened their economic positions through income from palm sugar enterprises. Their leadership grew from daily practice: tending food, preserving knowledge, and ensuring the continued vitality of village life.

Collective Savings and Loan Enterprise (UBSP): Strengthening the Collective Economy



The Mandiri Farmers' Group organized a UBSP meeting, demonstrating that women's economic empowerment begins with collective action and mutual support. (Photo: Yakines)

Women's groups supported in Lalong and Golo Lewe Villages, Manggarai Barat, East Nusa Tenggara, have developed a collective economic empowerment initiative through the Usaha Bersama Simpan Pinjam (UBSP), or Collective Savings and Loan Enterprise. This initiative creates a space in which women can support one another financially, strengthen economic independence, and improve their bargaining position in community life and decision-making.

The UBSP not only addresses the long-standing problem of limited capital access, but also strengthens women's solidarity and economic resilience in the face of economic pressures and climate change impacts.

The UBSP is an activity carried out by women's groups to collectively manage capital in order to improve household welfare. The activity aims to provide capital to group members who need

financing for the development of their individual green enterprises.

In the UBSP model implemented by women in these assisted villages, principal savings, mandatory savings, and voluntary savings are contributions made by members to form a collective fund that can be loaned to other members:

- **Principal Savings:** A one-time contribution paid when joining the group. Principal savings cannot be withdrawn as long as the member remains part of the group.
- **Mandatory Savings:** Contributions paid regularly, usually every month. The amount depends on each group's policy. Mandatory savings cannot be withdrawn while the person is still registered as a member.
- **Voluntary Savings:** Contributions with flexible amounts and payment times. When this money is loaned to members, borrowers are required to pay loan interest.

The UBSP has generated transformations that go beyond access to capital. Over time, UBSP meetings have created several positive dynamics that strengthen the group.

First, the level of member participation has continued to increase. Regular meetings are no longer seen merely as administrative obligations, but have become spaces for active participation where every member feels they have a role and a voice.

Second, the sense of family among members has deepened, creating social bonds that go beyond financial transactions. This solidarity has become

a social safety net when members face hardship.

Third, the UBSP has proven genuinely helpful to women in building businesses and supporting their children's education, even though the available capital remains relatively modest.

Fourth, these groups have evolved into platforms for the exchange of knowledge, experience, and information that enrich members' collective understanding of agricultural practices, food processing, financial management, and marketing strategies.

Building Economic Resilience in the Face of Uncertainty

"The Tani Mandiri Group once built a Collective Savings and Loan Enterprise (UBSP), but loan repayments were often delayed or defaulted, compounded by unclear bookkeeping systems. This caused members' trust to decline and the group's working capital to stagnate." — Ibu Fransiska L. Bombong, Treasurer, Tani Mandiri Farmers' Group, Golo Lewe Village, East Nusa Tenggara

In the face of climate change that makes agricultural production uncertain, farmers need financial access that is flexible and quick. When crops fail, they need capital for the next growing season. When urgent needs arise, they cannot wait for a convoluted loan process. This is why community-based UBSP is so vitally important.

"We established clear rules and agreements that any member who is late in repaying a loan will be subject to sanctions and fines. The capital continues to grow, though it remains insufficient to meet all members' needs. But we continue to be committed to maintaining and developing this UBSP going forward." — Ibu Fransiska

"The group's dream for the future is to reduce and eventually eliminate borrowing from external cooperatives. So far, UBSP has been very helpful in developing agricultural businesses, meeting children's sudden school expenses, and covering social events." — Ibu Fransiska

The UBSP serves as an economic cushion when climate uncertainty causes agricultural income to fluctuate. When crops fail due to drought or pest attack, group members still have access to capital to get back on their feet. This is the essence of community-based economic resilience.

Transparency is not merely a matter of recording income and expenditure correctly; it is also about building trust among group members. In the context of village communities where social relationships are of the highest importance, trust is the most valuable form of social capital.

Reflection: Women's Leadership in Climate Action

The stories of these women are not a romantic narrative of individual heroism. They are stories of leadership that grew collectively, of how women who were traditionally regarded only as implementers came to take on the role of solution formulators, participants in decision-making, and advocates who shape the direction of policy.

Their experiences teach us that solidarity is a key resource in the face of scarcity brought about by drought. These mothers, known as mama and inaq, have proven that women can enter the space of village policy and advocate for their own needs. They have shown that leadership demonstrated through example is often more meaningful and more effective than instruction alone. Mama Imakulata shared her actions in preserving local food diversity as a resilience strategy.

Across different regions, including both in NTB and NTT, these women face similar climate challenges: drought, water scarcity, extreme weather, and seasonal unpredictability affecting

production and livelihoods. Their response is built on a single key: not waiting for solutions from outside, but building solutions from within their own communities.

Most importantly, they have proven that climate action does not always begin with sophisticated technology or major investment. Climate action frequently begins in spaces close to daily life: in gardens, in yards, at springs, and through simple practices such as processing livestock waste into biogas as an energy source and fertilizer, and building community-based financial systems. Climate action begins with building solidarity, trust, and collective leadership.

"We did not expect that we would be able to come and share what we experience in our village. Thank you for supporting us and for placing your trust in us as village women to become leaders and to carry out advocacy in our village, so that we can be independent and make decisions, whether in the family, in village governance, or at

the district level, about environmental issues." — Mama Getrudis

"We rise. If we do not speak, who else will? Because we know best the exhaustion of working for everyone and for the household." — Inaq Baiq Anom

The sentiments expressed by Mama Getrudis and Inaq Baiq Anom are representative of the experience of women across supported areas in NTB and NTT. They reflect a broader process:

the journey that women undertake in facing and responding to crisis within their communities. This is the beginning of a larger transformation. When women engage in leading climate action, the impact is felt not only at the level of their immediate problems; they not only save their communities from crisis, but open space for broader change, including transforming power structures and clearing the path for the next generation of women. The climate crisis is real. But women's response to that crisis is equally real, and deeply effective.



Smoke from burning activities can be seen near the prayer room within the Keureto Reservoir complex, Blang Pante Village, Paya Bakong Subdistrict, North Aceh. (Photo: ACCI USK)

Reading Climate Change Impacts through Gender-Responsive Baseline Data: Lessons from Aceh

Why Gender-Responsive Baseline Data Matters

In much of the documentation of climate change impacts and disasters, numbers arrive without stories. Data on casualties, displaced persons, or environmental damage is presented without disaggregation by gender, age, or vulnerability status. As a result, the experiences of women and vulnerable groups are almost always invisible, even though they are frequently those who bear the heaviest and most prolonged burdens.

The floods in Sumatra in 2025 affected millions and displaced hundreds of thousands. The availability of disaggregated data is essential to ensure that policy responses and humanitarian

assistance have accounted for the different risks, needs, workloads, and specific risks facing women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Data that is not gender-responsive risks deepening existing inequalities.

This is where gender-responsive baseline data becomes crucial. A baseline is not simply an initial snapshot; it is the foundation for understanding who is affected, what experiences are being faced, and why these impacts differ. For regional governments, baseline data managed with a gender perspective enables the formulation of climate and energy policies that are more targeted, equitable, and accountable.

Why Is Gender-Responsive Baseline Data Important?

Because the climate crisis is not experienced equally. Without gender- and vulnerability-disaggregated data, policies only read numbers, not lived experiences.

Gender-responsive baseline data helps ensure that climate responses do not deepen inequality, but instead reduce it.



Women in the village work together to prepare food for a wedding celebration of a resident in Bantayan Village, Seunuddon Subdistrict, North Aceh. (Photo: ACCI USK)

Key Findings from the Baseline Data

The gender-responsive baseline data developed in the districts of Aceh Tengah, Aceh Barat, and Aceh Utara offers a more complete picture of women's and household situations. Beyond using the 14 poverty indicators of Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the baseline examines access to basic services, disaster experience, food security, ecosystem conditions, agricultural practices, and access to and use of energy, including renewable energy. Rather than presenting numbers alone, the baseline data opens up layers of experience that have long been hidden behind statistics. From this mapping, several consistent patterns emerge.

The first finding demonstrates that progress in basic services has been made, but remains uneven. There are still households living without adequate sanitation, relying on unsafe drinking water sources, and traveling long distances for health services. These households frequently also carry the responsibility of caring for multiple vulnerable family members, meaning that every disruption to basic services carries layered consequences.

The first finding shows that **progress in basic services does not necessarily mean progress in equitable access.** While the majority of households have their own homes, electricity, and private toilets, in every district a group of households still lives without adequate sanitation, relies on unsafe water sources, and must travel far for health services. Notably, this group is almost always made up of households with multiple dependents, including young children,

the elderly, persons with disabilities, or family members with chronic illness. Any environmental disruption caused by climate change therefore does not produce a single impact; it triggers an entire cascade of vulnerabilities simultaneously.

Second, in the economic dimension, the baseline reveals **a paradox of women's contribution. Women are the primary economic pillars of households with low and unstable incomes.** They manage daily expenditures, adjust consumption when prices rise, and seek supplementary income. Yet the greater women's contribution to sustaining the family economy, the less this translates into greater control over strategic decisions regarding assets, land, or long-term loans. Household economic resilience is built on women's labor, but control over resources remains unequal.

Third, **women's workloads are layered and largely invisible in economic indicators.** The baseline shows that many women are responsible for multiple vulnerable groups within a single household simultaneously. When disaster strikes, this work expands: cleaning the home after a flood, managing informal displacement, ensuring that children continue their schooling, and restoring family routines. Remarkably, this work is almost never reflected in economic indicators or policy, yet without it, recovery would be nearly impossible.

Fourth, **household dependence on fossil fuels remains very high,** primarily subsidized LPG, with firewood and kerosene as backup sources. Renewable energy is almost entirely absent from everyday domestic practice. Interestingly, when renewable energy surfaces in community

conversations, it is more often understood as an external project for public facilities, such as a pilot program or a one-off aid initiative, rather than as a solution relevant to women's needs at home. Renewable energy is present in public spaces, but has yet to enter women's living spaces.

Fifth, **the impacts of climate change and disaster are genuinely felt, but levels of protection are not uniform.** Knowledge about evacuation, preparedness, and the equitable distribution of assistance varies across regions. When formal systems are inadequate, social networks, frequently mobilized by women, become the primary support system.

A family prepares meals for the wedding celebration of one of its members in Dakuta Village, Muara Batu Subdistrict, North Aceh. (Photo: ACCI USK)





The Silih Nara Hydropower Plant in Central Aceh. (Photo: ACCI USK)

What Can Be Done with Baseline Data

Gender-responsive baseline data is not an end in itself; it is an instrument of change. It helps shift the approach from assumption-based policy toward policy grounded in the real experiences of women and vulnerable groups. By reading how women manage water, food, energy, care, and post-crisis recovery, baseline data provides an evidence base for designing more contextually relevant and appropriate climate adaptation and mitigation programs.

Five Key Findings from the Aceh Baseline Data

1. Basic services are available, but inequitably distributed, with layered impacts on vulnerable households.
2. Women sustain the family economy, but have minimal control over strategic decisions.
3. Women's care workloads increase during crises, yet are rarely documented.
4. Households depend on fossil fuels; renewable energy has not reached domestic spaces.
5. Women's social networks fill gaps in the formal system, but cannot substitute for policy.

Beyond that, **baseline data opens space for correcting the direction of regional policy.** Data on care workloads, limited access to resources, and escalating risks of gender-based violence during climate crises enables regional governments to formulate policy that is not only environmentally responsive but also socially just. Climate and energy policy can thus cease to be gender-neutral and instead consciously align itself with the groups that have long borne the heaviest impact.

By linking local findings to national frameworks such as the RAN-GPI, **baseline data serves as a bridge between national policy and grassroots reality.** It ensures that national commitments do not remain as norms or planning documents, but are firmly grounded in empirical evidence at the regional level, while simultaneously providing feedback for the refinement of national-level policy.

Baseline data also functions as an **accountability instrument.** It can serve as a monitoring and evaluation reference for assessing whether climate policies and programs genuinely reduce gender gaps, or are in fact deepening them. With a clear baseline, change can be measured, compared, and held accountable, both to communities and to policymakers.

Benefits of Gender-Responsive Baseline Data

Gender-responsive baseline data can be used to:

- Design climate and energy programs that are more accurately targeted;
- Develop local policies with a gender perspective and a deeper understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups;
- Link local needs with national policy frameworks;
- Ensure accountable foundations for monitoring and evaluation.



A dialogue between the women's group of Dasan Geria Village and the Village Head on clean water management. This meeting reflects women's active involvement in village-level planning and decision-making processes. (Photo: Gema Alam)

This Data is Not an End, but a Starting Point for Change

Taken as a whole, the baseline data findings from Aceh affirm that women are not only the group most affected by the quality of basic services, climate policy, and energy policy, but also those

with the potential to lead change, when given adequate space, support, and recognition. The lessons from Aceh demonstrate that reading women's experiences through data is an essential step toward designing a more just and sustainable path of change, from the household level to national policy.



An initial discussion brought together diverse stakeholders to identify challenges and needs in mainstreaming gender into climate policy. (Photo: WRI)

From Field Experience to Policy Dialogue

As part of the effort to bridge field experience with the policy formulation process, Women Research Institute, through the EmPower Program, organized three Roundtable Discussions involving diverse multi-sectoral stakeholders.

These forums brought together representatives of ministries and government agencies, civil society organizations, academics, development partners, as well as women's groups and program-supported communities. The Roundtable Discussions were designed as spaces for equal dialogue to discuss

the gender and climate change policy framework, departing from empirical evidence, baseline data findings, and the concrete experiences of women in accompanying the impacts of the climate crisis at the grassroots level.

These discussion spaces not only opened room for the exchange of perspectives among actors, but also promoted a process of collective learning regarding the challenges, gaps, and opportunities for strengthening gender-responsive climate policy. The Roundtable Discussions became

a strategic medium for formulating critical reflection on existing policy while drafting initial recommendations for strengthening the RAN-GPI framework to make it more inclusive, contextual, and rooted in the realities of women and vulnerable groups in the field.

The findings and dynamics that emerged from the Roundtable Discussion series demonstrate that although initiatives and good practices related to women's leadership in climate action have developed across various levels, policy fragmentation and coordination gaps among actors persist. Differences in capacity, understanding, and institutional mandates often

cause gender and climate change issues to proceed on separate tracks. It is in this context that the need for a unified, cross-sectoral national policy framework has become increasingly apparent.

The National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI) exists as a strategic effort to address this need. The RAN-GPI provides a shared direction for integrating gender perspectives into climate change policy and programs, while affirming women's role not merely as an affected group, but as key actors in climate adaptation and mitigation.



The dialogue continued by deepening issues of cross-sectoral coordination and strengthening regulatory frameworks, including support for the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI). (Photo: WRI)

The Importance of the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI)

These challenges affirm that climate change does not only worsen the environmental crisis; it deepens pre-existing gender inequalities. Gender-responsive climate policy such as the RAN-GPI is therefore essential to ensure that women are not only protected from the impacts of the climate crisis, but also recognized and empowered as primary actors in the solution.

The drafting of a Government Regulation on the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI) was carried out through a multidisciplinary approach integrating legal, sociological, political, economic, and gender analysis.

A Sociological Review of Women and Climate Change

Indonesia as an archipelago nation with more than 17,000 islands faces enormously complex climate change impacts, ranging from hydrometeorological disasters (floods, landslides, drought, storms) and environmental degradation to sea-level rise (WRI, 2025). Women bear the heaviest burden as a result of pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities. Data from the 2022 National Socioeconomic Survey (Susenas) shows that 9.65 percent of women live below the poverty line, compared to 9.29 percent of men (BPS, 2022; WRI, 2025).

Sociologically, climate change impacts on women because women and vulnerable groups

are the most affected by climate change; structural access inequalities in land, energy, economics, and decision-making deepen their vulnerability; women possess locally-grounded adaptive capacities that have proven effective, but which the state has yet to recognize; and formal regulation is needed to shift the paradigm from viewing women only as “victims” toward recognizing them as key actors in low-carbon, climate-resilient development.

Structural Inequality

Women contribute significantly to agriculture, representing 40 percent of the agricultural workforce, yet only 18 to 20 percent hold land ownership rights (FAO, 2021; KPPPA & KLHK, 2024). Policy bias in social forestry that designates “male head of household” as the primary beneficiary reinforces women’s exclusion, limiting their access to credit, technology, and government programs (ICEL, 2025).

In the energy sector, women are the primary household energy users, relying on biomass, kerosene, and gas, yet are almost entirely unrepresented in energy transition policy. This reveals the existence of an “unjust transition” if gender perspectives are not mainstreamed (WRI, 2025).

Socioeconomic Impacts

From the Roundtable Discussions organized by WRI on June 4, June 19, and July 18, 2025, it was established that the issues affecting women and



The third meeting reaffirmed the importance of collaboration and policy integration as steps toward strengthening implementation in a more systemic and sustainable way. (Photo: WRI)

climate change, drawn from field experiences across West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, Papua, East Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, Bali, Jakarta, and other regions of Indonesia, reveal a uniform pattern of vulnerability, including: **the double burden**, whereby women must care for the family while simultaneously seeking new economic sources when crops fail or ecosystems are damaged; **loss of economic sources**, as extractive projects and climate disasters deprive women of their living spaces and land, forcing them to become migrant workers; **risks of gender-based violence**, as economic pressure triggers domestic violence, sexual violence, and even human trafficking in regions such as NTT and NTB; and **exclusion from decisions**, as women are rarely involved in policy consultations related either to climate projects or to forest governance.

A concrete case: in Timbulloko, Demak, permanent tidal flooding since 2010 has forced women to become fishers and has led to economic abandonment and domestic violence (Nurhayati et al., 2023). In East Kalimantan, women must walk long distances in search of clean water, increasing the risk of sexual violence. In Papua, women in East Mimika have been forced to migrate due to mining waste, further increasing their vulnerability to trafficking.

Multidimensional Vulnerability

Indigenous women, persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly face layered risks. Indigenous law communities (MHA), for example, face the threat of losing their land and traditional way of life due to deforestation and extreme climate events. Persons with disabilities working in the informal sector lose their livelihoods and

lack access to agricultural or fishing insurance. Children face educational barriers due to food and water crises, while the elderly are more vulnerable to health impacts (Bappenas, 2025).

in open spaces without social protection.

Extreme heat as a new social risk.

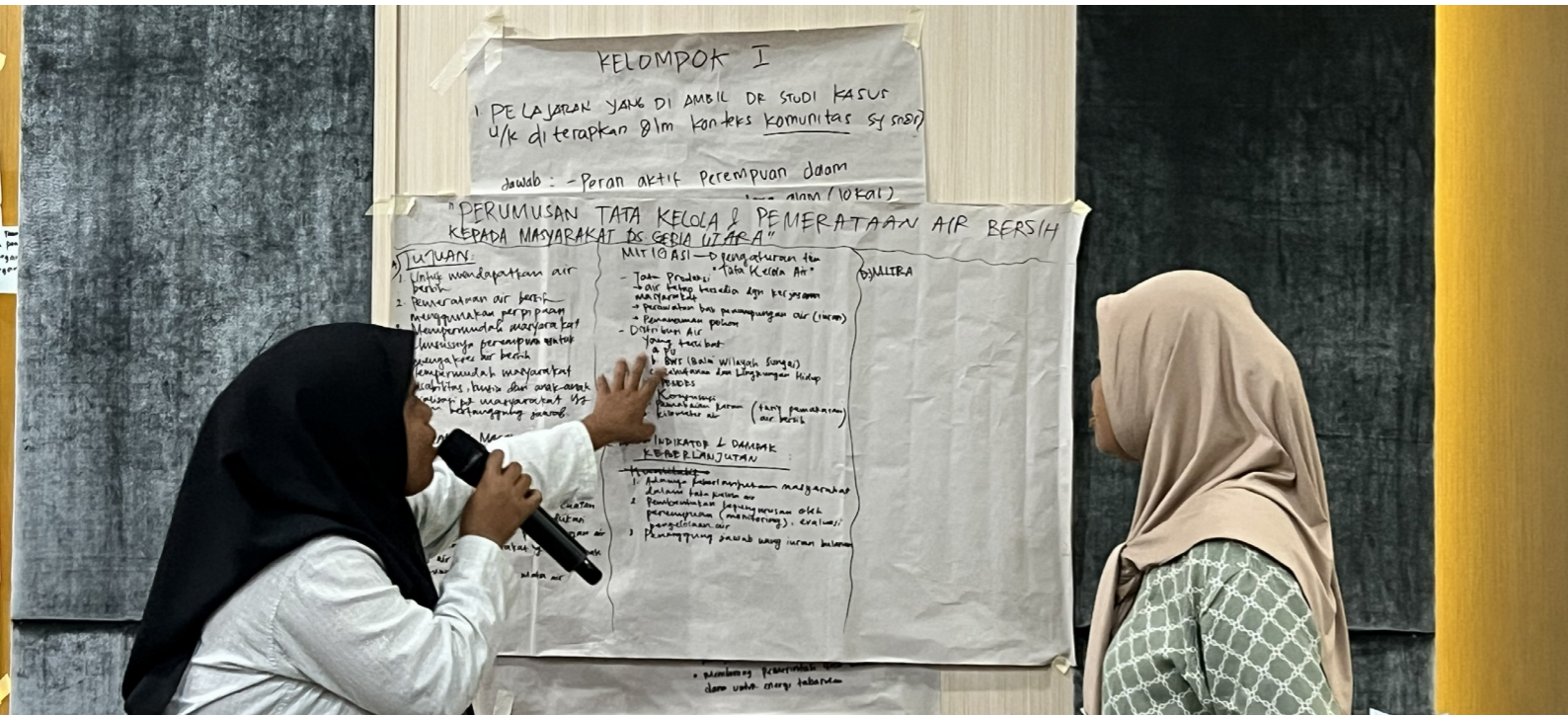
Extreme heat in urban areas has increased health risks, added to women’s workloads, and worsened inequitable access to green open spaces and clean water. The RAN-GPI 2024–2030 documents the impacts of extreme heat on maternal and infant health, risks of perinatal complications, and maternal mental health. The WRI Roundtable Discussion findings also affirm that women workers in the informal sector, such as street vendors and market laborers, are highly vulnerable to heat-related illness due to working

Women as Agents of Change.

Despite their vulnerability, women have been proven to be climate adaptation agents. A study by KEHATI documented that women’s forums in Manggarai, East Flores, and Lembata mobilized 338 million rupiah for water and local food conservation (KEHATI, 2025). WALHI has also highlighted practices of rural women leading community-based water and food conservation.

However, women’s participation remains too often symbolic. What is required is women’s meaningful and formal participation in national policy-making.

Women of Dasan Geria Village presented the results of climate mapping based on their everyday experiences in facing the water crisis. (Photo: WRI)



Addressing RAN-GPI Challenges: From Institutional Frameworks to Legal Certainty

The Roundtable discussions also underscored that the existence of a policy, however important and progressive, does not automatically guarantee change at the implementation level. The RAN-GPI faces a range of structural challenges, from institutional limitations and knowledge and data gaps to social and cultural norms that constrain women’s meaningful participation in climate decision-making.

the RAN-GPI needs to be elevated to the level of a Presidential Regulation. Through a Presidential Regulation, the RAN-GPI would attain a standing equivalent to other national strategies. Its implementation would be binding upon all ministries and institutions, regional governments, and non-state actors. The allocation of budgets, inter-institutional coordination, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms based on disaggregated indicators would be more reliably guaranteed.

In its current position, the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection has been mandated to coordinate the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI). The Ministerial Decree on the RAN-GPI faces several limitations. It does not carry binding force across sectors and regions, making implementation highly dependent on voluntary commitment. It is vulnerable to being disregarded because it is not compulsory, making it a lower priority than other agendas. It does not serve as a formal reference in planning, budgeting, or evaluation, meaning that budgets for gender-responsive climate programs are not guaranteed. And it cannot fill the legal vacuum in sectoral climate policies that remain gender-neutral, such as the Economic Value of Carbon, REDD+, low-carbon development, carbon tax, and carbon trading policies.

A Presidential Regulation on the RAN-GPI would also serve as a connecting legal instrument to ensure that sectoral climate policies focus not only on emissions reduction, but also uphold the principles of climate justice and gender equality in accordance with the constitutional mandate, national legislation, and international commitments.

RAN-GPI Challenges at the Policy and Institutional Level

At present, the RAN-GPI is positioned only at the level of a ministerial decree, and therefore lacks binding force across sectors and regions. As a consequence, implementation of the RAN-GPI is heavily dependent on the voluntary commitment

Given these limitations, the Ministerial Decree on

of each ministry and institution, and of regional governments. In practice, this situation means the RAN-GPI has yet to become a formal reference point in climate policy planning, budgeting, or evaluation.

The absence of a stronger legal framework also means the RAN-GPI has been unable to fill the gender perspective gap in various sectoral climate policies, including the Economic Value of Carbon policy, REDD+, low-carbon development, carbon tax, and carbon trading. As a result, the climate agenda risks continuing to operate



Participatory mapping became part of the discussion process to identify challenges and needs in mainstreaming gender into climate policy. (Photo: Gema Alam)

with a gender-neutral approach, even though its impacts and benefits are felt differently by women and vulnerable groups.

RAN-GPI Challenges in Knowledge, Data, and Culture

Beyond the institutional dimension, the challenges of RAN-GPI implementation are also

rooted in limited understanding of the connection between gender and climate change, both among policymakers and among technical practitioners in the field. Gender issues are too often viewed as an add-on rather than as an integral part of climate strategy.

The scarcity of sex-disaggregated and intersectional data undermines evidence-based decision-making. At the same time, patriarchal social and cultural norms continue to constrain women's participation and leadership in climate initiatives, even though field experience, as demonstrated by the EmPower Program, has proven women's capacity as key agents of change.

Strengthening the Regulatory Framework: From Policy to Legal Certainty

Field experience demonstrates that women's leadership practices in climate action have been taking place across many regions, but remain highly dependent on local commitment and program initiatives. For these practices to be sustained, scaled up, and systematically replicated, stronger and more binding policy support is required. In this context, strengthening the RAN-GPI through a regulatory framework that provides legal certainty is a strategic step that cannot be deferred.

Based on the results of the Roundtable Discussions organized by Women Research Institute within the EmPower Program framework, several complementary policy models can mutually reinforce the implementation of the

RAN-GPI:

1. **Presidential Regulation (PerPres)** as the nationally binding framework for ministries and regional governments, establishing institutional mandates, coordination mechanisms, and clear reporting systems;
2. **Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB)** to clarify the division of roles and responsibilities across ministries and institutions, and to promote the development and alignment of Regional Action Plans on Gender and Climate Change (RAD-GPI);
3. **RAD-GPI** at the provincial, district, and city levels as the contextually appropriate implementation instrument, responsive to local conditions, sectoral priorities, and actual community needs.

Through this combination of regulatory frameworks, the RAN-GPI will attain a standing equivalent to other national strategies and carry stronger binding force in its implementation. This strengthening enables the integration of the RAN-GPI into development planning and budgeting, clarifies inter-institutional coordination, and ensures an accountable monitoring and evaluation mechanism based on disaggregated indicators.

Furthermore, strengthening the RAN-GPI regulatory framework will position it as a connecting legal instrument ensuring that sectoral climate policies focus not only on emissions reduction, but consistently uphold the principles of climate justice and gender equality in accordance with the constitutional mandate, national legislation, and international commitments.

Gender-Responsive Funding Support and Governance

The success of RAN-GPI implementation is also significantly determined by the availability of gender-responsive funding. Without integration into national and regional planning and budgeting systems, women-led climate initiatives will continue to depend on short-term projects.

Strengthening funding governance, including the use of climate financing schemes and development partner support, creates an opportunity to ensure that women-led climate action receives sustained support while contributing to the achievement of national climate targets.

Social Capital and International Commitments as Reinforcing Forces

Indonesia possesses significant social and political capital to strengthen the RAN-GPI. International commitments such as the Paris Agreement, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Lima Work Programme on Gender under the UNFCCC provide a clear normative foundation for the mainstreaming of gender in climate policy.

At the national level, good practices from community-based programs, including EmPower, demonstrate that when women are given space and support, climate action can proceed in ways that are more just, effective, and sustainable. This capital represents an important lever for



Shared learning spaces help women understand changes in sap, the environment, and their interlinkages with food, the economy, and village sustainability. (Photo: Gema Alam)

driving the transformation of the RAN-GPI from a coordinative policy into a genuine instrument of change.

Good Practices from Other Countries

The experience of countries in the Global South demonstrates that mainstreaming gender in climate policy can strengthen community resilience.

- **The Philippines** has integrated a Gender and Climate Change Framework Strategy since 2013, which requires every adaptation and mitigation program to incorporate gender analysis. As a result, community-based disaster risk reduction programs have succeeded in increasing women's participation in early warning systems and reducing mortality during typhoons (Villanueva, 2010).
- **Bangladesh** developed a Cyclone Preparedness Programme involving 50 percent women volunteers. Studies

demonstrate that women's involvement significantly reduced the number of women and children killed during cyclones, which had previously been far higher than male mortality (Alam & Collins, 2010).

- **India**, through the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) program, built micro-insurance schemes and community-based renewable energy cooperatives. This program has proven effective in reducing informal women workers' vulnerability to climate crises while increasing household incomes (Chen, 2008).
- **Fiji and Vanuatu** as Pacific Island nations have adopted gender-responsive climate resilience plans ensuring women's access to international climate funds and promoting women's leadership in community-based adaptation forums (United Nations Women, 2016).

The MEL Framework for the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change



Through a participatory approach, experiences and field data were collected to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of policy processes. (Photo: WRI)

The success of the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (RAN-GPI) is determined not only by the existence of policies and programs, but also by the capacity to monitor, evaluate, and make meaning of the changes

it produces. In the context of a national, cross-sectoral policy of the scale of the RAN-GPI, the **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)** framework is a key instrument for ensuring that the achievements being measured do not stop at statistics alone, but reflect real changes in the lives of women and vulnerable groups.

The RAN-GPI MEL framework opens space for understanding impact more completely, by combining quantitative data and qualitative learning, and capturing the complexity of social change processes occurring at scale. With an approach oriented toward learning and transformative change, MEL functions not only as an accountability instrument, but also as a mechanism for ongoing reflection and improvement in the implementation of gender and climate change policy.

Behind Every Statistic Is a Human Reality

All development projects have milestones and targets that guide the program toward its intended impact. Behind every statistical number is a human life and a real situation unfolding.

Women's organizations in Indonesia have diverse focuses, beliefs, and working methods. Yet all

women's organizations share one common aspiration: the desire to transform the lives of Indonesian women for the better.

RAN-GPI: An Opportunity for Transformative Change

The existence of the RAN-GPI is not a miracle. It is the result of the countless hard work of social advocates, change-makers, and activists who have persistently sought to improve the lives of women and marginalized groups in the midst of a worsening climate crisis.

The scope of the RAN-GPI crosses almost all ministries in Indonesia and reaches all levels of government. Most development programs are only able to influence one or two aspects of the lives of their target groups. Very few can deliver impact across multiple dimensions of life. Before the RAN-GPI, there was no initiative capable of influencing nearly all dimensions of women's and marginalized communities' lives.

With the scope it possesses, the RAN-GPI represents the best opportunity for advocates for women's rights and marginalized groups to drive genuinely transformative change.

Greater Scale Brings Greater Complexity

The scope of the RAN-GPI is vast, requiring the cooperation of many ministries to achieve its established targets, even before considering the involvement of civil society organizations and multilateral institutions. This scale brings with it



Everyday experiences of processing palm sap encourage women to bring the issues of palm protection and local food security into village dialogues and planning. (Photo: Gema Alam)

hope and enthusiasm, as well as challenges and complexity of considerable proportion.

The explicit purpose of the RAN-GPI is to support Indonesia in fulfilling various international development commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (eNDCs). For this reason, the RAN-GPI targets are developed with these commitments in mind.

However, achieving transformative change is no simple matter. The interaction between a person's social identity and various social issues is not additive in nature, but multiplicative. Real change in people's lives will not be achieved by addressing only one issue in one sector. The approach must be intersectional, because human beings are intersectional.

Setting targets in development programs demands great precision, as does monitoring and evaluating impact. The RAN-GPI uses Indonesia's

international commitments as the reference point for change, but two areas remain that could be strengthened: the availability of high-quality data, and an integrated national-level MEL framework.

Data and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

Indonesia currently faces a significant challenge in the form of limited knowledge about the issues faced by women and marginalized groups, the magnitude of these issues, and the social forces that underlie them. Academics and civil society organizations have worked hard to collect data, but their reach and resources are very limited. Government ministries face similar constraints, compounded by Indonesia's challenging geography. This information gap makes the targeting of project activities and social interventions less precise.

At present, the RAN-GPI is designed around seven sectors and five priority areas, with MEL targets and indicators limited to those sectors and activities. International commitments are undoubtedly important, but the primary goal should not be merely to fulfill those commitments; it should be to genuinely transform the lives of women and marginalized groups. For this reason, KPPPA needs a comprehensive MEL framework that is binding across all sectors and focused on transformative change.

To address these two needs, WRI proposes the use of **the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP)**.

Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) for the RAN-GPI

The Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) is a MEL framework that collects data through semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to understand the changes taking place in the lives of program beneficiaries.

The questions in interviews and FGDs are open-ended, designed to explore how beneficiaries make sense of their living conditions and whether change is genuinely being experienced. This approach is what allows us to verify the occurrence of genuine transformative change. The stories and narratives collected are then analyzed using thematic coding to produce Causal Maps, which are visualizations of cause-and-effect relationships between problems and interventions.

The exploratory nature of QuIP enables the collection of change stories while simultaneously generating the gender-responsive data urgently needed to enrich program design and implementation.

QuIP is proposed for three primary reasons: the majority of the RAN-GPI's MEL indicators and targets remain quantitatively oriented; QuIP allows research to be conducted simultaneously with monitoring and evaluation activities; and QuIP places the narratives of women and marginalized groups at the center of analysis.



Local knowledge of palm is being re-practiced by women to ensure it is not lost and remains alive. (Photo: Gema Alam)

Four Stages of QulP

1. **Data Collection:** Interviews and FGDs with beneficiaries are focused on Impact Domains to keep narratives oriented toward changes in life conditions.
2. **Case Selection (Sampling):** Samples are determined on the basis of shared intersectional characteristics, enabling stories to be compiled and generalized with care.
3. **Data Analysis:** Qualitative data analysis and thematic coding are used to construct Causal Maps and to deepen understanding of women's and marginalized groups' experiences.
4. **Cross-Checking:** The resulting causal narratives are compared with quantitative data from the sectoral MEL framework.

of public policies, services, and initiatives on women's lives;

- **Access and agency,** addressing women's ability and capacity to access decision-making spaces, education, capacity building, economic and financial tools, as well as legal recognition and protection;
- **Knowledge and planning,** addressing communities' understanding of social and climate vulnerabilities, the capacity to use that knowledge for collective planning, and the preservation and use of local and traditional knowledge.

Impact Domains and RAN-GPI Sectors

Because the implementation of the RAN-GPI is divided into sectors to facilitate inter-ministerial coordination, a change-oriented overarching framework is of the utmost importance. The primary focus of this framework is the change that occurs in people's lives.

In determining the changes to be achieved, the focus falls on how the climate crisis exacerbates social problems faced by women and marginalized groups. These changes encompass three domains:

- **Structural support,** covering the impact

Reflections from the National Forum: The Importance of Economic Transformation, Collaboration, and Financing Systems for Climate Justice

Women Research Institute (WRI), together with UN Women, implemented a program of women's leadership in climate change action through the EmPower II Program. This program was carried out in eight villages in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) and East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), involving more than 300 women over 18 months. As part

of the learning process, WRI together with UN Women conducted reflections on the program's implementation through a National Forum.

This National Forum was attended by approximately 160 participants and became a reflective space bringing together diverse actors,



Participants of the National Meeting on Women's Leadership in Climate Action, bringing together diverse stakeholders to reflect on pathways toward climate justice in Indonesia. (Photo: UN Women)

including government, civil society, communities, academics, and development partners, to revisit the direction and challenges of women's leadership in advancing climate justice in Indonesia.

From this forum, one strong common thread emerged: climate action for justice cannot stand alone as a program or sectoral intervention. It must be supported by a system capable of ensuring sustainability, inclusivity, and long-term impact.

Reflections from the National Forum converged on three interconnected pillars: economics, collaboration, and financing systems. Together, these three pillars form an essential whole in determining how local-level climate action can develop from a limited initiative into systemic change.

1. The Economy as the Foundation of Climate Action and Women's Leadership

In the National Forum discussions, participants consistently highlighted that climate change is increasingly felt in the daily lives of communities. Its impacts appear in many forms: increasingly limited water access, uncertainty in harvest yields, rising living costs, and the degradation of natural resources.

In this situation, the household becomes the first space in which pressures from climate change are felt directly. Women are often at the center of these dynamics, because of their role in managing basic family needs and sustaining daily life.

The National Forum also affirmed that women's leadership in climate action cannot be separated from the economic dimension. Participants emphasized that women, like other leaders, need



Panel discussion at the National Meeting highlighting the role of women's leadership and economic empowerment in advancing climate action. (Photo: UN Women)

access to adequate resources, including access to funding, information, capacity, and networks, in order to participate effectively in public decision-making spaces. Without this support, women's contributions to driving climate action risk remaining limited to the domestic sphere and not yet fully connected to more systemic change.

Women are the ones who must ensure that basic needs continue to be met under uncertain conditions. They adapt family consumption patterns, seek alternative food sources, regulate water use, and develop survival strategies that

are rarely recognized as “climate action.” These experiences reveal that women are not merely an affected group; they are active actors who respond to, manage, and maintain the continuity of life in the midst of crisis.

Key Field Insights

In many areas, climate change is experienced as everyday economic pressure through water crises, food insecurity, and rising living costs that directly burden households.

In these situations, women stand at the forefront—managing scarcity, adjusting family needs, and developing survival strategies as tangible forms of adaptation.

From these experiences, the economy emerges as the most concrete entry point: not only responding to crisis, but also opening space for women’s leadership and linking daily needs with broader structural change.

When women gain access to economic resources, whether through productive enterprise, training, financing access, or natural resource management, changes occur that are not merely individual, but also social and political. Women do not only respond to the crisis; they begin to shape the direction of the response itself. They have space to make decisions, set priorities, and organize action at the community level.

This transformation is visible in broader role changes. Women who were previously regarded as primarily domestic actors are now recognized in the public sphere. They participate in village deliberations, are involved in development planning, initiate community-based enterprises, and take part in decisions related to resource management. Many of the economic activities

they develop also possess a strong ecological dimension, including water management, sustainable agriculture, waste processing, and natural resource-based enterprises. The economy is therefore no longer understood merely as a means of livelihood, but as a medium that strengthens resilience while opening the path for women’s leadership in climate action.

Reflections from the National Forum also showed that this transformation remains fragile. Various economic initiatives grew rapidly during the program period because they were supported by training, accompaniment, networks, and funding. But when external support ended, many enterprises stagnated, groups began to lose momentum, and innovations that had previously taken root did not always continue.



Panel discussion during the National Meeting on women’s leadership in climate action, highlighting the role of collaboration in advancing a just and inclusive energy transition. (Photo: UN Women)

The successes that were visible were often still dependent on the external ecosystem that had sustained them. When that support diminished or ended, communities faced the challenge of continuing their initiatives independently, while local capacity and support were not yet fully adequate.

This is the point at which the limitations of a program-based approach become most clear. Programs can spark change, but they do not always ensure that change will continue after the intervention concludes.

Capacity building and initial access remain important steps, but are insufficient if not followed by the strengthening of a broader system. This strengthening encompasses supportive policy and regulation, integration into regional planning and budgeting, sustained access to resources and financing, and a local institutional capacity capable of continuing and developing the initiatives that have been built.

The central challenge is therefore not only how to begin change, but how to ensure that change continues to live, develop, and adapt over the long

term. In this context, economic empowerment cannot stop at the level of the individual or the group; it needs to connect with a broader system encompassing market systems, financial systems, public policy and planning, and local institutions. With this connectivity, women's economic initiatives are no longer small and precarious; they have the opportunity to grow sustainably.

Without this connectivity, many women's initiatives will remain as sporadic local efforts. But when connected to broader systems, these initiatives have the potential to grow, to be replicated, and even to influence the direction of more inclusive development. From this, it becomes clear that the economy is not only an entry point for climate action, but also a critical juncture that determines whether that action

can endure and expand. Women's leadership is therefore not merely a byproduct of a program, but a foundational element of change that must be continuously strengthened.

2. Collaboration as a Bridge between Local Practice and Systemic Change

If the economy is the entry point for change, then collaboration is the bridge that determines how far that change can spread and endure. Without collaboration, even the most powerful local initiatives will continue to operate in isolation, disconnected from one another and unable to reach greater impact. The National Forum reflections demonstrated clearly that the transformation toward climate justice cannot be achieved by a single actor.

Partners of the EmPower Program unite in a collaborative space, reflecting the importance of cross-sector partnerships in connecting local practices with broader systemic change. (Photo: UN Women)



Every actor has both its strengths and its limitations. Government holds policy mandates and budget authority, but is often limited in its ability to reach community dynamics. Civil society has proximity to communities and the ability to build trust, but does not always have sufficient resources to guarantee sustainability. The private sector brings opportunities in

financing, markets, and innovation, but is not yet consistently connected to social justice and gender agendas. Communities possess local knowledge and direct experience, but are often in the most limited position with respect to access to decision-making. In this situation, collaboration is not an optional addition; it is a fundamental necessity.



Dwi Yuliawati of UN Women Indonesia delivers remarks at the National Meeting, emphasizing the importance of connecting diverse initiatives to advance more integrated and effective climate action. (Photo: UN Women)

The National Forum reflections also affirmed that existing collaboration remains far from ideal. Many initiatives run in parallel, even in the same regions and on the same issues, without strong interconnection. Programs are developed with their own approaches, using different data,

indicators, and working logics. As a result, even though a considerable number of activities have taken place, the impact generated does not always accumulate significantly. What has occurred is not a lack of effort, but a lack of connectivity.

Real Challenges in Collaboration

The National Meeting highlighted that various actors have been actively engaged in advancing climate action. However, many efforts still operate in parallel—even on the same issues and within the same regions—without strong interconnection.

Gender and climate change issues are often addressed separately, with cross-sectoral coordination remaining limited.

What is needed is not only joint work, but interconnectedness that can drive systemic change.

The root of this problem lies in fragmentation of governance. Gender and climate change issues are still too often placed in separate policy spaces, managed by different institutions, with priorities and working mechanisms that are not always aligned. On one side, climate policy has not yet been fully gender-responsive. On the other, gender policy does not always include

climate change as a core part of the development agenda. As a result, good practices that have developed at the community level, including women's initiatives in resource management and local economic empowerment, are not always connected to broader policy. Conversely, policies formulated at the national or regional level do not always respond to the realities on the ground.

Dr. Amurwani Dwi Lestariningsih, Deputy for Gender Equality at KPPPA, delivers a keynote address highlighting the role of collaboration in advancing gender-responsive climate policy. (Photo: UN Women)



Collaboration is the effort to build systemic connectivity, linking actors, policies, resources, knowledge, and decision-making processes within a mutually reinforcing framework. In this sense, collaboration is not only about who works with whom, but about how various ongoing initiatives can be interconnected, coordinated, and complementary, so that they no longer proceed in parallel without clear connection.

One important foundation for building effective collaboration is data transparency. Such data functions as a shared language that enables diverse parties to understand context, needs, and impact more completely. With open and integrated data, the actors involved can see the interconnections between interventions, identify gaps, and design more targeted strategies.

Beyond data, clarity of roles is also a highly determining factor in building effective collaboration. In an ecosystem involving many actors, each party needs to understand its position, function, and contribution to shared goals. In practice, this can be strengthened through more structured mechanisms such as role and mandate mapping among actors, the development of shared frameworks, and coordination forums that enable periodic alignment. This approach has also been widely employed by philanthropic institutions and development partners to ensure that various interventions do not proceed independently, but complement one another.

More broadly, collaboration also demands changes in institutional ways of working. Integration cannot occur if every sector continues

to operate according to its own logic, language, and procedures. Alignment is required between planning, budgeting, implementation, and learning across sectors, so that the interventions undertaken do not only run alongside one another, but genuinely reinforce each other. This is where collaboration becomes a bridge to systemic change: it opens the possibility for local practices born of genuine community need to be elevated as part of policy, and conversely, for existing policy to become more responsive and contextual because it is connected to field experience.

3. Inclusive, Community-Based Financing Systems as the Foundation of Sustainability

The reflections on economy and collaboration at the National Forum converge on one key question: how to ensure that climate action initiatives can continue after the initial intervention concludes. When external donor or development partner funding ends, many previously well-functioning initiatives slow down or stop entirely. This demonstrates that the primary challenge is not simply the availability of funding, but how a sustainable financing system is designed from the outset.

So long as financing is positioned as short-term donor support for program implementation, sustainability will remain a problem. Instead, financing needs to be designed as part of a broader system, connecting diverse sources of funding, whether from regional government through planning and budgeting, the private sector, or community-based financing mechanisms, with actual needs at the local level.

Access Is Not Always Equal

In many cases, women already have formal access to financial services. However, this does not necessarily mean they have control, capacity, or sufficient space to make optimal use of that access.

This situation is shaped by social norms, limited information, and minimal involvement in decision-making. Inclusion cannot be understood merely as “opening access”; it must encompass broader dimensions:

- the capacity to utilize
- control over resources
- bargaining power in decision-making

In this context, financing functions not only as program support, but as an instrument that strengthens local economies, promotes collaboration among actors, and strengthens governance at the community and regional levels. With this approach, climate action has a far greater chance of enduring and developing sustainably. The shift from a program-based approach to a systems-based approach is therefore not merely a technical change, but a change in the fundamental perspective from which sustainability is designed.

Globally, the challenge of climate financing is not only the absence of capital. The problem is how that capital can flow all the way to those who need it most. Various structural barriers, including limited institutional capacity, unsupportive regulations, weak market access, and limited connections to formal financial systems, mean that local communities often remain outside the reach of available financing schemes. In the Indonesian context, opportunities to bridge

this gap are actually quite open. The National Financial Inclusion Strategy provides direction for broadening financing access more equitably, while the Village Fund provides a routine and potentially useful source of public funding to support climate-related activities.

The inclusion of climate-adaptive village development as a priority in village development planning signals a shift at the policy and planning level. Village governments are beginning to focus not only on physical infrastructure development, but also on integrating climate resilience and environmental sustainability into the development agenda.

Yet these opportunities have not been optimally utilized. Challenges in planning capacity, budget management, and program integration at the village level remain real obstacles. This demonstrates that the availability of financing alone is not sufficient; what is needed is the capacity to connect that financing with actual



Katherine Hallyburton, representing the Embassy of New Zealand, delivering opening remarks at the National Meeting on women's leadership in climate action. (Photo: UN Women)

needs at the community level.

At the same time, the financial sector is also moving in a more inclusive and sustainable direction. Various sustainable finance initiatives are opening opportunities for the financing of environmentally friendly economic activities, including small-scale enterprises at the local level. This development is important because it enables community economies to begin connecting with the formal financial system.

Nevertheless, National Forum reflections also underlined that access to financial systems does not automatically mean equal inclusion has been achieved. Without design that is responsive to the needs and contexts of vulnerable groups, including women, that access risks remaining

limited and not reaching those who need it most. Women often continue to face barriers in utilizing financial services, whether due to information limitations, social norms, weak bargaining positions, or limited access to decision-making spaces. In many cases, women may have formal access, but not the control or capacity to make optimal use of it. This demonstrates that inclusive financing cannot be understood merely as opening access. It must be consciously designed to ensure capacity, control, and bargaining power for groups that have long been marginalized. Without this, financing risks reinforcing existing inequality.

This is where community-based financing approaches become highly relevant. The

sustainability of local-level climate action cannot rest on a single type of financing; it requires a combination of complementary instruments suited to the characteristics of the activities and the needs of the community. For activities related to public goods, such as ecosystem protection, water management, or disaster preparedness, public financing such as the Village Fund remains the primary instrument. Such financing is important because the benefits of these activities cannot always be translated into direct financial returns, even though their social and ecological impact is immense.

Many community initiatives have a strong economic dimension, including sustainable agriculture, waste management, natural resource-based enterprises, clean water provision, and renewable energy. Activities such as these require a different financing approach, one that not only supports environmental sustainability but also creates economic value and income sources.

Community-based schemes are highly important in this context. Savings and loan groups, cooperatives, and local financial practices such as arisan not only provide access to funds, but also build solidarity, trust, and shared learning spaces. For many women, these schemes are often the first entry point for understanding financing, developing enterprises, and strengthening their economic position in the community. Community schemes thus have a function that goes beyond a mere financial instrument: they are also social infrastructure.

In addition, village economic institutions such as the Village-Owned Enterprises (BUM Desa)

have strategic potential as connectors between climate action and the broader economic system. By managing enterprises based on local needs and potential, including waste management, sustainable agriculture, water provision, or renewable energy, BUM Desa can create financially sustainable business models that simultaneously contribute to environmental resilience. At this juncture, financing begins to become part of village economic development, no longer merely project support.

Many communities still struggle to access formal financing due to limited assets, documentation, or business profiles that do not conform to the standards of conventional financial institutions. In this context, risk-sharing mechanisms, flexible financing schemes, and approaches that accommodate community capacity can open new access for those who have long been at the margins of the system.

Financing does not operate effectively without trust. And trust can only be built through transparency, participation, and accountability. Village-level experience shows that information openness is indeed increasing, but transparency alone is not enough. Information must be accessible, understandable, and usable by all community groups. If not, transparency will remain an administrative formality that does not genuinely strengthen accountability.

Participation is also a highly determining issue. In many cases, community involvement in decision-making remains uneven, particularly for women and vulnerable groups. When participation is limited, the distribution of benefits from financing also tends to be uneven. This demonstrates

that governance is not merely a matter of administrative procedure, but is directly related to the distribution of power and resources. A system that is not inclusive risks reinforcing inequality, even when designed with good intentions.

From all of this reflection, it is clear that the sustainability of climate action is not determined by the size of available resources, but by how

the economy, collaboration, financing, and governance are connected within an integrated system. That system is what enables local experience to connect with policy, community needs to meet financing mechanisms, and the principles of justice, including gender equality, to become part of how development is conducted.

Key Messages from the National Meeting

Reflections from the National Meeting reaffirmed that the sustainability of climate action cannot be supported by project-based approaches alone. Programs may trigger change, but they do not always ensure its continuity.

What is needed is a shift toward an integrated system, where different elements are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

This transformation includes:

- local economies as the foundation
- collaboration as the connector
- financing as the enabler
- governance as the determinant

Ultimately, sustainability is not defined by the amount of funding available, but by the strength of the system built to support it.

With this, local-level climate action is no longer positioned as a temporary intervention, but as part of a broader development direction. Women's leadership is no longer viewed as the outcome of a program, but as an essential element of the transformation of the system itself. Ultimately, climate justice is about building bridges: between

the local and the national, between community and policy, between the needs of today and the sustainability of tomorrow. And those bridges can only stand firm when the economy, collaboration, and financing systems move together in the same direction.

Closing

Women's leadership in responding to the climate crisis does not emerge from formal positions. It grows from everyday lived experiences, from the courage to read changes around them, share knowledge, and organize collective action.

Through their experiences and knowledge, women are not only adapting to climate change. They are transforming how villages understand problems, formulate solutions, and imagine the future. Water, waste, and food are no longer treated as separate issues, but as part of one interconnected landscape of life that must be cared for together.

This documentation seeks to bring women's experiences from the margins to the center, positioning them as a foundation of knowledge for just, sustainable, and life-centered village development.

Women's experiences are important sources of knowledge that need to be integrated into policies with stronger legal standing, so that the experiences and suffering of women in regions far from centers of power do not remain scattered, ignored, or wasted.

Amid the climate crisis, women are opening pathways for change. They have shown leadership in both adaptation and mitigation efforts. We—civil society organizations and governments—must find ways to support women and vulnerable groups by listening to what they truly need.

