

# WOMEN WEAVING THE WAY FORWARD: HOW WOMEN ARE TACKLING THE PLANETARY CRISIS



## Executive Summary

Across cultures, weaving has symbolized creation and connection. Figures like Athena in Greek mythology, Frigg in Norse folklore, and Neith in Egyptian lore, bind meaning, community, and destiny. Rooted in the daily craft and artistry of women, weaving represents the power to interlace what is separate, to transform loose threads into living systems of connection, resilience, and meaning.

Today, as humanity faces the unraveling of the planetary fabric, this ancient metaphor feels urgent. The Planetary Health Check 2025 reveals that seven of nine planetary boundaries have been breached, from climate and biosphere integrity to land and freshwater systems, marking a threshold where Earth's life-support systems can no longer be assumed resilient. This ecological degradation has not only wounded the biosphere, it has also torn the threads of our collective psyche. As Miles Richardson's research at the University of Derby shows, **human connection to nature has declined by over 60% since 1800, leading to what he calls an "extinction of experience"**, weakening empathy, diminishing stewardship, and eroding the very orientation that once bound humanity to the living world.

Amid this fragility, a regenerative force is rising: women leading restoration across ecosystems, from mangroves in Ecuador to savannas in Kenya, from coral reefs in Indonesia to forests in Madagascar. These **women are modern weavers, stitching together land, knowledge, and community to regenerate both ecosystems and human connection to nature**. Their work not only offers a glimmer of hope but also invaluable insight into **what makes an initiative not just effective, but transformative, a true driver of systemic change**.

At Daughters for Earth, we have seen this power firsthand. Founded in 2022, Daughters is both a fund and a movement and it has funded over 220 projects in 50+ countries. Building on this network, we saw the opportunity to understand how and why women-led action delivers such enduring change. This study does not compare women-led initiatives to men-led ones; instead, it offers a women's-eye perspective on how relational, community-centered approaches foster long-term resilience and systemic transformation.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past six months, Daughters for Earth undertook its 2025 Impact Pilot Study to understand how and why women-led initiatives generate such enduring environmental and social transformation, drawing on evidence **from 24 organizations across 11 countries and seven different ecosystems**. Together, these women are achieving outstanding environmental and social outcomes:

Six initiatives apply sustainable farming across **5,000 + ha** integrating agroforestry, organic methods, and soil restoration.



44% of the initiatives protecting water already show improved quality or availability.



A third of the initiatives report contributing to carbon sequestration by restoring ecosystems that naturally store carbon, tree-planting programs, soil and carbon monitoring, or laying the groundwork for future impact.

Over **115,000** hectares are being protected and restored in key biodiversity hotspots.

Initiatives working on biodiversity stewardship are recovering approximately 21 native native flora and fauna species and 77% report the return of wildlife:



Lion populations have tripled in Kenya



Sharks species are reappearing in Indonesia



New lemur species have been sighted in Madagascar



Across South America, flamingos, foxes, and Andean bears are returning

**5**

initiatives report a decrease in wildfires as a result of reforestation, strengthened ecosystem protection, and the mobilization and training of communities for rapid action.

Five initiatives have removed almost

**19,000**

waste items through 300 community-led beach and underwater cleanups.

We wanted to go beyond traditional environmental metrics to understand how women-led projects truly sustain communities and regenerate nature. Our findings revealed a powerful pattern: across scales and contexts, from grassroots collectives to established institutions, women are leading the planetary response through the same weaving logic: a shared way of seeing and acting that transcends cultures and ecosystems. At its core lie two interwoven dynamics: **continuity and women's ripple effect**.

## 1. Continuity

The ability to ensure that conservation efforts persist and evolve over time, becoming the cornerstone of systemic change.

**90%**

of participants show clear indicators that conservation efforts would endure long term.

**In over 60%**

of initiatives, communities have moved from participants to owners and leaders, reclaiming agency and redefining power.

**In half of the cases**

there are signs that people's relationship with nature is shifting: from managing a resource to caring for a living kin.

**This continuity is not only institutional but also cultural and emotional, a renewed bond with nature rooted in beauty, harmony, and belonging.**

This is relevant because while dominant paradigms often prioritize what can be counted, women also value what can be felt.

Why does continuity emerge so consistently across such diverse contexts? Our findings suggest that these **women have an approach to conservation that is both profoundly effective and disarmingly simple, an approach grounded in common sense**:

**With deep care, women weave three foundational threads — capacity, knowledge, and wellbeing — that align human and ecological needs and, in turn, sustain continuity.**

### Local Capacity Building:

Women invest in local capacity, intentionally working for the local people to have the skills, confidence, and leadership needed to carry conservation forward in the long term:

**23 out of 24 participants**

implemented training to strengthen local capacity, with tens of thousands of people being upskilled to be regenerative farmers, forest rangers, marine and wildlife conservationists.

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About one-third of the women leaders explicitly expressed the long-term, strategic vision of building independence, from a perception of their role as dispensable.

## **Wellbeing and Livelihood Integration:**

Women leaders ground conservation in community needs, recognizing that **environmental health is inseparable from human wellbeing:**

**50%**

of the initiatives promoting alternative sustainable livelihoods have strengthened food security.

**+234,000**

people have been directly benefited through education, training, and improved livelihoods.

**Over half**

of those aiming to generate income opportunities, are successfully linking ecosystem restoration to household stability with positive economic results.

**6** initiatives are improving health access and reproductive health education.

## **Knowledge Exchange:**

Women recognize that knowledge flows in many directions, weaving traditional, experiential, scientific, and spiritual wisdom to keep solutions adaptive and grounded:

- Around 92% of women leaders have reported the integration of traditional and indigenous knowledge within their conservation work.
- Among those initiatives, nearly half are fostering a revival of traditional knowledge by bringing ancestral practices and cultural expressions into their ecological strategies.

## **2. Women's Ripple Effect**

**The exponential spread of impact as women's actions and leadership inspire, equip, and enable other women to step into stewardship.**

- Well documented in many sectors, yet often overlooked, women's ripple effect is part of the answer to why women-led action is so effective, in fact can be found in 90% of our sample.
- Around 75% of the women leaders described actively working to shift gender norms by creating spaces for other women to participate, speak, and lead.

**When women lead, they challenge norms, proving barriers can be broken and expanding what's possible for their communities.**

## Conclusion

This report marks the conclusion of our pilot phase, during which Daughters for Earth supported more than 220 initiatives. The 2025 Impact Study is a first effort in our commitment to document why women-led action is critical to addressing the planetary crisis. The evidence gathered is strong, distinctive, and deeply promising, but this is only the beginning.

Building on these findings, Daughters for Earth will deepen its commitment to expand investment in women-led climate and conservation efforts through 2030, measuring their impact at scale. Beyond presenting data, this report challenges us to rethink how we act on climate, not just by elevating women's leadership, but by learning from it, revealing how we can boost our impact and deliver true systems change.

As humanity stands before the unraveling of the planetary fabric, women's leadership shows us what it means to weave regeneration, binding land, knowledge, and community into living systems that endure. In doing so, they ensure continuity for future generations, mend the connection that once bound humanity to the living world, and remind us that we are also nature.

## Examples – Three weaving threads

### Livelihood and Wellbeing Integration

In Kenya, **Witeithie Women Group** trains women in crop cultivation such as avocado, mango, tree tomato, pawpaw, and moringa, along with poultry and dairy goat farming, to ensure a balanced diet while allowing income generation from selling seedlings and fruits to cover kids school fees and support their families.

In Madagascar, **Association Mikajy Natiora** links forest protection with healthcare access through a mobile medical service that visits the community every two months, offering free consultations and nutritional monitoring.

### Local Capacity Building

In Uganda, **African Women Rising** (AWR) exemplifies the strength of investing in local leadership. The organization has certified 1,000 new trainers and reached over 25,000 women across its programs, including more than 15,000 trained in regenerative agriculture. Of these, 80% continue to apply three or more regenerative practices after training.

In Kenya, **Mara-Meru Cheetah Project** has trained over 150 safari guides, who once approached cheetahs only as tourist attractions, to understand their behavior, minimize disturbance, and actively contribute to data collection.

In Belize, **Sea of Life** has trained over 320 people from diverse stakeholder groups in waste documentation (students, faculty, NGOs, and locals) and graduated 32 entrepreneurs through its Plastic Solutions Academy, a platform that builds local capacity to develop entrepreneurial solutions for the reduction of single-use plastics in Belize.

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## Knowledge Exchange

In Kenya, **Lion Guardians** blend ancestral Maasai tracking skills with modern tools such as GPS and data collection, creating a living, evolving model of conservation that unites heritage and science in service of both people and wildlife.

In Indonesia, **Flores Bumi Lestari** integrates traditional knowledge by using the seasonal calendar to understand local planting and harvest cycles, customary rituals, food and water availability, and social activities. Additionally, they integrate traditional food knowledge into their education efforts with women and youth, and promote the nutritional value of sorghum as part of community health awareness. They have already seen how the perception of this local cereal is shifting away from "poor people's food".

In Colombia, the leaders of **Women for Conservation** participate in spiritual ceremonies and cleansing rituals alongside mamos or spiritual leaders to guide their fieldwork and maintain the natural order. Through these practices, they aim to strengthen the cultural dimension of conservation, fostering respect for ancestral and indigenous wisdom.

Once seen as adversaries, lions are now regarded as part of the community. "We flipped the script, now they protect lions; lions are part of their herd, part of their family" explains Nadia D'Souza. Each lion is given a Maasai name, creating a bond of kinship and care. What began as a way to prevent retaliatory killings has evolved into active stewardship: former hunters now track and protect lions, teach coexistence, and mediate conflicts.

## Local Leadership Taking Root

In Kenya, Shivani from **Ewaso Lions** built the strategy and made decisions alongside the local community from the very beginning. Today, across the program's diverse initiatives, the Samburu people are the ones driving change. The Mama Simba women define their own work plans and are now restoring 10 acres of grass enclosures and managing invasive species on 9 km<sup>2</sup> (900 hectares).

## From Participation to Ownership

In Madagascar, **AMPELA** (Amplifying the Movement of women-powered efforts to Protect the Environment through Leadership and Actions) vividly illustrates this evolution. Women once excluded from environmental activities now lead nursery management, restoration, and community mobilization. In the beginning, it was difficult to find even five women willing to engage in the baobab nursery; two years later, more than fifteen now manage it independently, continuing their work even when funding runs dry. Their perseverance sustains the conservation of baobab forests: 80 hectares haven been restored, and the preservation of more than 26,000 hectares within the Mangoky-Ihotry protected area has been strengthened.

## Examples – Indicators of how continuity takes place:

### Relational and Behavioral Transformation

In Kenya's Amboseli ecosystem, **Lion Guardians** have helped transform how Maasai communities relate to wildlife.

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## Examples – Women’s Ripple Effect

In Indonesia, **Coral Catch** has graduated 40 Superwomen in just four years through its program, an immersive training and experience that equips women with professional diving certifications, scientific reef-monitoring skills, and leadership development. The initiative aims to award 100 scholarships to Indonesian women by 2030, cultivating a new generation of female marine conservationists.

In Kenya, the **Pate Kisiwani Women Group**, led by Mama Mikoko, began with just ten women restoring degraded mangroves in a community where women were traditionally excluded from leadership. Through gender inclusion workshops, they introduced the talking stick, a participatory tool that gave women an equal voice in community meetings. “We gave a chance to women, and they talked... men listened... Now we are working together with men.” This approach is contributing to women’s participation in decision-making and income-generating activities as the new norm.

In Bolivia, the **Uru Uru Team** has reduced heavy metal levels in their lake by 30% using native totora reeds. When tensions over mining pollution escalated, the women led a nonviolent campaign to engage the government after realizing that confrontation had failed. “The government opened a dialogue with us, they received us and listened. That was a big step forward. Before, we followed men’s instructions because we believed they knew everything, that they held the power. But through leading this project, we understood that we also have agency.”

**THANK YOU!**

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Learn more about us at  
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