



Women weaving the way forward: how women are tackling the planetary crisis

2025 IMPACT STUDY

Report by

DAUGHTERS
FOR EARTH with myzelio

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	(3)
2	Methodology and Context	(5)
3	Findings	(7)
	a. Local Capacity Building	
	b. Knowledge Exchange	
	3.1 Continuity	
	c. Livelihood and Wellbeing Integration	
	d. Care and Leadership	
	3.2 Women's Ripple Effect	
4	Challenges	(17)
5	Partnerships	(18)
6	Conclusion and future research	(20)
7	References	(21)
8	Annexes	(22)

INTRODUCTION

Across cultures, weaving has symbolized creation and connection. Long surrounded by myth, it has been deeply intertwined with women's roles and seen as an archetype for creation and the social fabric of life itself. 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 stands before the unraveling of the planetary fabric, this ancient metaphor becomes acutely relevant. Months before reaching the halfway mark of what was once called the decade of action and delivery, the Earth is sending unmistakable signals: its health is faltering. The Planetary Health Check 2025 ([Planetary Boundaries Science, 2025](#)) reveals that seven of the nine planetary boundaries have already been breached, from climate and biosphere integrity to land and freshwater systems, and for the first time, ocean acidification. Our planet has crossed from a "zone of increasing risk" into a threshold of instability, where the life-support functions that sustain us 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 ([Richardson, 2025](#)) 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 bond that once connected humanity to the natural 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.

Over the past six months, Daughters 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 outcomes:

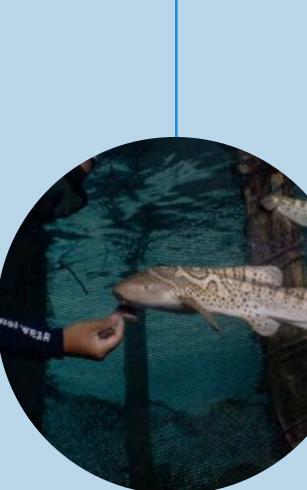


44% of the initiatives protecting water already show improved quality or availability.



(3)

Initiatives working on biodiversity stewardship are recovering 14 native flora and fauna species and 77% report the return of wildlife:



Photos by: Ewaso Lions, Thrive Conservation, Association Mikajy Natiora.

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: ensuring **continuity** and **women's ripple effect**.

Our findings reveal that the way women approach the protection and restoration of the natural world is enabling these efforts to last and their leadership unlocks a larger wave of change.

Women-led environmental action is not only effective, it is exponential. To invest in a woman is to invest in a community, an ecosystem, and a future.

Her impact multiplies through networks of care: each act of stewardship ignites others, creating ripples of regeneration that extend far beyond any single initiative. In a world that must urgently transition from extraction to regeneration, women-led approaches offer a scalable and resilient pathway forward. And while their approaches clearly work, the persistent funding gap means we are still far from giving these solutions the conditions they need to expand and endure.

Every woman interviewed for this study spoke of navigating short funding cycles, limited access to capital, and the need to stretch scarce resources to sustain long-term impact.



Photo by: African Women Rising

Despite these transformative results, only 0.2% of all foundation funding focuses explicitly on women and the environment ([Global Greengrants Fund, 2018](#)) and 0.01% of global finance supports projects that address both climate and women's rights ([UNFCCC, 2024](#)). 90 cents out of every philanthropic dollar to tackle climate change goes to organizations led by white people, and 80 cents to organizations led by men ([Mongabay, 2022](#)). Clearly, this challenging reality is worse for indigenous and grassroots organizations ([Mongabay, 2024](#)).

The pages that follow aim to add to the overwhelming evidence of why investing in women is one of the most effective ways to tackle the planetary crisis. We will explain how they protect and restore nature, weaving intentionally thread by thread, making their impact both lasting and systemic.

Methodology and Context

This study followed a dynamic methodology, combining qualitative depth with structured analysis to build a collective learning experience. Grounded in deep listening, the process blended storytelling, reflection, and data.

We spent about three months analyzing the work of 24 initiatives from the Daughters for Earth grantee network. The sample reflected diversity in organizational size, years of operation, and the background of the women leading them, ranging from foreign founders who once arrived to the territory and stayed to serve, to local leaders working in rural areas of their own countries, to grassroots women who emerged as leaders within their own communities. The participants protect and restore seven different ecosystems in eleven countries, in four of the Earth's most diverse regions in terms of biodiversity: North America, the Amazon node, East Africa and South East Asia.

The value of the protection and restoration of ecosystems is immense. Indeed, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assign a monetary figure to the economic, social and environmental services that ecosystems provide: from cultural services like mental and physical health benefits and aesthetic value, to provisioning services such as providing medicine, and regulating services like moderating extreme weather impacts.

What we know is that half of the world's GDP is moderately or highly dependent on nature (WEF, 2020) and critical resources, such as medicine and food, rely on healthy ecosystems.

Annex 1 provides further information on the relevance of the ecosystems included in this study.

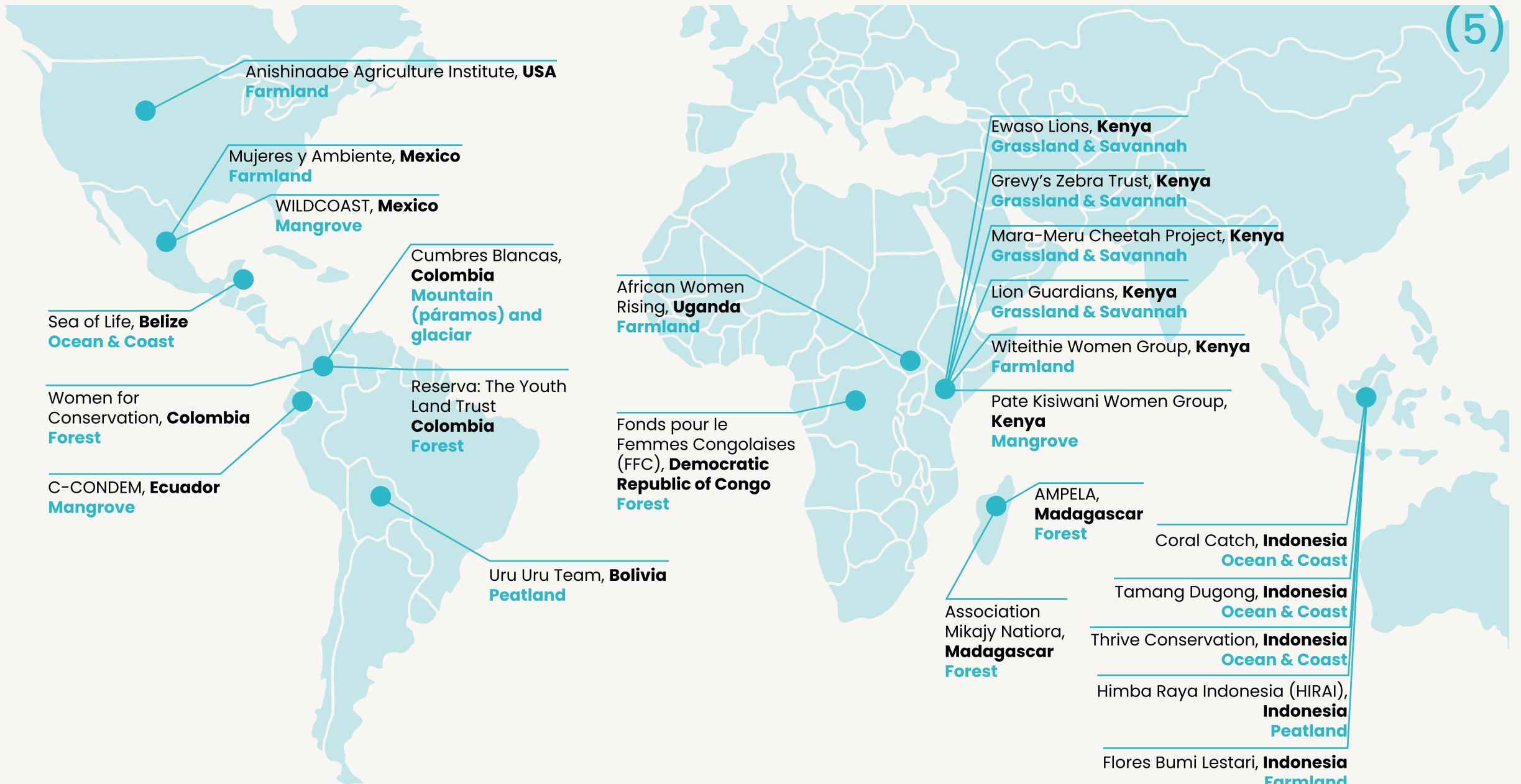
¹In this report, we use the term conservation in its broadest sense, referring to both protection and restoration efforts (Conservation standards, 2019)

Conservation action¹ becomes imperative, considering how degradation is quickly escalating: about 25% of assessed plant and animal species are threatened by human actions (WEF, 2020), land degradation has reduced productivity by 23% since 1970, with \$235 billion to \$577 billion annual global crops at risk because of pollinator loss (IPBES, 2019), and by 2030, the loss of pollination, fisheries, and tropical forestry could potentially be USD 2.7 trillion annually in GDP reduction (World Bank, 2021).

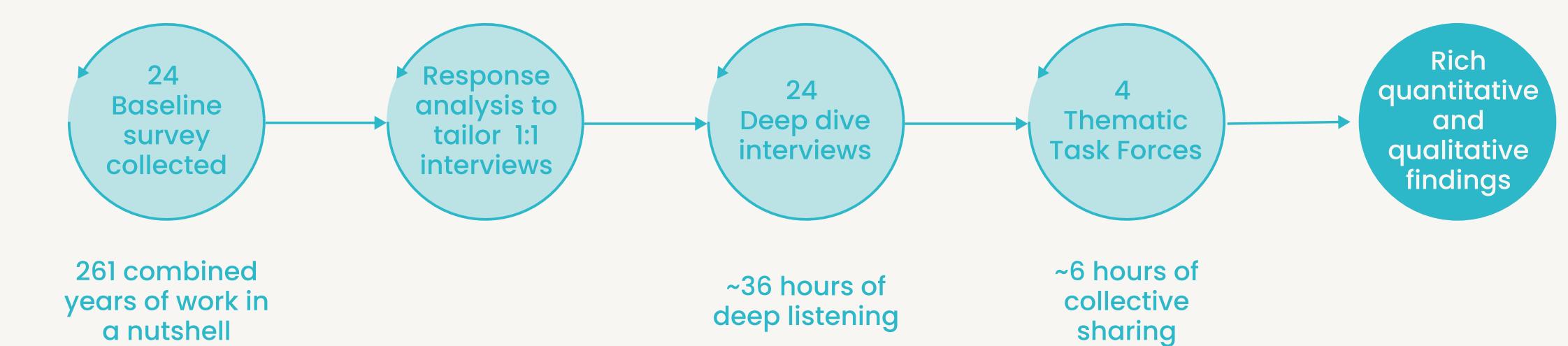
Nature-based solutions can provide up to 37 percent of the emissions reductions needed by 2030 to tackle climate change and are considered highly cost-effective (TNC, 2017). Investing in conservation delivers high returns: the IMF (2021) found that every dollar spent on conservation yields nearly USD 7 within five years, and the World Bank (2021) reports returns of USD 6-28 per dollar invested in protected-area.

Similar to women-led initiatives that remain highly underfunded, nature, too, faces a significant funding gap – receiving barely one-third of the resources required to meet global climate, biodiversity, and land restoration targets by 2030, with over 80% of current financing coming from public sources (UNEP, 2025).

Considering this broad environmental context and the realities of women-led initiatives described in the introduction, the first phase of the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of what these organizations are doing for the natural world, why they do it, and what they have achieved so far. We began with a Baseline Survey where we collected qualitative and quantitative data about the ecosystems they restore and protect, their environmental and socioeconomic outcomes, and the challenges and learnings from their work. The overview of 261 combined years of work helped identify early patterns and informed the design of the following phase.



A highly dynamic methodology to build a collective learning experience and understand the shifts that may not emerge from traditional impact measurement



Methodology and Context

(6)

Beyond conservation practices and achieved results, our main purpose was focused on understanding how and what women contribute to achieve them. We started this study with several hypotheses based on years of empirical evidence and numerous global studies and publications²: their leadership, the way they engage communities, their knowledge. From a detailed analysis of each initiative's baseline survey we built a tailored semi-structured interview to explore these aspects from the process and stories behind their impact. These conversations with each organization lasted between one and one and a half hours, engaging both the woman leader and a team member directly involved in community work, when needed. This approach ensured that insights also reflected other recent lived experiences and perspectives from the ground.

In total, the interviews generated over 36 hours of dialogue and reflection, offering a rich understanding of how change happens within women-led initiatives. Designed as spaces for co-learning rather than information extraction, the interviews encouraged participants to reflect, connect ideas, and articulate the deeper processes shaping their impact. Following the interviews, the team revisited all notes and transcripts, using a shared coding taxonomy to tag and analyze key ideas, quotes, and observations. This step transformed the qualitative data into structured evidence, enabling the team to identify trends, recurring enablers across different contexts and insights behind the information.

Finally, the research team engaged in collaborative thematic task forces to collectively interpret findings, validate patterns, and surface the key findings that underpin women's effectiveness in ecosystem protection and restoration. Through this multi-layered process, the study generated both quantitative evidence and rich qualitative insights capturing not only what women are achieving for nature and their communities, but also why their approaches are being successful in creating lasting change.



² See for example: FPA (2024), TNC (n.d), IUCN Gender Report (2024), Leisher et al. (2016), IIED (2018), WEDO (2019), Vollen & Henry (2019), IIED (2023), Mongabay (2024), UNDP (2024) APA (2024).

FINDINGS

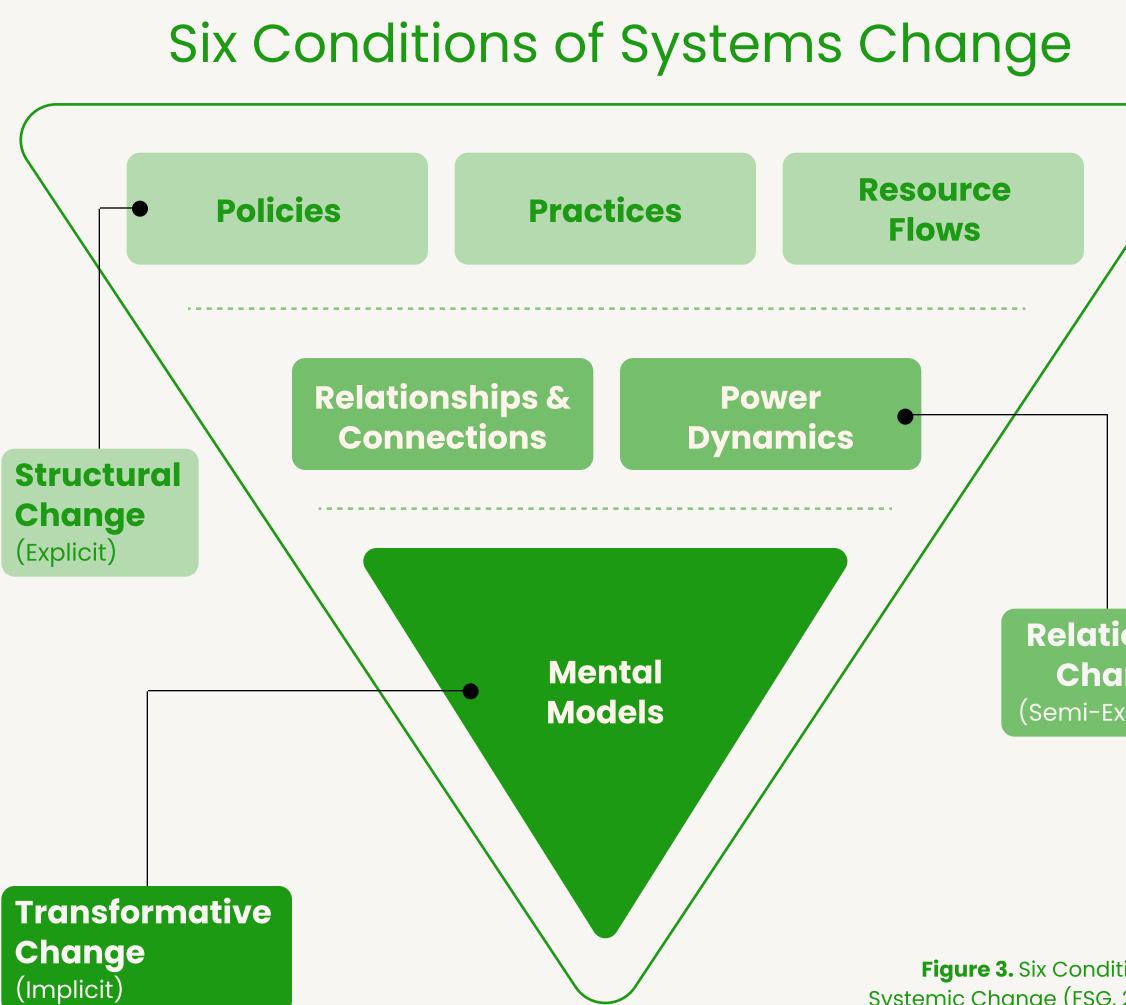
CONTINUITY

When we saw continuity taking hold across initiatives as an outcome, we witnessed how this signals that a systemic change is underway. Continuity in environmental action is truly critical. The regeneration of habitats, soil, water sources, return of wildlife and the climate resilience of communities, not only take time, but require deep shifts to be achieved and sustained. The planetary crisis we face requires systemic changes to transform what brought us here. Achieving systemic change can be defined as shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place, as defined in The Waters of System Change (FSG, 2018).

This well-known framework highlights six interdependent conditions that typically sustain a social or environmental problem and should shift to achieve systemic change: Explicit structural changes achieved by different and new policies; practices and resource flows; relational change from transformed power dynamics; relationships and connections; and implicit, transformative change through a shift in mental models. Changing these conditions in the complex social, economic and political structures where these initiatives operate takes time, too.

Continuity, for these conservation efforts, is where these deeper transformations start to take root: when communities move from participation to ownership, when local leadership settles, when livelihood is sustained by conservation and when new relationships and practices with nature begin to shape daily life and collective identity. In [Annex 2](#), we summarize how these shifts, sometimes invisible or difficult to measure, are key for achieving successful environmental outcomes.

Across initiatives, from the youngest to the most established organizations, we have seen this progression happen in tangible ways. 22 out of the 24 participants present indicators that point to sustained continuity over time, clues of emerging systemic change that reflect how women-led action contributes to shifts in power, resources and mindsets. Of course, it varies from one context to the other. In younger initiatives, this may be about subtle indicators compared to established structures where the transformation is very evident and deep.



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.

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

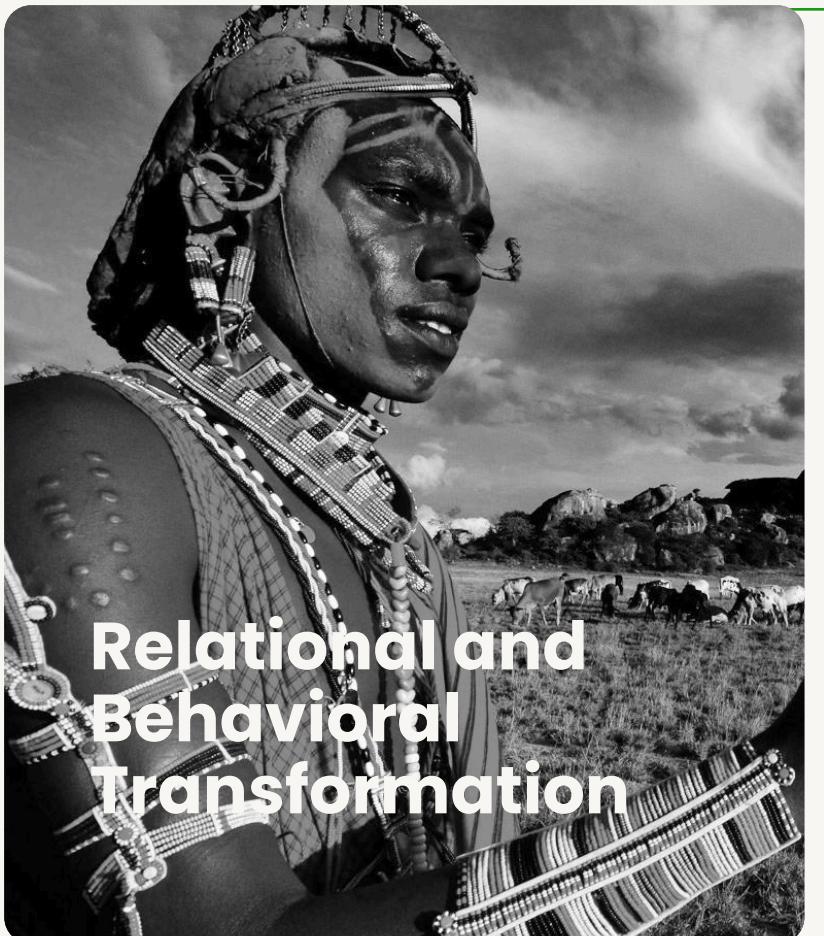
90%

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



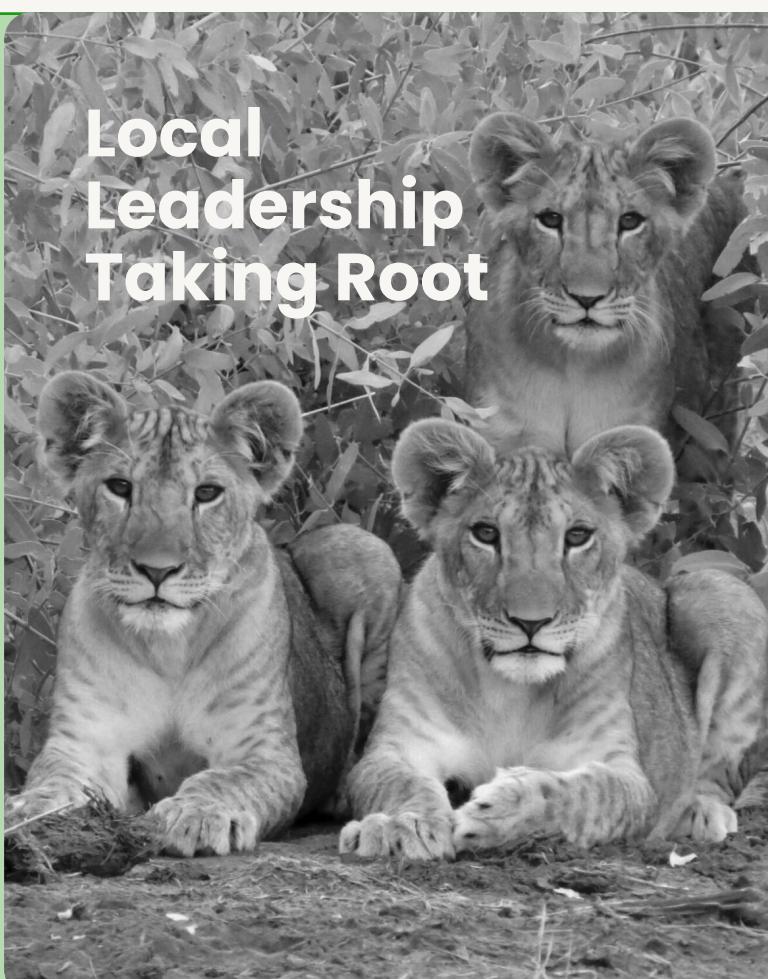
This continuity is not only institutional but also cultural and emotional, a renewed bond with nature rooted in beauty, harmony, and belonging. This is relevant because while dominant paradigms often prioritize what can be counted, women also value what can be felt.

Examples 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. 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 km² (900 hectares).



From Participation to Ownership

In Madagascar, **AMPELA** 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.

23

1/3

For any practice to endure over time, there is the need to build capacity. Women leaders recognize that these efforts will only be sustained if the local people themselves, local institutions, and the next generation have the knowledge, resources, and ownership to carry a vision forward. These women deliberately focus on building local capacity in a way that allows communities to carry forward conservation on their own. In our study, 23 out of 24 participants implemented technical or practical conservation training and ecosystem-specific knowledge programs to strengthen local capacity. More than half (66%) also focused on developing leadership skills for women within their communities, cultivating new leaders who can continue the work over time.

Collectively, these organizations have trained tens of thousands of people: farmers, rangers, citizen scientists, youth, and entrepreneurs, and we found that approaches to capacity building tend to mature and deepen with each year of operation.

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

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.

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

Long-established organizations (15+ years) like C-CONDEM, WILDCOAST, and Africa Women Rising (AWR) demonstrate institutional consolidation of capacity building: they operate large-scale programs with formal partnerships, curricula, and even certification systems.



C-CONDEM has trained +1,000 of women harvester and has engaged with coastal communities through participatory territorial planning and mangrove restoration, strengthening local co-management of Ecuador's mangrove ecosystems.

WILDCOAST has strengthened local capacity for coastal protection by training community members in monitoring, seedling production, eco-tourism, and mangrove restoration, creating community-led systems that support long-term stewardship of MPA's and surrounding ecosystems.



African Women Rising (AWR) 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.

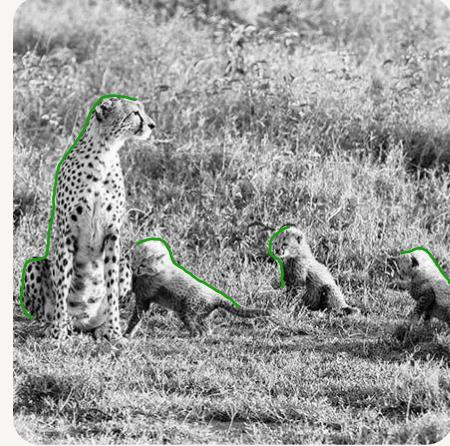
Mid-stage organizations (6-14 years) like Uru Uru, Mikajy Natiora, and Mara-Meru balance technical conservation training with livelihood improvement, often mentoring community members:

Uru Uru Team, engages entire communities surrounding Bolivia's Lake Uru Uru in ecological restoration through totora reed planting and recycled raft construction to ensure the community can sustain restoration work over time. Their goal is to restore the entire lake, a process already halfway achieved, with 50% of the lake now rehabilitated.



Association Mikajy Natiora involves community members, encouraging them to take an active role in protecting nature. The organization employs four local rangers who work on a rotating schedule to conduct ongoing patrols, monitor threats, and collect data on lemurs. These rangers receive a salary, which helps them support and feed their families.

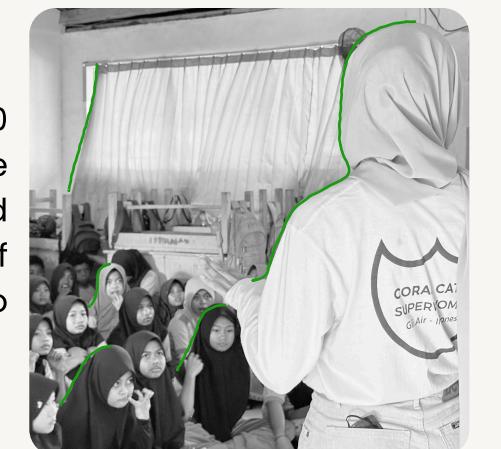
Mara-Meru Cheetah Project has trained over 150 safari guides, who once approached cheetahs only as tourist attractions, to understand their behavior, minimize disturbance, and actively contribute to data collection.



Emerging organizations (2-5 years) like Sea of Life, Coral Catch, and AMPELA are agile innovators that experiment around education, entrepreneurship, and gender inclusion:



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.



Coral Catch has trained 40 Superwomen through its immersive diving, reef-monitoring, and leadership program, with a goal of awarding 100 scholarships to Indonesian women by 2030.



AMPELA has trained over 50 women in nursery management and forest restoration, established one nursery fully managed by local women, and created short-term jobs and stipends during the nursery phase.

A. LOCAL CAPACITY

B. KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Across initiatives, women describe their roles as temporary, emphasizing that true success means becoming dispensable. “[The] long-term plan is to make sure everything that is happening is not dependent on me,” explained Linda Eckerbom, Executive Director of African Women Rising. While achieving this is a complex task and often a considerable challenge, several women leaders intentionally work to prepare others to assume the organization’s leadership in the future.

Elena Chelysheva, founder of the Mara-Meru Cheetah Project.

“I don’t want to show how irreplaceable I am. I trained my assistants, and one became manager of a conservation project. If tomorrow I get sick or die, I want this mechanism to work.”

Dr. Sylviane Volampeno, founder and president of Association Mikyajy Natiora

“Giving [them] the seeds is for now; one day they’ll lead the forest on their own. We won’t always be here, they are the next forest leaders. We support them to grow as rangers and eventually take the lead in forest work”

Nadia DeSouza, one of Lion Guardians’ leaders

“We developed the Elder to Herder Program to pass down knowledge from elders to the youth, so they learn how to herd better and protect livestock.”

Women allow knowledge to flow in many directions, weaving traditional, experiential, scientific, and spiritual wisdom to keep solutions adaptive and grounded.

Around
92%

of women leaders acknowledged the integration of traditional and indigenous knowledge within their conservation work.

Among these initiatives,
nearly half

are fostering a revival of traditional knowledge by bringing ancestral practices and cultural expressions into their ecological strategies.

In women-led initiatives, knowledge moves in many directions, and is not only a one-way transfer. It is offered, received, and reimagined through dialogue and collaboration. Women are not mere transmitters of knowledge; they are weavers who interlace threads of different knowledge into a shared space of understanding.

In the Witeithie Women Group, women immerse themselves in traditional knowledge: “We learn about trees from indigenous elders, including their importance and how to extract medicine from them”, as Julian Wanja explained. At the same time, they engage beyond their community, visiting other groups and organizations doing similar work to expand their perspectives and strengthen their conservation practices: “When we meet other groups, we get to interact with them and learn from them, explore new ideas and knowledge with other organizations.”

Women leaders weave spaces where different threads of understanding can meet: traditional, experiential, scientific, and technical. Around 92% of them acknowledge the integration of traditional and Indigenous knowledge within their conservation work. Among these initiatives, nearly half are fostering a revival of ancestral wisdom, bringing traditional practices and cultural expressions into their ecological strategies. Through listening, translation, and adaptation, they align patterns of meaning so that knowledge becomes shared and usable by everyone involved. Their weaving honors the wisdom of elders and local experience as much as external expertise. In this way, technical knowledge is not imposed but anchored in lived reality, while local knowledge gains visibility, recognition, and the tools to strengthen itself.

As María Janet Arteaga, one of Mujeres y Ambiente leaders, explained, “Working alongside universities has been really special for me because it’s all about exchanging knowledge. As I tell them, university knowledge brings us great richness, but the empirical knowledge that we, as community members, hold can also be valuable to them. It’s a mutual exchange of learning – and, in fact, that’s how Mujeres y Ambiente began: as a way to project ourselves, share knowledge, and offer what we know.”

Among the threads that women bring to the loom, spirituality forms one of the most subtle yet enduring fibers. It runs through their work like a golden strand, connecting past and present, people and nature. This spiritual knowledge carries observations, moral principles, and ecological insights accumulated through generations. It reflects how communities perceive and sustain their relationship with the land, water, and all living beings.

In this sense, spirituality is not an external belief system but a reflection of traditional and generational knowledge, a living expression of how communities have understood and maintained balance with their environment across time. We’ve witnessed across the leaders of these organizations how women value and foster this way of understanding the natural world to lead its protection and restoration.

Within this spiritual thread of leadership rooted in ancestral knowledge, Winona LaDuke, leader of the Anishinaabe Agriculture Institute, describes her role: “My job is to nurture, you know, to support the resistance and the healing.” Her work is guided by the prophecy of lighting the Eighth Fire, a fire of harmony and peace that calls for the care of their territory. As she explains, “We were told long ago there would be two paths ahead – a path which is scorched and one which is green. We are told to make a choice. Today, we see a good path ahead, the green path. This work is about creating a new green revolution, a green economy.”

Examples of How Women Weave Knowledge



In Indonesia, **Flores Bumi Lestari** incorporates traditional knowledge into their work by applying the seasonal calendar to align with local planting and harvest cycles, customary rituals and patterns of food and water availability. Additionally, they integrate traditional knowledge into educational activities 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 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 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.

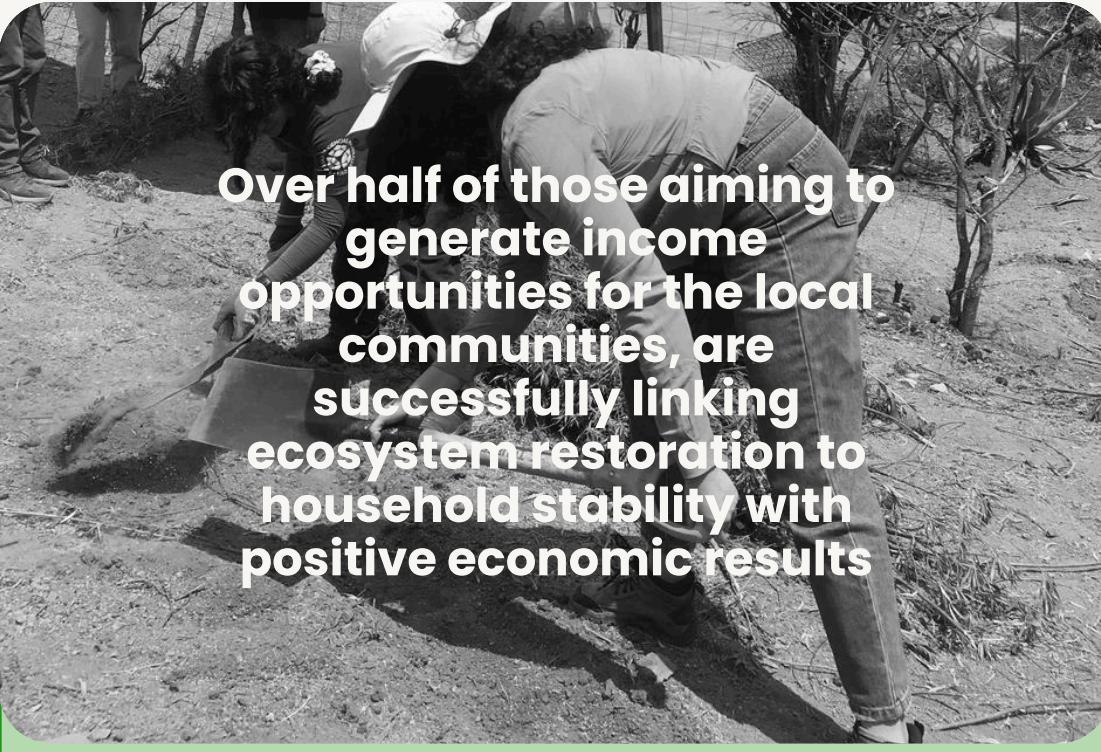
C. LIVELIHOOD AND WELLBEING INTEGRATION

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

Across the initiatives promoting alternative sustainable livelihoods, about **50%** strengthened food security through conservation-based activities.

- These efforts directly benefited **234,000+** people through education, training, and improved livelihoods.

Photos by: Coral Catch, Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises & C-CONDEM



Wellbeing has advanced through health-focused interventions, with **six initiatives** improving access and reproductive health education.

Women leaders acknowledge how the protection and restoration of nature becomes lasting when it is rooted in people's wellbeing and livelihoods. For them, conservation is not separate from caring for human life; it is human life. They begin by addressing community needs because behind every degraded ecosystem, they see degraded living conditions, broken relationships, and lost possibilities for dignity and stability. Rather than treating community vulnerability from a charity perspective or means to an end, they address it with care and a clear orientation toward meaningful, lasting results.

→ Recognizing the context: the people, and their needs, as part of living systems.

The deep awareness of how human wellbeing and environmental health are part of an interconnected living system emerges first, from the recognition that when one suffers, the other follows: when the land deteriorates, survival itself becomes fragile. As Belinda Low, Grevy's Zebra Trust co-founder put it, "There is a connection between healthy land and the health of the community. When the land is bad, the women go away. (...). The most important indicator of success is children staying at home... Healthy rangeland means community members do not leave". Women recognize the web that connects people to their environment: to the food that sustains them, the livelihoods that empower them, and the landscapes that anchor their sense of belonging. In this way, restoration is not only ecological recovery but a foundation for human wellbeing.

For some communities, the most urgent need is food, and conservation has become a source of food. One initiative was explicitly aimed at fighting hunger: "It's difficult to care for something when your kids are hungry. So we focused on improving the farms... planting fruit trees and fodder trees so they might be productive" (African Women Rising). Women are turning conservation into a powerful tool to secure food and sustain families. Of those initiatives that address alternative sustainable livelihoods, about 50% have strengthened food security through conservation-based activities. Of course, there are times when human survival comes into direct conflict with nature's protection; but, when conservation approaches are designed around a deep understanding of people's needs, this tension begins to dissolve.

As these efforts to secure food advance, another form of stability often follows — peace. In contexts marked by violence and displacement, the act of restoring land has come to represent much more than an environmental effort, it is a form of protection and a symbol of hope for the community. "We have less community conflict and children leaving and dying, when land regenerates. Regular rangeland regeneration is now the solution to conflict." (Grevy Zebra Trust). We studied four initiatives that emerged in conflict contexts, as well as others operating in areas affected by the presence of armed groups, where conservation work has become intertwined with the defense of life itself.

Alongside peace, health emerges as another essential bridge between conservation and wellbeing. Six participating initiatives are strengthening reproductive and physical health in the local community, which has proven transformative. In Madagascar, Sylviane Volampeno, president of Association Mikajy Natiora, shared: "When we started, they did not see a good connection between them and our work (focused on protecting lemur habitats and the species itself). Now that we have introduced health services, they become more active on conservation and aware that these efforts are for them, not only for the Lemur species". Through their community wellbeing program, they have introduced healthcare access through a mobile medical service that visits the community every two months, offering free consultations and nutritional monitoring.

When people can see their needs reflected in environmental work, conservation stops feeling like an external agenda and becomes part of a community's own system of care.

Over time, evidence also shows how healthy ecosystems enhance human safety and wellbeing, as Marianeli's experience exemplifies. In 2016, a 7.5-magnitude earthquake struck Ecuador's coast³, devastating many urban areas. On the coastlines where C-CONDEM and local communities had spent years restoring mangroves and planting coconut and mango trees, the story was different. Despite being near the epicenter, these islands withstood the waves and tremors with minimal damage. This experience revived ancestral memories of past earthquakes, when elders recalled feeling safe "because the mangroves surrounded us", as those forests absorbed the shock and protected homes. Marianeli Torres, one of C-CONDEM leaders reflected, "Resilience is collective. It is not possible without nature, but neither is it possible without our bonds with one another. (...). Nature is an actor in our planning — the first one on the map."

³ See: BBC Mundo. (2016, April 16). Terremoto de magnitud 7.8 en la zona costera de Ecuador deja más de 600 muertos.

→ When nature-based activities become a source of income

Income, in this sense, is not only an economic reward – it is recognition that care for nature has value. In Kenya, members of the Witeithie Women Group cultivate crops such as avocado, mango, tree tomato, pawpaw, and moringa, along with poultry and dairy goat farming, to ensure a balanced diet while generating income from selling seedlings and fruits to cover kids school fees and support their families. Their leader, Julian Wanja described “[Community members] generate revenue... boosting the morale to become actively involved (...) I’m proud that we as women are able to feed our families, educate our children, and earn income by selling seedlings and fruits.”

In other contexts, forming local associations gave communities the means to manage their own funds and lead their own projects. “We empower a leader from the neighborhood... She keeps track of how many ladies are in the group, what are the businesses they want to co-design and what they need funding for.” (Women for Conservation). In Madagascar, Sylviane from Association Mikajy Natiora explained how their conservation work has become a vital source of income for women in the community: “They are very poor, some days, they don’t even have rice to eat. But those who work with us as patrols are paid for their work so they can buy food for their families.” When conservation produces livelihoods, it no longer requires persuasion; it becomes legitimate work that sustains families and communities.

We found that 92% of the initiatives studied were seeking to generate income, and among them, over half (64%) showed evidence of achieving this, developing diversified livelihood opportunities. These included activities such as selling grass, cultivating fast-growing crops, poultry and dairy farming, planting fruit trees like avocado and mango, nursery production and baobab product sales, mariculture, eco-tourism, meliponiculture, and even high-altitude nurseries supported by private companies. Through these diverse livelihood strategies, conservation can activate local economies and create sustained incentives for ecological stewardship.

Taken together, these findings show that women-led initiatives are not simply adding livelihood elements to ecological projects. By grounding conservation in wellbeing, women dissolve the boundary between sustaining nature and sustaining life. This also connects back: conservation endures when it is built on people’s life and when ecological protection is inseparable from human wellbeing.

⁴ Founder of the Human Leadership Institute, 4x TEDx speaker, Relational Leadership & Performance Psychology expert.

D. CARE AND LEADERSHIP

If women are weaving local capacity together with diverse knowledge, livelihoods, and wellbeing into the fabric of conservation to sustain continuity, then the core value of care is their common needle. Across the 24 initiatives in this study that embodied these elements for continuity, women’s leadership consistently appeared as profoundly shaped by care—though not in the passive sense often associated with the word. For these leaders, care is neither sentimental nor secondary; it is a form of strength—steady, deliberate, and enduring. As Sarah Lewis, Founder and CEO of Thrive Conservation, explained, “Feminine leadership doesn’t have to be passive. Like a mama lion protecting her cubs, nurturing energy when it’s threatened turns into a strong, powerful force.”

This care often begins as a deep, personal connection to the places women protect. It is not symbolic but embodied—caring for nature means caring for themselves, their families, and their heritage. As Dayana Blanco, co-founder of the Uru Uru Team described, “Care for us means care for nature, but also care for the other, and care with reciprocity. That’s the way we lead in my community.” Across the study, 71% of women leaders described a direct, lived bond with the ecosystems they protect. Mama Mikoko, leader of the Pate Kiswani Women’s Group, expressed it vividly: “Me and mangrove—it’s like skin and blood.” In Ecuador’s coastal communities, Marianeli described how, when a child is born, their umbilical cord is buried in the mangrove—a ritual that anchors belonging to the land across generations (C-CONDEM). This way of caring redefines what leadership looks like. For these women, care operates simultaneously as a value and a strategy—a guiding principle for how they organize, make decisions, and relate to others.

It is a deliberate practice of safeguarding life, relationships, and the conditions that allow both people and ecosystems to thrive. Through this approach, women’s leadership fosters a renewed bond with nature, transforming how communities see, feel, and relate to the living world.

In roughly half of the initiatives studied, women described how they’re already seeing signs of people shifting relationships with nature—from fear, distance, or mere to appreciation, harmony, and coexistence.

Across contexts, women bring a distinctive perspective—one that values beauty, balance, and interconnectedness, moving conservation beyond a purely functional or extractive model toward a more relational practice.

At the Youth Land Trust, Callie Broaddus, founder and executive director, explained how women’s participation in wildlife monitoring transformed indifference and fear into fascination: “When women start studying animals—observing, taking notes, watching behaviors—they begin to see them differently. The more time they spend looking, the more value they find. They say, ‘I didn’t know the monkey did that. How beautiful.’ Even with snakes, people used to kill them out of fear but now they see them as part of the forest, as another being to live alongside.” From the spiritual dimension, in Colombia, the women of Cumbres Blancas describe the páramos as “the heart that gives us water.” Protecting frailejones, giant rosette plants that store moisture—has become a sacred act: each seedling planted is “a prayer for the mountains.” In Ecuador, C-CONDEM work “began with the aesthetic revaluation of nature—to reawaken emotional bonds that counter the logic of extraction and domination.” As leader Marianeli Torres explained, weaving the concept of beauty to mangrove restoration is a way to make visible the value of life itself and to restore a sense of dignity to ecosystems once dismissed as wastelands.

→ Relational leadership

Alongside the common core value of care, we identified a cross-cutting trait across diverse leadership styles, contexts, origins and personalities: women lead conservation initiatives through a relational approach, grounded in trust and collaboration with their communities and teams. As leadership scholar Jen Croneberger⁴ writes, relational leadership “emphasizes empathy, understanding, and genuine connection, and sees people as the foundation of any lasting change—prioritizing connection over control” (Forbes, 2024). Rather than relying on formal authority or technical credentials alone, women leaders anchor their work in values that shape daily interactions and community relationships.

In 71% of our participants, we observed a way of leading that intentionally shares ownership and decision-making. For example, we noted women leaders resist arriving with answers and solutions, opening space for communities to define priorities and co-create strategies and actions. Collaboration, for these women, begins with listening.

As Eka Cahyaningrum, CEO of HIRAI, explained, “We don’t come to the village and say, ‘We have a solution.’ We ask them what they want. And if it aligns with our values, we work together.” We witnessed this firsthand during the interviews conducted for this study, where many leaders invited team members to participate and even served as translators for those who did not speak English or Spanish, translating questions and answers back and forth to ensure their voices were included. These gestures made visible what their leadership truly stands for: those on the ground are leaders too.

Trust, in turn, is what makes collaboration durable. In our interviews, over 70% of the women leaders spoke about the process of trust-building and its central role in their work. At Ewaso Lions, for instance, founder Shivani Bhalla described how she built trust by “leading from behind” allowing her team and community members to make decisions and learn from experience. This approach fostered confidence and ownership, transforming conservation into a shared responsibility rather than a top-down effort.

Together, care, collaboration, and trust form the living fabric of relational leadership. Women lead not as external authorities but as legitimate articulators, enabling long-term participation.

They explain why continuity emerges so strongly across such diverse contexts: because leadership rooted in relationships among people, communities, and ecosystems is leadership that leads conservation work to last.



Photo by: African Women Rising

FINDINGS

WOMEN'S RIPPLE EFFECT

When a woman steps into leadership to protect or restore the natural world, she sets change in motion, often without realizing it. Simply by being visible in roles from which women were once excluded, she challenges what her community imagines possible. Her presence becomes living proof that women can break cultural barriers and open pathways for others to belong and lead in conservation. Just by standing in leadership roles, she begins to crack the invisible ceiling that has long limited women's participation in public and environmental spaces.

As women see each other leading, they gain confidence to transform community practices, expand conservation efforts, and step into decision-making spaces. The ripple effect unfolds through two complementary dynamics: the quiet power of example that gives women the visibility that inspires imitation and shifts norms, and the intentional creation of spaces where other women and girls can learn, speak, and lead.



Photo by: Coral Catch

→ The quiet power of example

This influence often unfolds through example: "Our director used to go to the field up to seven months pregnant—and that inspired everyone. The community saw that women can lead, and they can do it well," shared Nadia from Lion Guardians. At Ewaso Lions, when a single visible act, like the first woman driving a field vehicle in the Samburu National Reserve Park in Kenya, becomes inspiration for other women to drive. The women's field presence has been equally transformative there: "Women outside the initiative are digging holes themselves for wildlife during drought seasons" Shivani stated, becoming a catalyst for others, sparking confidence to take initiative and step into restoration work.

The same dynamic emerged in the Tamang Dugong organization, where all field staff are women. "Maybe it's new for people here to see women working in the field," shared founder Mikaela Clarissa, "but now the men in the local communities respect us, they even invite us to go fishing with them." What began as curiosity became admiration, and eventually, collaboration. By simply doing the work, these women shift perceptions of what leadership looks like and who it belongs to.

What is it? It's 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 we were able to identify it in

90% of our sample.



Examples of How Women's Ripple Effect Looks Like



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. Rose Huizenga, founder of the organization, said "Five years ago, it was rare to see Indonesian women working in marine conservation or as dive professionals. Today, organizations reach out to hire our alumni". By recognizing the absence of female role models in marine conservation in Indonesia, Rose designed a marine conservation leadership program that accompanies women from early inspiration to professional employment. Through this program, women gain technical skills while developing leadership and confidence to run their own initiatives. The impact extends beyond employment: more than 90 local women have learned to swim and seen the coral reefs for the first time, dive centers and boat operators now welcome women as divers and conservation leaders, and young girls watch the "Superwomen" or graduates of Coral Catch return from their dives, many of them wearing their hijabs, and imagine what it would feel like to be in their place.



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. "Our community didn't allow women to take part in leadership. That was the challenge," recalled Mama Mikoko. 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 participatory approach gradually transformed local governance, normalizing women's involvement in decision-making and community projects. What began as a small and isolated restoration effort has evolved into a collective movement that now includes 73 active members. As a result, both ecosystems and livelihoods have improved. Restored mangroves have brought back fish and crab populations, while prawns, mudskippers, and even terrestrial species such as monkeys and baboons have reappeared around the rehabilitated coastal habitats. Women have also been trained in leadership and business skills, enabling them to manage income-generating activities in mariculture and improve household livelihoods.



In Bolivia, the **Uru Uru Team—a youth- and women-led organization**—has restored the heavily polluted Lake Uru Uru using an ancestral water filtration technique with totora reeds. Men, who had long dominated community decision-making, were initially skeptical but changed their perception once the women's solution proved effective. "After they saw that the totoras took root and started to grow into the lake's polluted waters, they said, 'wow, it has worked,'" recalled Dayana Blanco, the organization's co-founder. The project's success not only reduced heavy metals in the lake by 30% and brought back bird species such as flamingos but also shifted gender dynamics: "Now they include us in the different decisions they are making." When tensions over mining pollution escalated, the women challenged calls for confrontation and instead organized a nonviolent campaign to engage the government. "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 held the power. But through leading this project, we understood that we also have agency," explained Dayana. Through patience, dialogue, and ancestral knowledge, the women of Uru Uru not only are reviving their sacred lake but also redefined leadership and the very process of change itself.

→ Creating space intentionally for other women

On the other hand, women intentionally make space and create opportunities for other women to join the collective work, learn, speak, and develop as leaders, defying norms that many times confine them to the household. Across 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.

Therefore, the more women step into leadership to safeguard nature, conservation efforts grow stronger, communities become more engaged, and more women take the lead in the protection and restoration of ecosystems. It is within this expanding circle of action that women's leadership proves to be not just transformative for gender equality, but for conservation itself, creating a ripple effect beyond their intent, with 90% of the participating initiatives showing evidence of it.

They enable measurable ecological outcomes but also reshape the way communities collaborate, resolve conflict, and share responsibility for natural resources.

In this sense, the ripple effect of women's leadership represents one of the most powerful returns on investment in conservation: investing in a single woman-led organization yields exponential benefits for the ecosystem, the community, and the generations that follow. In a time of polycrisis—where environmental, social, and economic systems are deeply intertwined, investing in women's leadership emerges as both a model and a mandate for how regeneration can take root and endure.



Photo by: Pate Kisiwani Women Group



Photo by: Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises

Although our findings show that women's leadership in conservation generates greater impact through its ripple effect, leading such efforts is far from easy. These women and their teams are achieving remarkable results, often while working in conditions of persistent adversity. Half of the surveyed initiatives report gender-based barriers or biases as a main challenge in their journey, representing the third most common one in the sample. The reality is women continue to encounter discrimination, exclusion, and safety risks in their daily work. As Callie Broaddus from Youth Land Trust expressed, "We as women are not safe in the field without accompaniment of male counterparts. This is true for any female scientist or conservationist practically anywhere in the world." Rose Huizenga, founder of Coral Catch, noted that "despite so much progress towards breaking down gender barriers, we still encounter moments when our women are deprived of opportunities on the basis of gender."

These biases manifest across multiple dimensions, from professional credibility to physical safety, and often intersect with land ownership and tenure issues, creating compounded obstacles: "[A significant challenge is] gender inequality problems with land ownership within rural communities" (Witeithie Women Group); "Land tenure laws often exclude women, and patriarchal norms inhibit their leadership in environmental spaces." (Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises). Such systemic discrimination not only restricts access to resources but also limits women's participation in decision-making processes essential for conservation and land management.

The second most common challenge reported is climate change impacts, affecting more than half of organizations (54.2%). Women across regions outline how extreme weather events undermine restoration and livelihood activities. "Droughts and floods heavily impacted on us," shared Ewaso Lions. Another explained that "changing weather patterns make it harder for farmers to be successful" (African Women Rising). These testimonies reaffirm the urgency of building resilience systems capable of protecting both ecosystems and livelihoods from recurring shocks.

Funding scarcity stands out as the most pervasive challenge, affecting all 24 surveyed initiatives.

CHALLENGES

This unanimous finding underscores a critical gap in the global funding ecosystem for women-led environmental action. Organizations frequently described how short funding cycles and restricted grants hinder continuity, forcing leaders to divert energy from implementation to constant fundraising. In response, multiple initiatives prioritize local capacity building and community-based income generation to sustain conservation efforts independently.

Moreover, nearly two-thirds of the surveyed organizations (62.5%) reflect a growing emphasis on long-term financial sustainability, a reflection of women leaders' strategic vision to secure continuity. Some organizations, like WILDCOAST and Association Mikajy Natiora, have developed strategic fundraising plans or diversified donor bases, while others such as AMPELA are exploring community-based income generation models to maintain autonomy and continuity. Several leaders expressed a desire to build income-generating activities and social enterprises, yet struggle to access mentorship or investment tailored to women-led organizations.

Beyond these primary challenges, other persistent barriers continue to shape how women-led initiatives operate and grow. Many of these limitations expose structural gaps that can only be addressed through broader collaboration and systemic support. On one hand, capacity and knowledge gaps remain a significant limitation for many organizations. Reported by 42% of initiatives as lack of tools or equipment, 38% as lack of training, and 38% as limited technical knowledge, these constraints reveal the interdependence between resources, skills, and outcomes. On the other hand, political and legal barriers were identified by 33% of surveyed initiatives as another major obstacle. Restrictive policies and regulatory frameworks often delay or block project development, requiring significant time and energy to navigate complex bureaucratic processes.

Yet, these challenges also highlight the importance of relationship-building as a pathway to overcome barriers and influence. As will be elaborated next, establishing strategic partnerships becomes essential to address funding scarcity, technical gaps, and restrictive policies. Through collaboration, women gain access to technical support, training, shared data, policy frameworks, and market linkages, transforming limitations into opportunities for growth and continuity.



Photo by: Coral Catch

PARTNERSHIPS

In this context, partnerships emerge not only as a response to barriers but as a reflection of how women lead: collaboratively, relationally, and with a long-term vision. Rather than isolated efforts to fill gaps, these alliances become a way of weaving resilience into their initiatives.

Therefore, weaving with others becomes an integral part of continuity in how women build partnerships that overcome the challenges while sustaining and expanding their work. Across organizations, women leaders seek alliances with diverse stakeholders that nurture their initiatives and help weave their impact on ecosystems and communities. We found that, regardless of the leader's background (foreign founders, local leaders, grassroots leaders and organizational leaders implementing "umbrella" organizations), about 80% of the women-led initiatives had three or more categories of stakeholders as partners. These collaborations not only support projects but also extend their reach and influence, connecting local actions with national and global agendas (See Annex 3).

Just like the knowledge exchange women facilitate within their initiatives, partnerships do not bring benefits in only one direction. Women-led initiatives contribute to their partners through knowledge, data, training, and visibility, weaving connections that enrich all who take part.

With environmental organizations and community partners, they provide training and resources — as seen in Madagascar, where women's groups run nurseries, and in Kenya, where MoUs with community conservancies strengthen restoration efforts.

With NGOs, they share local knowledge and advocacy, co-authoring food literacy books in Indonesia or presenting case studies internationally through the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature in Colombia.

With academia, they collaborate in research and capacity building, hosting Princeton students in Bolivia for totora restoration or working with Indonesian students to document food plants and co-create educational materials.

With government institutions, they share monitoring data and outcomes — as in Madagascar, where initiatives report to the Ministry of Environment, or in Kenya, where they inform ministries of agriculture and environment about restoration progress.

With the private sector, they create bridges to conservation-linked markets, such as partnerships with PROVITAL S.A. in Mexico or frailejón nursery projects in Colombia that demonstrate measurable conservation impact.

These findings show that women-led initiatives are not merely recipients of support but active contributors to broader systems. Their work provides partners with legitimacy, grounded knowledge, and tested approaches that strengthen conservation outcomes.



Photo by: African Women Rising

Where the women leader "comes from"

Community leaders



Indigenous Hemp Cooperative



Pate Kisiwani Women Group



Witeithie Women Group



Mujeres y Ambiente



Uru Uru Team



Flores Bumi Lestari

Local leaders working on rural communities of their countries



Association Mikajy Natiora



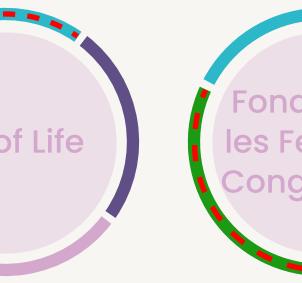
C-CONDEM



Himba Raya Indonesia (HIRAI)



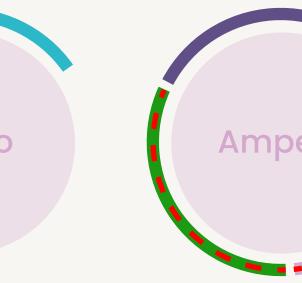
Women for Conservation



Sea of Life



Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises



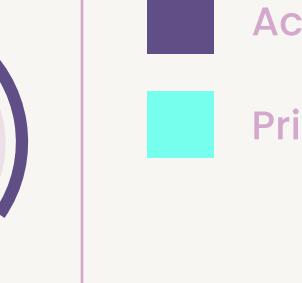
Ewaso



Ampela



Tamang Dugong Indonesia



Lion Guardians

Foreign leader that stayed to work with the local community



Grevy's Zebra Trust



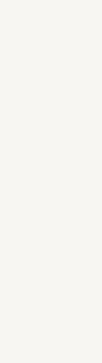
Coral Catch



Thrive Conservation



African Women Rising



Mara-Meru Cheetah Project

Women leading implementing "umbrella" organizations



Reserva: The Youth Land Trust



Cumbres Blancas



WILDCOAST

Partners categories

- Environmental organization
- Government
- NGO
- Academia
- Private sector

Actions performed by partners

- Training
- Communications
- Scholarships
- Information sharing
- Funds
- Initiative gives policy support

If the figure has a dotted inner line, the interchange is bilateral!

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We want to sincerely thank every woman that supported this study, and their teams, for their generosity and openness to share their journeys with us. Learning firsthand from them and what they do was our honor and incredible privilege.

This impact study 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.

At a time when the very fabric of life is fraying, these women are showing us how to mend it. As we near the midpoint of 2030 the decade of action and delivery, their work reframes what is possible, revealing how we can leapfrog our impact and stand a real chance of delivering on the commitments. It also offers vital guidance for how global development policy must evolve as we step into a new era: one that will continue to weave the future of humanity.



We want to thank every leader, team member, and organization that collaborated to make this study possible.

African Women Rising

Linda Eckerbom Cole

Anishinaabe Agriculture Institute

Winona LaDuke

ASSOCIATION MIKAJY NATIORA

Sylviane Volampeno
Guy Randriatahina

C-CONDÉM

Marianeli Torres Benavides

Cumbre Blancas

Estefania Angel
Angela Sofía Fajardo

Ewaso Lions

Shivani Bhalla
Munteli Lalparasaroi

Flores Bumi Lestari

Ismi Ariniawati
Maria Beribe Floored
Petric Dewa

Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises (FFC)

Wangechi Githaiga

Grevy's Zebra Trust

Belinda Low Mackey
Damaris Lekiluai
Sintiwan Lekilia
Ngeeti Lempate aka Mama Grevy

Lion Guardians

Nadia de Souza
Merishi John

AMPELA

Seheno Andriantsaralaza

Pate Kisiwani Women Group

Zulfa Hassan

Mujeres y Ambiente

María Janet Arteaga Ordaz
María de los Ángeles Balderas Moreno
Rosa Balderas Moreno

Photo by: Tamang Dugong

Reserva: The Youth Land Trust

Callie Broaddus
Laura Suárez
Johana Villota

Thrive Conservation

Sarah Lewis
Nesha Ichida

Coral Catch

Rose Huizenga
Sakinah Yusuf
Dassia Regalado

HIRAI

Eka Cahyaningrum

Tamang Dugong Indonesia

Mikaela Clarissa
Santi Kartini

Uru Uru Team

Dayana Blanco Quiroga

WILDCOAST

Anne Middleton
Monica Franco
Angela Kemsley
Daniel Arellano
Minerva Carrillo
Rocio Lopez

Witeithie women group

Julian Wanja
Ann Wambura
Rose Muthoni

Women for Conservation

Sara Inés Lara
Isabella Cortés Lara



Photo by: Pate Kisiwani Women Group

REFERENCES

Amazon Investor Coalition. (s.f.). [Amazon deforestation damage and recovery in numbers](#). Amazon Investor Coalition

Akpensuen T.T., Cartmill A.D., Pérez-Márquez S., Sheridan H., Lee M.R.F. & Rivero M.J. (2025). [Make African grasslands climate-change resilient](#). Communications Earth & Environment, 6:111.

Bauza, V. (2024). [In Ecuador, a 'milestone' effort to protect mangroves – and people](#). Conservation International.

BBC Mundo. (2016). [Terremoto de magnitud 7,8 en la zona costera de Ecuador deja más de 600 muertos](#).

Foreign Policy Analytics. (2024). [Protecting biodiversity and driving development through women's leadership](#)

Forbes Coaches Council. (2024). [Relational leadership and the path to reconnection](#).

Global Greengrants Fund. (2018). [Our voices, our environment: The state of funding for women's environmental action – Executive summary](#). Global Greengrants Fund. https://www.greengrants.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GGF_Mapping-Report_Executive-Summary_HighRes-FINAL.pdf

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). (2023). [Ambition to achieve gender balance in international climate negotiations must be matched by finance](#).

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). (2018). [The role, influence and impact of women in biodiversity conservation](#)

International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2021). [Building back better: How big are green spending multipliers?](#)

Leisher, C., Temsah, G., Booker, F., Day, M., Samberg, L., Prosnitz, D., et al. (2016). [Does the gender composition of forest and fishery management groups affect resource governance and conservation outcomes? A systematic map](#)

Nature4Climate. (s. f.). [Restoration and management](#).

Mangrove Action Project. (2022). [Restoring vital ecosystems in Kenya](#).

Mongabay. (2022). [Funding for women-led conservation remains tiny, but that's changing fast](#).

Mongabay. (2023). [A standing Amazon Rainforest could create an \\$8 billion bioeconomy: Study](#).

Mongabay. (2024). [Women-led groups remain severely underfunded for climate action: Report](#).

Pratami, D. (2023). [Riding the waves for a blue future in Indonesia](#).

The Guardian. (2025). ['We used to think the ice was eternal': Colombia looks to a future without glaciers](#). The Guardian.

The Nature Conservancy. (n.d.). [Women & allies in climate](#).

The Nature Conservancy. (2017). [Nature's make-or-break potential for climate change](#).

UNESCO. (2025). [Mountains and glaciers: Water towers](#). En United Nations World Water Development Report 2025. UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). (2021). [Becoming #GenerationRestoration: Ecosystem restoration for people, nature and climate](#).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2024). [How gender equality drives effective forest conservation](#).

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2024). [Closing the gap: Boosting ambition – investing in women is key to climate action](#).

Volland & Henry, (2019). [Diversity in decision-making](#).

Water of Systems Change (FSG). (2018). [The water of systems change](#).

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). (2019). [Women's organizations and climate finance: Engaging in processes and accessing resources](#).

World Bank Group (2021). [Banking on Protected Areas](#)

World Bank Group. (2021). [Mobilizing private finance for nature](#).

World Bank. (s.f.). [Indonesia Sustainable Oceans Program](#).

World Economic Forum (WEF). (2020). [Half of world's GDP moderately or highly dependent on nature, says new report](#).

WWF. (2020). [Grassland and Savannah Ecosystems: An Urgent Need for Conservation and Sustainable Management](#).

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Participants by ecosystem type, relevance and value of key environmental services identified, long with infrastructure that supports conservation initiatives.

Ecosystem	Participants and supporting infrastructure	Key ecosystem services	Economic benefits	Why it matters: reflections from the participant initiatives
Farmland and agro ecosystems	 <p>4 organizations with: 3 nurseries 6 solar panels</p>	Soil formation and regeneration, water regulation, pollination, biodiversity maintenance	Restoring degraded land through sustainable agriculture can yield an extra US \$1,140 per hectare (Nature4Climate, 2023).	Women-led action shows how environmental recovery translates into food security, income diversification, and reduced vulnerability to drought and market shocks.
Forests	 <p>5 organizations with: 2 nurseries 6 protected areas</p>	Climate regulation, water regulation, food production, erosion regulation, biodiversity maintenance	Each hectare cleared costs about US \$55,000 in global damages, while standing forests could generate an US \$8 billion bioeconomy annually (Amazon Investor Coalition, 2023; Mongabay, 2023).	In women-led initiatives, forests also embody cultural identity and intergenerational stewardship – the link between people's wellbeing and ecosystem health.
Mangroves	 <p>3 organizations with 1 nursery</p>	Moderation of extreme events, erosion regulation, climate regulation, biodiversity maintenance	In East Africa, mangrove ecosystem services are worth over US \$6.5 million annually in Kenya's Mida Creek and US \$3.5 million in the Tana Delta (Mangrove Action Project, 2024). Projects along Ecuador's coasts aim to sequester nearly 5 million metric tons of GHGs over 20 years (Conservation International, 2023).	In impact terms, mangroves exemplify nature as infrastructure: they protect human settlements while mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration and sediment accretion (the opposite of soil erosion).
Oceans and Coral Reefs	 <p>4 organizations with: 12 sites with environmental education. 1 laboratory 1 nursery</p>	Moderation of extreme events, biodiversity maintenance, nutrient cycling	In Indonesia, ocean resources generate over US \$256 billion annually, accounting for more than a quarter of the national economy; 70% of the population lives along coasts and seven million people depend directly on the sea for their livelihoods (World Bank, 2023; UNSDG, 2023).	In the context of women-led initiatives, these ecosystems are crucial for community safety, income generation, and cultural continuity. Their restoration links local action to global climate resilience.
Peatlands	 <p>2 organizations with: 1 zone with regenerative grazing practices</p>	Climate regulation, moderation of extreme events, water purification and waste treatment, Biodiversity maintenance	Found in over 180 countries, peatlands cover just 3 percent of land yet store nearly 30 percent of soil carbon. They manage water, prevent floods and droughts, support communities, and shelter species unique to this ecosystem (UNEP, 2021).	In women-led initiatives, peatland and wetland restoration represent both climate mitigation and community protection—guarding carbon belowground while safeguarding health, food, and livelihoods above it.
Grasslands and Savannas	 <p>4 organizations with: 150 solar panels 7 zones of regenerative grazing</p>	Climate regulation, erosion regulation	Grasslands and savannas sustain about 70% of rural Africans who depend on livestock for their livelihoods (Akpensuen et al., 2025). Beyond their social role, these ecosystems deliver enormous ecological and economic value—over US \$9 billion annually in food, water, medicine, and timber—while maintaining soil carbon, biodiversity, and hydrological balance (WWF, 2020).	In East Africa and similar contexts, they represent the social-ecological nexus where community wellbeing and rangeland health are inseparable. Restoration of these systems improves soil fertility, reduces conflict over grazing, and strengthens resilience to drought.
Mountains and Glaciers	 <p>1 organization with 1 frailejón nursery</p>	Fresh water supply, erosion regulation, water regulation	Mountains and glaciers sustain 2 billion downstream through glacier and snowmelt-fed water supplies (UNESCO, 2025). In the Andes, Colombia's Sierra Nevada del Cocuy alone holds the equivalent of 256,000 Olympic swimming pools of freshwater, underscoring the magnitude of these reservoirs (The Guardian, 2025).	In women-led initiatives, mountain ecosystems represent spaces where climate adaptation, water security, and intergenerational knowledge converge—ensuring that the sources of life at high altitudes continue nourishing the plains below.

ANNEXES

Annex 2. Environmental outcomes resulting from the conservation efforts of the participant organizations and the relevance of continuity to achieve them, enabled by deeper shifts.

Environmental outcomes	Why continuity matters	Examples from participant organizations
Biodiversity Recovery: 18,795 ha Area of ecosystem protected, contributing to species conservation and population recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 77% of the initiatives focused on biodiversity maintenance report the return of wildlife. Population growth has been reported in five key species, including lions, Grevy's zebra, marine turtles, parakeets, flamingos, and sharks. More than 21 native fauna and flora species have recovered. 	<p>For wildlife protection, local leadership and ownership secure long-term protection by turning conservation into a community-driven practice rather than an externally funded effort. As local people gain stewardship, monitoring, and anti-poaching become part of daily life, while relational change — seeing wildlife as kin, teachers, or symbols of identity — anchors protection in cultural meaning. This sustained bond between people and species ensures biodiversity recovery endures over time. Continuity is essential because biodiversity recovery unfolds slowly — ecosystems need time and stability to heal. Habitats require years to regenerate, animal species depend on consistent conditions to reproduce and reestablish their populations, and native vegetation needs multiple seasons to mature, disperse seeds, and rebuild the ecological balance that sustains wildlife.</p> <p>Lion Guardians — they've achieved a shift of mindset from hunters to guardians, building ownership and promoting coexistence between people and wildlife, reflected in a 7.6 lions per 100 km² density in 2024 (5.6% increase from 2023).</p> <p>Ewaso Lions — strengthened Samburu leadership and cultural values, lion populations tripled in 15 years and protected 450,000 hectares of wildlife habitat.</p> <p>Grevy's Zebra Trust — community scouts led by local women sustained wildlife protection, reaching 29.9% juvenile recovery rate.</p> <p>WILDCOAST — 9,377,736 olive ridley hatchlings protected at Morro Ayuta beach in 2024 season; over 130 million total hatchlings protected since inception</p>
Habitat & Vegetation Regeneration 97,864 ha Area of ecosystem restored 5,162 ha Area of sustainable agriculture 5 ha of trees planted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invasive species removed, improving ecosystem function. 	<p>Communities that integrate livelihoods with restoration create a living cycle where the health of the land sustains the health of people. As women lead these processes, they embed restoration within community identity and local economy enabling sustained habitat management. Soils need time to rebuild their structure and recover nutrients, while native vegetation requires several seasons to take root and restore natural cover.</p> <p>African Women Rising — livelihoods integrated into restoration through resilience farming, sustaining tree planting and soil cover.</p> <p>WILDCOAST — community-led mangrove restoration (40,000+ trees) maintained through local monitoring and eco-livelihoods.</p>
Freshwater & Soil Recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 initiatives are applying sustainable agricultural practices to degraded soil. Improved soil fertility has led to increased vegetation, which in turn helps control erosion. 44% of those safeguarding water report improvement in quality or availability 		<p>Behavioral change and community ownership reduce unsustainable agricultural practices and foster adaptive land management rooted in ecological knowledge. Continuity ensures that soil and water restoration are not one-time interventions but ongoing, seasonal processes shaped by observation and care. As farmers adopt this long-term perspective, fertility and water retention become shared responsibilities rather than isolated tasks.</p> <p>Mujeres y Ambiente — Improved soil retention, water absorption, and increased soil organic content.</p> <p>Uru Uru Team — 30% reduction in lake water pollution through the planting of native totoras, leading to improved health of surrounding lands.</p>
Climate change mitigation and resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 in case of fires. 33% 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. 		<p>The stewardship of local communities is key for effective nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change from sustained carbon capture and avoidance of land conversion. Carbon sequestration through reforestation, soil restoration, and sustainable land management requires years of uninterrupted growth and protection to reach its potential. Similarly, climate resilience builds gradually as vegetation cover, soil moisture, and biodiversity strengthen ecosystem functions.</p> <p>Witeithie Women Group — farmers report climate improvement and microclimate stabilization through continuous reforestation and soil restoration.</p> <p>Cumbres Blancas — community trained to prevent and respond to fires, ensuring lasting local climate resilience.</p> <p>Flores Bumi Lestari — Using the Carbon Sequestration Tool from Women's Earth Alliance, the organization monitors carbon capture according to tree species and their specific traits.</p>
Waste & Pollution Reduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 initiatives are directly reducing waste pollution in their communities. 18,735 pieces of waste audited, 200 beaches and 100 underwater cleanups. 		<p>Through consistent clean-up activities and awareness efforts, communities value and contribute to maintaining a cleaner and healthier ecosystem. These actions, combined with stronger waste management systems, more conscious production and consumption habits, help create lasting positive change for people and nature.</p> <p>Sea of Life — consistent youth leadership and community training sustain large-scale beach cleanup and waste monitoring.</p> <p>Coral Catch — women-led marine waste removal and eco-tourism enterprises maintain long-term plastic reduction and coral health.</p>

ANNEXES

Annex 3. Examples of partnerships by stakeholder categories.

Stakeholder category of reported partnerships	Example
<p>Women-led initiatives collaborate with environmental organizations and community partners that implement restoration and nursery activities such as tree planting, mangrove restoration, and seed systems. Community associations, Indigenous collectives, and women's groups organize restoration work, manage nurseries, and facilitate coexistence projects that balance conservation with livelihoods. These alliances connect ecological work with community-led action and local stewardship.</p>	<p>The Youth Land "We collaborate intensively with local partners at our project sites to plan and execute conservation projects. Together, we decide which external institutional collaborations to pursue for scientific research (e.g. they may have a collaborator for bird research, and we may bring one in for herpetology research). We rely on them to identify community groups for collaboration. Our collaborative work includes scientific exploration, land purchases and payments for conservation, media collection and dissemination, and educational workshops."</p>
<p>Partnerships with NGOs and advocacy networks provide conservation expertise, technical support, training, and access to funding. NGOs also connect initiatives to international advocacy and policy forums.</p>	<p>Coral Catch The initiative has established partnerships with eleven NGOs and foundations that strengthen their work in marine conservation, scientific research, and women's empowerment. Through these collaborations, participants receive professional dive training, ecological monitoring and coral identification skills, and access to global conservation programs. Additionally, these alliances support women pursuing marine science careers.</p>
<p>Engagement with academia and research institutions supports monitoring, data generation, and scientific validation. Universities and research centers contribute studies and training, while initiatives open their territories for fieldwork, co-create knowledge, and bring community perspectives into research agendas. These exchanges align scientific outputs with community realities.</p>	<p>Mara-Meru Cheetah Project "We collaborate with international and research institutions and projects, with conservation organizations, international and local universities by conducting collaborative studies and exchanging knowledge in order to enhance wildlife conservation and building capacity."</p>
<p>Government institutions are important partners for technical advice, training, policy frameworks, and in some cases financial or programmatic support through agencies such as UNDP, GIZ, or WFP. Initiatives contribute by sharing information from the field, reporting on restoration results, and ensuring that local perspectives inform national and international policies.</p>	<p>Sea of Life The initiative contributed to the government by identifying the top ten brands and items most responsible for plastic pollution, providing key evidence to guide national recommendations for banning non-essential single-use plastics. These findings are supporting the development of a national plastic phase-out policy.</p>
<p>Partnerships with the private sector provide funding for nurseries, restoration, and conservation activities. They also include trade agreements, integration into sustainable value chains, and collaborations that connect local products with markets. These partnerships link conservation with income generation and economic diversification.</p>	<p>Cumbres Blancas "In private companies, we used to say, "come and do a tree planting," which was the common idea — and one we're also trying to change — because planting trees is not the only way to reforest. Instead of investing so that the whole company comes to plant trees, which is great if they do, it's even better if they invest in a high-mountain nursery and help sustain it for one or two years. That company benefits by contributing to germination, supporting education, and helping to activate the local economy."</p>



DAUGHTERS
FOR EARTH

daughterforearth.org
[Instagram](#)