

Reframing Climate Justice: **Insights from** **Women Deliver 2026** Author: Mary Maina



From **April 27–30, 2026**, the global gender equality community convened at the **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in Melbourne, Australia**, for the **Women Deliver 2026 Conference**, organized by Women Deliver.

Bringing together over **5,000 participants from more than 185 countries**, including political leaders, activists, funders, journalists, and young people the conference took place at a moment defined by rising conflict, shrinking civic space, and increasing pressure on both gender equality and climate resilience.

Shaped through months of consultations across regions and movements, the convening signaled a critical realignment in how gender equality and climate action are understood, prioritized, and advanced. At the center of that realignment was a clear and urgent shift: **The climate crisis is not only environmental, it is deeply gendered, unequal, and rooted in systems that must change.**

Climate Crisis as a Gendered and Systemic Reality

Speaking in Narm, Melbourne, **Dr. Maliha Khan, CEO of Women Deliver**, captured the urgency of this moment:

“Girls disproportionately bear the burden of the climate crisis, but are among those who contribute the least to it. It is a very gendered issue.”

Her remarks underscored a broader reality echoed across the conference: climate change is intensifying inequalities, particularly in low and middle-income regions across Africa and South Asia.

Its impacts extend beyond the environment into **health systems, livelihoods, and access to essential services, disrupting areas such as:**

- Sexual and reproductive health
- HIV and AIDS treatment
- Community-based care systems

This reframing positions climate change as a development, equity, and justice issue and not a technical concept.

Holding Power, Access, and Responsibility

While the Women Deliver 2026 Conference created space for connection, exchange, and strategy, it also unfolded within a global context shaped by deep and persistent inequalities.

Not everyone who should be in these spaces is able to be present.

Across contexts, many continue to navigate:

- Conflict and displacement
- Barriers at borders
- Limited access to resources
- Shrinking civic space

The ability to gather in Melbourne is therefore not neutral, it reflects structural realities of access and privilege.

Recognizing this does not diminish the convening, it deepens its responsibility. It calls for engagement that is intentional, accountable, and grounded in collective action, with a clear imperative to ensure that the momentum generated extends beyond those in the room.

At the center of this moment is the need to ensure that global outcomes, such as the **Melbourne Declaration for Gender Equality**, are not confined to convening spaces, but are translated into **locally led, context-driven action**.

This requires sustained efforts to:

- Adapt global commitments to lived realities
- Strengthen community-rooted systems and responses
- Advance advocacy and accountability beyond global platforms

This is the space where **The Center for Resilience and Sustainable Africa (CEFRESA)** operates, bridging global frameworks with community systems, and enabling climate and gender commitments to translate into practical, locally owned impact.

In this way, the impact of the Women Deliver 2026 Conference extends far beyond Melbourne. It is carried forward through collective action, local leadership, and sustained engagement across contexts.

Climate at the Core of WD2026

Climate change was not a side conversation; it was embedded across the conference as a core pillar.

Climate at the Core of WD2026

Discussions centered on:

- Those most affected, particularly women, girls, and adolescent leaders
- The need for justice-based, gender-responsive climate solutions
- Addressing structural inequalities shaping vulnerability

High-level plenaries moved the conversation forward focusing on:

- Community resilience and adaptation
- Loss and damage support
- Gender-responsive climate action plans

The message was clear: **Resilience alone is not enough, systems must transform.**

Pacific and Indigenous Leadership at the Center

Hosting the conference in the Oceanic Pacific region was not incidental it was intentional. Sessions co-hosted by UN Women Pacific and SPREP highlighted:

- The intersection of climate crisis and violence against women
- The realities of environmental disasters
- The leadership of Indigenous and First Nations communities

As Julia Gillard noted:

“We must not allow the next five, 10 or 20 years to entrench a rollback of rights.”

These conversations reinforced a critical shift: ***Climate justice must be led by those most affected, not designed around them.***

Care, Data, and Coalition Building

Across sessions such as “***Centering Care in Gender-Transformative Climate Action***”, three cross-cutting priorities emerged:

1. Data as a tool for justice

Inclusive, gender-responsive data is essential to guide decisions and investments.

2. Care as climate infrastructure

Climate resilience depends on care systems, often invisible and under-resourced.

3. Coalitions for systemic change

No single actor can drive transformation. Progress depends on strong, sustained alliances.

From Advocacy to Practice

The conference itself modeled climate-conscious programming, embedding sustainability across:

- Travel
- Food systems
- Waste management

Advancing Climate Justice Through the Melbourne Declaration

The Melbourne Declaration for Gender Equality stands as a central outcome of the convening.

Developed through over 35 consultations involving more than 650 participants, it reflects a shared global vision.

Within it, climate and environmental justice are clearly positioned as integral to gender equality. It calls for:

- Gender-responsive climate action
- Centering leadership of frontline communities
- Equitable climate financing and investment
- Stronger accountability across systems

From Global Commitments to Local Realities

For many communities across Africa, climate change is not a future risk it is a daily reality. It is experienced through:

- Food insecurity and shifting agricultural systems
- Increased burdens on women for water and care
- Livelihood disruption and economic instability
- Rising risks of displacement and conflict

The conversations in Melbourne made one thing clear:

Global commitments will only matter if they translate into local impact.



Bridging Systems and Communities

In this context, The Center for Resilience and Sustainable Africa (CEFRESA) is positioned at the intersection of climate resilience, gender equality, and community systems strengthening.

CEFRESA's role is to:

- Translate global frameworks into locally led, actionable solutions
- Strengthen community resilience ecosystems
- Support women and youth leadership in climate action
- Bridge policy, investment, and lived realities

This reflects one of the most critical insights from Women Deliver 2026: Climate justice must be built where it is lived.

A Defining Window

With just four years remaining to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 deadline, the intersection between:

- **Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality**
- **Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action**

has become increasingly urgent. This is critical window to accelerate action, realign priorities, and deliver measurable impact.

A Call to Collective Impact

The climate conversations at Women Deliver 2026 Conference point to a clear path forward:

- Invest in community-led resilience systems
- Build strategic, cross-sector partnerships
- Align funding with locally driven priorities
- Strengthen accountability for delivery

CEFRESA stands ready to engage as a partner, implementer, and bridge for impact.

