Press release

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Power to the Winners! Gender Just Climate Solutions Awards Celebrate Grassroots Feminist Climate Action at COP31

The 11th edition of the awards brought together grassroots leaders, climate advocates and international guests to celebrate women-led solutions from Vanuatu, Colombia and Mexico.

“Power to the winners!”

The chant rang out during the 11th Gender Just Climate Solutions (GJCS) Awards ceremony, held on 16 November at COP31 in Antalya, Türkiye. With singing, celebration and voices from across the world, the ceremony brought attention to something often overlooked in international climate negotiations: women and their communities are already developing solutions to the climate crisis, and their work deserves recognition, resources and support.

Organised through the Gender Just Climate Solutions programme, coordinated by WECF International in collaboration with the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC), the ceremony recognised three initiatives from Vanuatu, Colombia and Mexico working at the intersection of climate action, gender equality and community empowerment.

This year, the awards received 340 eligible applications from 74 countries, reflecting the diversity of locally led approaches to climate justice.

The 2026 awardees demonstrate how climate solutions can address environmental challenges while strengthening women's rights, leadership and autonomy.

Technical Solutions — Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITTT), Vanuatu

Represented by Dalila Laus Lalulu, the initiative, implemented with ActionAid Vanuatu, trains women in North Tanna to install and maintain solar energy systems using repurposed lithium-ion batteries. By expanding access to renewable energy, the project is also creating opportunities for women to develop technical skills and greater independence.

“Our Benefits from the lights…Gender base violence, sexual abuse from our young girls and single mothers have decrease. We have extra 4 to 5 hours every evening for weaving for our income and also contribute to our traditional custom ceremony. Woman with disability are also included in this as they also can sell food after dark to increase their income. We have increased our income from our weaving. Widows in our community can sleep without a knife under their pillows. We can now charge our phone so that we can pass accurate and right early warning preparedness messages or information for any disaster…,” said Dalila Laus Lalulu.

Non-Technical Solutions — Federación Afroamerica XXI, Colombia

Represented by Elvia Duque, this initiative works alongside Afro-Colombian women farmers in Dagua, Valle del Cauca, strengthening climate resilience through organic cacao production, knowledge sharing and community-led agriculture. Their work connects climate adaptation with economic opportunities and the fight against racial and gender discrimination.

"How can we talk about gender-responsive climate justice when African descendant women who produce our food still face barriers to making decisions about the very land they work on? That is why our project promotes sustainable ancestral farming practices while strengthening women's economic independence, leadership, and participation in community decision-making." said Elvia Duque.

Transformational Solutions — Proyecto Concentrarte A.C., Mexico

Represented by Liliana Riva Palacio, Proyecto Concentrarte works with the Mujeres del Huerto collective in Chiapas to advance women's land rights, agroecology and economic autonomy. In 2024, women from the collective secured legal land ownership, a milestone in their efforts to shape their own livelihoods and futures.

"What had seemed impossible became a collective victory. And it was no small achievement. In a country where so many rural and Indigenous women still face enormous barriers to accessing land or holding a property title, this space of their own means far more than producing food. Having access to land also means having a voice; it means being able to make decisions and to hold a place in the community's future. I am here today because of them." said Liliana Riva Palacio.

A celebration of collective power

The ceremony was more than an awards presentation. Throughout the event, participants joined in a collective *Victory Chant*, celebrating the strength of grassroots movements and the women behind them.

"Power to the winners!"

The chant, which returned between award presentations, brought a festive and collective spirit to the celebration, connecting the recognition of individual initiatives with a broader call for climate and gender justice.

The ceremony welcomed representatives and guests from climate institutions, governments and feminist networks.

Nada Elbohi, from the Women and Gender Constituency, and Valeria Peláez Cardona, from WECF International, welcomed participants.

The programme featured opening remarks by Mary Robinson, representing The Elders, highlighting *"for decades these awards have provided visibility and recognition for the community-led initiatives, their showcase, as we see, the remarkable creativity and*

determination of women and their communities in tackling the climate crisis and this are solutions developed by women for women in their communities"

The awards were presented by invited guests including Ingrid Lundberg, representing the COP31 Presidency, Australia; Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, Minister of Environment of Vanuatu; Ana Pimentel, Vice Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability of the Dominican Republic; and Dr. Iniobong Abiola Awe, Director of Nigeria's Department of Climate Change.

The programme also featured Anisa Abibulloeva of Little Earth, with closing remarks by Kaoru Yamaguchi, Vice-Chair of the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN).

Anisa Abibulloeva, past awardee winner from the Technical Solution category in 2024 shares this inspiring message for the winners "*Let me tell you something, this award ceremony is not the end of your journey, this is just the beginning… when we received the award it meant so much more than the international recognition. For us it was a powerful act of solidarity from the global feminist community, it was a message that our work matters."*

Recognition that goes beyond the ceremony

Each winning initiative receives a €5,000 award, alongside tailored mentorship, skills training and international visibility through the GJCS programme.

The awards aim not only to celebrate these initiatives but also to strengthen their capacity to continue their work and connect grassroots experiences with international climate discussions.

From renewable energy in the Pacific to Afro-Colombian women's agricultural resilience and rural women's land rights in Mexico, the 2026 winners show that climate justice takes different forms depending on the communities leading it.

As COP31 negotiations continue, their experiences offer a reminder that meaningful climate action is already taking place beyond conference rooms. The challenge is to ensure that the people developing these solutions receive the recognition, resources and decision-making power they deserve.