

Seizing the moment for gender justice

Roundtable summary

STUDIO 5, NAARM (MELBOURNE) 29 APRIL 2026

Summary from a closed-door session of gender justice leaders on the margins of Women Deliver 2026

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Three priority actions for collective response

1 Build a strategic infrastructure

Invest in shared capabilities – social listening and analysis, strategic knowledge infrastructure, narrative development, media engagement and digital platforms – that can both connect, in digital and physical spaces, and reach beyond existing constituencies. A critical gap identified was the lack of multilingual tools and coordinated strategy, limiting reach across regions. The shift required is from defensive messaging to a more intentional offensive posture.

2 Forge a focused, cross-movement alliance

Build a structured advocacy coalition anchored in a small number of shared, winnable priorities. The agenda must be globally coherent but locally adaptable, aligning different forms of power within the gender justice movement and across other sectors.

3 Shift how resources are accessed and deployed

The constraint is not only the volume of funding, but whether it is accessed and the conditions attached to its deployment. Participants called for increased risk appetite from funders, fewer restrictions with more core and flexible funding, and greater use of existing financial instruments. The priority is adaptable, trust-based support that strengthens movements and shares risk more equitably.

Additional insights

1 Fragmentation within and across movements

Clear recognition that fragmentation remains a structural weakness – not only across sectors, but within the gender justice space itself. Tensions across constituencies, competition for resources and siloed strategies continue to limit collective impact.

2 The need for longer-term strategy and infrastructure

Shared agreement that the current moment is not temporary. Anti-gender movements are investing over the long term, while progressive efforts often remain short-term and reactive. This points to the need for sustained infrastructure across communications, alliances and resourcing.

3 A mismatch between where opposition operates and where we respond

Participants questioned whether pro-gender justice efforts are targeting the same levers being used by anti-gender actors – particularly in financial, legal and political domains. This raises a strategic question about whether current approaches operate across a sufficiently broad range of the spaces and levels where power is deployed.

4 The erosion of institutional capacity and memory

Echoing survey findings, participants noted the ongoing dismantling of gender expertise within institutions – through staff losses, restructuring and the retreat from gender language. This represents not only a loss of capacity, but of institutional confidence and continuity.

5 Institutional courage and the politics of silence

Participants named the growing pervasiveness of fear across institutions: driving caution, retreat and self-censorship, even where formal commitments remain. There was clear recognition that the challenge is not only external pressure, but internal hesitation – the reluctance to name what is happening, to take risks and to act collectively. This points to a deeper constraint on progress: one of institutional courage, not just resources.

CONCLUSION

The challenge facing gender justice is no longer primarily one of evidence or intent, but of collective organisation and strategic alignment.

The three priority areas identified – strategic infrastructure, alliance-building and resource deployment – point to a shift from reactive, fragmented efforts towards a more coordinated and intentional approach.

In a context where opposition is increasingly organised and long-term, the ability to align across institutions and movements will be decisive. The question now is how we collectively carry these forward.

Ideas surfaced during the session

The dialogue's open ideation session surfaced a wealth of ideas for advancing the gender justice agenda which informed the three priority actions. Some of these are presented below, grouped by theme.

A COMMON AGENDA, NOT A SINGLE VOICE

- Frame a common agenda that is globally coherent but locally adaptable
- Expand and create a shared umbrella; strong, cross-issue alliances
- Learn to have unified, not single, voices
- Collaboration over competition
- Pick a few wins – but think 5, 10, 15, 50 years out
- Build the architecture to support allies, not just the message

LANGUAGE, NARRATIVE AND REACH

- Reclaim our language from the anti-gender movement – starting with "family"
- Get beyond the acronyms; talk to the majority, not just ourselves
- The 80% in the middle don't know what we're talking about – shift the centre
- Reshape the language used in the finance space
- Build a network of journalists and strategic communicators as an entry point
- Find a way to win back lost allies in these conversations

INTELLIGENCE AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Track and monitor what the opposition is doing – and what pro-gender movements are doing
- Social listening tools miss most languages; regional gaps are wide
- Learn and experiment with new tech and AI tools
- Invest in our own social media properties – go beyond the algorithm
- Better data reflecting lived experience. Collate the evidence in one place

HOW MONEY MOVES

- "Go core or go more" – give more, give core, give flexible
- Increase risk appetite; review risk assessment
- Review contracts – the restrictions and regulations attached
- The financial instruments exist but haven't been used properly - change this
- Fund movement building; treat implementation policy as grant making and remove caps
- Support the movements that traditional philanthropy does not reach

POWER, PROXIMITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Mobilise grassroots organisations; trust and invest in civil society on the ground
- Support the leaders already doing the work
- Hold legal systems accountable; find new forms of endgame accountability
- Engage the UN
- Work with the private sector and other power-holders, including city mayors
- Name the APAC gap – state-backed opposition and weak regional multilateralism

KNOW WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST

- The opposition has convinced audiences that women's rights are not cultural
- Too many political leaders perceive a high political cost in pursuing gender justice
- Fear is pervasive – even great leaders are challenged
- Yet most people in most countries are pro-action across a range of issues

"They've got the money, but we've got the people."