

# THE CLIMATE CRISIS

SAVE THE CHILDREN'S  
INTERNAL  
CHILD-CENTRED  
FRAMEWORK FOR **ACTION**



Save the Children



# NOTE TO STAFF

This is primarily an **INTERNAL** document – to guide Save the Children’s staff when designing and implementing child-focused climate action. **EXTERNAL** materials are available on the [Climate Fundraising Hub](#). We constantly reflect on and update our approaches as the climate crisis progresses, and new evidence and tools become available. This means that this framework will be revised on a regular basis, and especially in conjunction with new strategy or campaign periods.

This document is guided by our new global strategy (Figure 1) that highlights our commitment to respond to and anticipate the triple threat to child rights of COVID-19, conflict, and the climate crisis.













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**Figure 1**  
Save the Children’s  
2022–24 global strategy

## SAVE THE CHILDREN’S 2020–24 GLOBAL STRATEGY: TRANSFORMING IMPACT



<p><b>A CHANGING GLOBAL CONTEXT TO WHICH WE WILL RESPOND AND ANTICIPATE</b></p>	<p><b>Respond to and anticipate threats from Covid-19, conflict and climate change</b></p>	<p><b>Protect the rights of children most impacted by inequality and discrimination, now and for the future</b></p>	
<p><b>4 STRATEGIC GOALS: OUR IMPACT FOR AND WITH CHILDREN</b></p>	<p> <b>Healthy start in life</b></p>	<p> <b>Safe back to school and learning</b></p>	<p> <b>Live free from violence</b></p> <p> <b>Safety nets and resilient families</b></p>
<p><b>6 ENABLERS: HOW WE ACCELERATE THAT IMPACT</b></p>	<p> <b>Advocate, campaign and mobilize</b></p>	<p> <b>Digital and data</b></p>	<p> <b>Strategic partnerships</b></p>
	<p> <b>Shift power</b></p>	<p> <b>Agile and inclusive organization</b></p>	<p> <b>Grow and optimize resources</b></p>

Cover: Deko\*’s family lived a nomadic pastoralist life before they were displaced because of drought. They had a lot of animals but because of the drought lost all but 20 goats and sheep.

Cover photo: Kate Stanworth / Save the Children  
Stripes adapted from Hawkins, E. *Show Your Stripes*. 2018–2019. <https://showyourstripes.info/> to show years 1960–2020 only.

\*Name changed to protect identity

Design: John F McGill



## Contents

<b>Why children and the climate crisis</b>	4
<b>Why Save the Children</b>	6
<b>Our guiding principles for climate action</b>	8
<b>Taking action on the climate crisis for children</b>	9
<b>Climate programming</b>	10
A healthy start in life	11
Safe back to school and learning	13
Live free from violence	15
Safety nets and resilient families	18
<b>Crosscutting work</b>	20
Children’s voices for climate action – advocacy and campaigning for and with children	20
Child rights and accountability programming for climate change mitigation and adaptation	23
Anticipatory action	24
Equality and non-discrimination	25
<b>Walking the talk: ‘greening our operations’</b>	28
<b>Key resources</b>	29



# WHY CHILDREN AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

**Around 1 billion children, or nearly half of all children worldwide, live in countries at extreme risk of the impacts of climate change (Fig 2).<sup>1</sup>**

Under the original Paris Agreement pledges made by member states, if fully met, will result in a child born in 2020 experiencing, on average, **twice as many wildfires, 2.8 times the exposure to crop failure, 2.6 times as many drought events, 2.8 times as many river floods, and 6.8 times more heatwaves** across their lifetimes, compared to a person born in 1960. By contrast, limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels will reduce the additional lifetime exposure of newborns to heatwaves by 45%, droughts by 39%, river floods by 38%, crop failures by 28%, and wildfire by 10%.<sup>2</sup>

Children have contributed the least to the climate crisis but are bearing the worst brunt of its impacts. Those most impacted by inequality and discrimination and living on the frontlines of the climate crisis will face the highest costs, deeply affecting their capacity to thrive and survive.<sup>3</sup> We know that climate change is unequivocally driven by human action, primarily from a small number of high emitting (mostly high-income) countries and corporations and that the window of opportunity to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is rapidly closing.<sup>4,5,6</sup> It is all of our responsibility to urgently champion a climate response that cares for every child and the planet and safeguards their futures.

<sup>1</sup> Estimates by [UNICEF](#) (2021).

<sup>2</sup> Novel research presented in Save the Children's [Born into the climate crisis](#) report (2021).

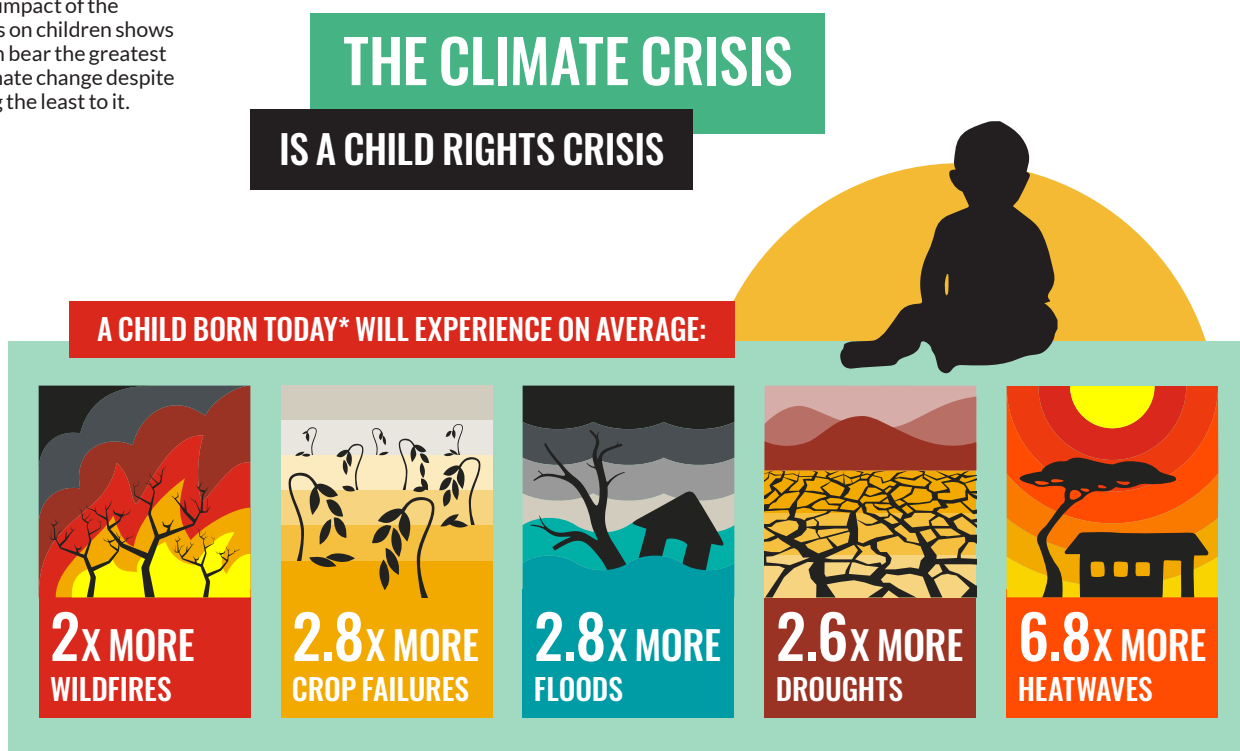
<sup>3</sup> [Carbon Brief](#) (2022).

<sup>4</sup> IPCC reports [AR6 WG1](#) (2021) and [AR6 WG2](#) (2022).

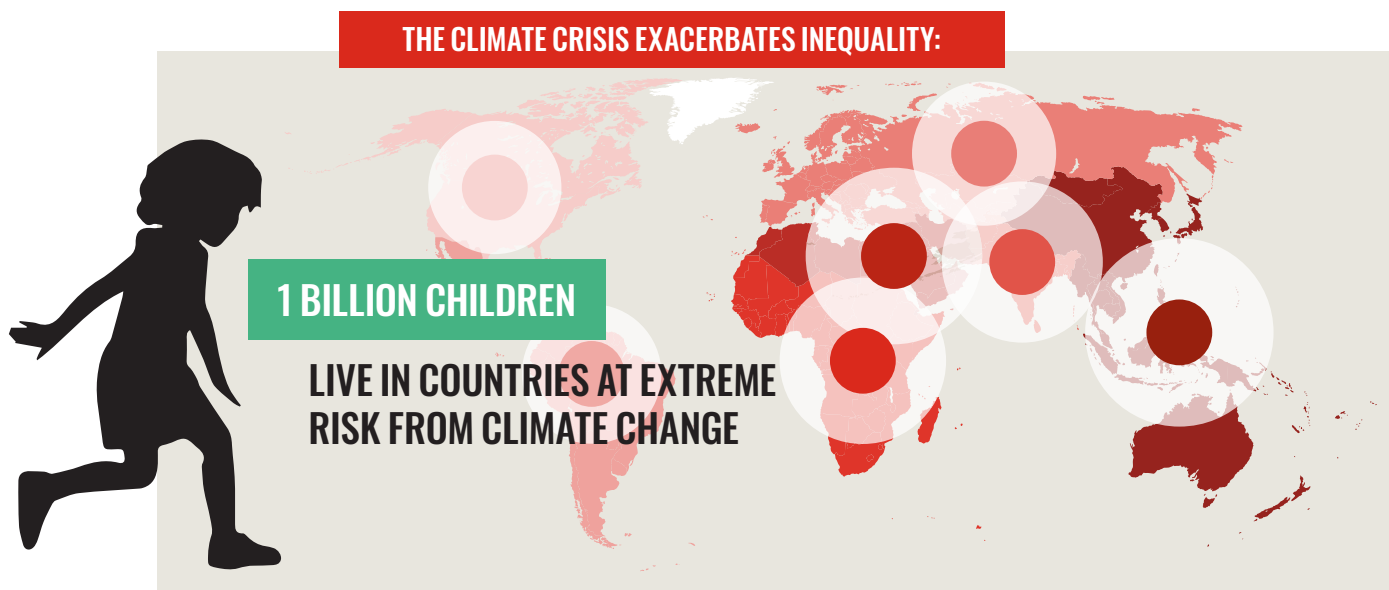
<sup>5</sup> [NASA](#) (2019).

<sup>6</sup> [Deutsche Welle](#) (2021).

**Figure 2**  
Data on the impact of the climate crisis on children shows that children bear the greatest brunt of climate change despite contributing the least to it.



\*compared with someone born in 1960



IN COUNTRIES THAT ARE HARDEST HIT AND LEAST PROTECTED, CHILDREN ARE ON THE FRONTLINE OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS:



Climate disasters and shocks are already disrupting **livelihoods and services**, exposing children and families to deeper poverty and danger.



37 million children are missing out on **education**. Girls are disproportionately affected.



A rise in **climate-related conflict** puts children at greater risk of violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, child marriage, child labour, and separation from their families.

Source: Born into the Climate Crisis, Save the Children International (2021) and The Climate Crisis is a Rights Crisis, UNICEF (2021)



# WHY SAVE THE CHILDREN

## Our unique contribution

As the world's biggest independent children's rights organization working in 120 countries Save the Children has:

- **over 100 years of experience and expertise** working with and for children and young people across the world, a strong presence in countries and deep, long-held relationships with communities;
- **power to convene stakeholders across multiple sectors** such as education, health, agriculture, and finance with representatives from governments, donors, communities, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector;
- **the ability to take and promote action at scale**, working with national systems and adopting evidence-based approaches to anticipate and manage the impact of the climate crisis on children, families and communities.

Save the Children is also the first and only child-centred humanitarian and development NGO accredited to the UN's Green Climate Fund, bringing huge opportunities to support national governments and communities at scale to respond and adapt effectively to climate change. As an organization, we have committed to reducing our own CO2 emissions by more than 50% by 2030 or earlier.

We have been supporting climate vulnerable communities to manage the unavoidable impacts of climate change for over a decade – building on our long history of working with climate vulnerable communities and responding to disasters. We are now scaling up our investment and response as climate change increasingly threatens the realization of child rights. We have a growing range of experienced climate and environment capacity across the Save movement providing expert guidance for climate risk assessment and community preparedness, mainstreaming climate into our education, health, food security and nutrition, protection and livelihood programming. We also recognize that to achieve climate justice involves working to tackle discrimination and inequality in all its forms and we take a strong ‘climate justice’ lens. Our global campaigns and advocacy influence national and international policies in support of children’s rights.

## Our vision for children

Our vision for children remains unchanged. We want every child to grow up and fulfil their potential, to learn, survive and be protected. To do this, we recognize that we must tackle the mutually reinforcing issues of climate change and environmental degradation, chronic poverty and inequality. We cannot achieve the vision we have for children without seeking climate justice and child rights including the right to a healthy environment for current and future generations. This requires being committed to both climate justice and a just green transition (box 1). Addressing these issues together, in a mutually reinforcing way is possible and will lead us to a future where every child can enjoy their full rights in a cleaner, greener, healthier and more equitable world.

### Box 1 Definitions

**Climate justice**, in essence, is the idea that richer countries and historical emitters must lead the way, and take most responsibility for climate change and the damage it causes, and help countries and people experiencing poverty who have not caused the problem, and yet are the worst affected.

A just transition: *“Ensuring that the move to a sustainable economy integrates the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and eradication of poverty.”*

ILO, 2015

# OUR **GUIDING PRINCIPLES** FOR CLIMATE ACTION

**All our climate action is guided by these seven principles.**

These are inspired by and consistent with Save the Children's global Theory of Change, focusing on voice, scale, innovation and partnership.

1	<b>Rights-based and child-led</b>	We fight for <a href="#">children's rights</a> and their ability to meaningfully engage in decisions at all levels. We make space for them to raise their concerns and we amplify it. Our response is centred on children's rights, and children themselves with all their diverse identities.
2	<b>Localising and decolonizing</b>	We move resources and ownership to the countries and communities hit hardest by the crisis. We strive to be anti-racist and transform colonial frameworks by shifting the imbalance of power and supporting the rights of Indigenous communities. We are working to embed the <a href="#">Principles for Locally Led Adaptation</a> across our climate programmes.
3	<b>Equitable and inclusive</b>	Our programming focuses on children facing inequality and discrimination, violence, displacement, and the institutional and systemic failure of governments and society to realize the rights of equality-denied groups. This includes children facing discrimination based on their ability, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and other multiple and intersecting grounds of discrimination.
4	<b>Gender transformative</b>	Gender equality is a human right. We challenge gender norms and tackle the root causes of inequality and discrimination so that every child can achieve their rights – regardless of their gender identity. We also recognize the intersection of gender and other forms of discrimination and the additional burden it causes for girls and women.
5	<b>Doing good and avoiding harm</b>	We carefully develop programmes, in partnership with communities to do good, and create positive change. We set up effective monitoring and evaluation to ensure we avoid unintended consequences, and continuously learn and improve.
6	<b>Partnerships for greater impact and accountability</b>	We work alongside partners at local, national, regional and international level that share our vision and values. We expect high standards from each other. We also value partnerships with groups and organizations representing excluded groups, this includes Disabled People's Organizations and Women's Rights Organizations.
7	<b>Leading by example</b>	We are committed to addressing our own environmental impact. We are developing environmental management systems for our programmes, and have set targets to reduce our own carbon emissions by 50% by latest 2030 from our 2019 baseline.

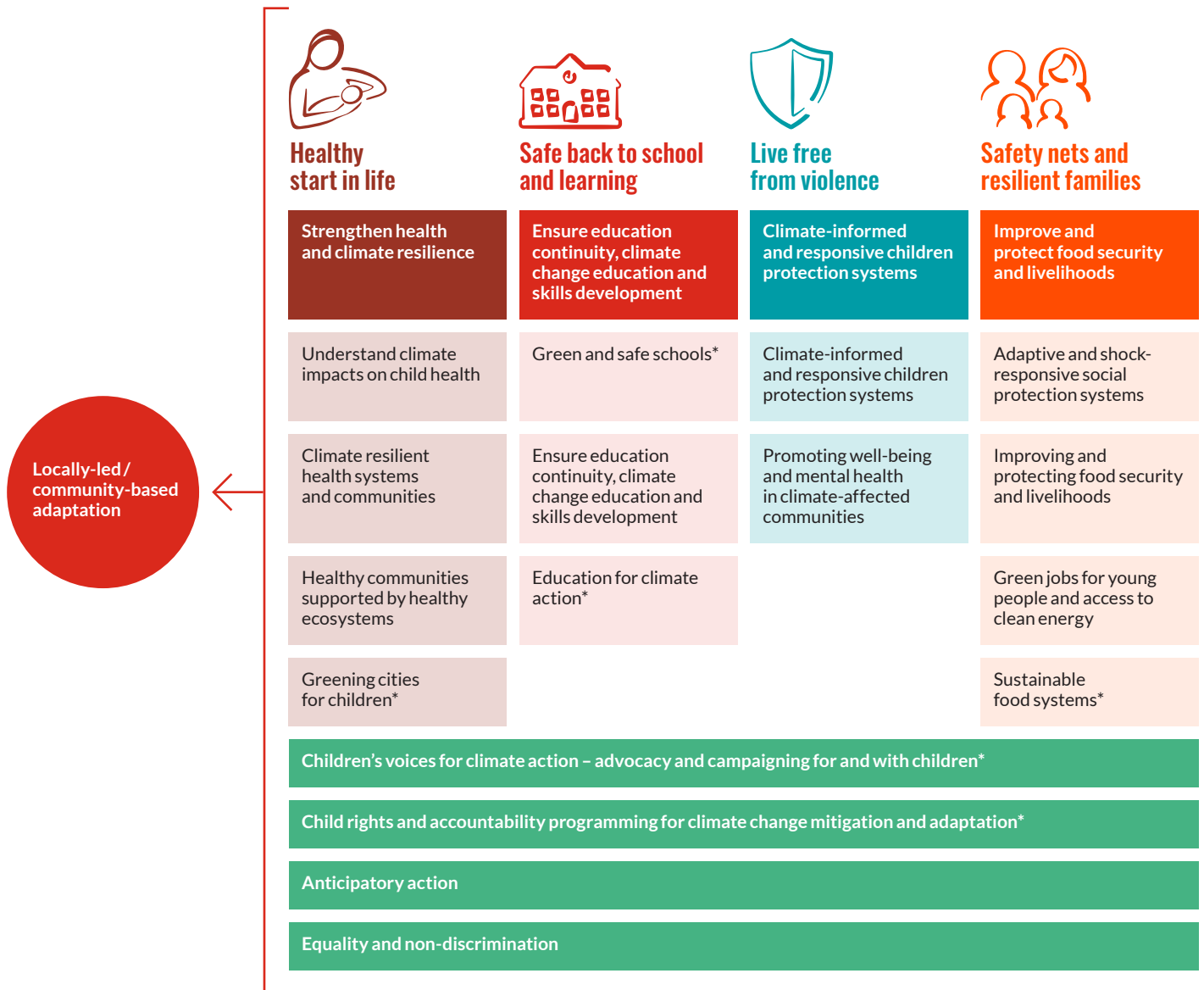


# TAKING ACTION ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS FOR CHILDREN

## Child-focused climate action across our goals

Save the Children is stepping up our work to address the climate crisis and its impact on children. The diagram below (Figure 3) outlines key climate actions against the 4 Goals in our 2022-24 Global Strategy, as well as cross-cutting actions that support all goals. Most of these support children and their families adapt to climate change - with a focus on locally-led initiatives which reduce vulnerability or support new opportunities - and help children achieve their full potential despite the increasing risks they face. However, several also contribute to mitigation - i.e. help to reduce the root causes of the climate crisis by reducing emissions.

**Figure 3**  
Save the Children's action on the climate crisis



\*contributes to mitigation, i.e. reducing emissions



# CLIMATE PROGRAMMING

**Save the Children has set ambitious targets related to our work on the Climate Crisis – cutting across our full 2022–2024 Strategy. By 2024 we aim to directly reach over 1.5m children and their families who are most at risk from the impacts of climate change. Our support will enable children and communities to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen climate resilience and reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. To support this ambition, our goal is to raise \$200m by 2024.**

With the climate crisis fast becoming the biggest threat to child rights globally, Save the Children works on key priority areas to create sustainable change, building on our core areas of expertise and delivering solutions at scale. The content in the diagram above is aligned with our thematic priorities. This list is not exhaustive as we are working to make all our programming sensitive to the risks of the climate crisis. Most programming focuses on adapting to the impacts of the climate crisis, but some also has benefits in terms of mitigation (i.e. helping to reduce emissions).

The four main areas of child-focused climate programming are:

- 1 A healthy start in life**
- 2 Safe back to school and learning**
- 3 Live free from violence**
- 4 Safety nets and resilient families**

Other areas of work identified in green are cross-cutting.



## 1 A healthy start in life

Climate change is among the greatest public health threats to child survival. This is because climate change disrupts and damages the functions of natural systems such as oceans, lands, wetlands and forests on which good health depends, which in turn affects the provision of food, safe water, and clean air as well as protection against extreme weather events. More than 99% of deaths attributable to climate-related changes occur in low- and middle-income countries and over 80% are children.<sup>7</sup>

Save the Children's work on climate and health is grounded in local conditions and contexts and we are tackling the mutually reinforcing issues of climate change, health, and inequality in the following ways:

### Understand climate impacts on child health

We aim to improve understandings of the multi-sectoral impacts of, and interconnections between, human activities, climate change, and health. It is widely accepted that climate change poses risks to health and prosperity, but decision-makers lack concrete cost and benefit information (e.g. relating to illness, death, lost economic productivity) to guide policy making and actions to address climate with benefits to health. Working in partnership with economists and climate and health modellers, we aim to create a multi-country systems model to quantify the health benefits of action or inaction on poor air quality, extreme heat and other climate, health and equity risks. In tandem, we will work with communities to co-produce and apply advocacy tools to create awareness of health costs and benefits and reduce risks at individual, household and community levels.

### Climate resilient health systems and communities

We support climate adaptation through health systems strengthening. Together with communities and health facilities, we develop and introduce tools and approaches for facility- and community-based health workers to prepare for, manage and respond to disruptions in supply chain, transport, electricity, clean water and access to services during and after climate-related extreme events. We work with local health authorities to integrate climate-related priorities into the minimum, essential health services coverage.

At community level, we partner with community stakeholders to develop and introduce systems-based tools to map climate change threats to health, their root causes, then work with communities to agree on priority adaptation actions especially for vulnerable groups. We are piloting these tools in several countries. In West and Central Africa, we are combining health and nutrition and hunger and livelihoods efforts to integrate age- and sex-disaggregated data on climate, household economies, and health to inform cash transfer and other programmes to improve the quality of diet for children and families.

<sup>7</sup>  
UNICEF, 2015

## Healthy communities supported by healthy ecosystems

We are producing a science policy brief on nature-based solutions for children. Through outreach and partnership discussions we will develop a community of practice of leading donors, knowledge generators researchers, scientists and practitioners who can use this knowledge to inform action on nature-based solutions for children including building targeted programming and interventions.

## Greening cities for children

Air pollution, heat waves, and extreme weather events are magnified in cities due to density of infrastructure and population, affecting children and vulnerable people first, especially those in slums or informal settlements. Child-sensitive climate adaptation needs to be prioritized in urban health planning with green spaces, pedestrian and sustainable transit infrastructure and revegetation of soils. We are applying tools such as the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to identify, refine, and measure the effectiveness of green infrastructure-based healthy design strategies for climate mitigation, adaptation and equitable health impacts; and, enhance participation of local stakeholders including children and youth of all gender identities, women, civil society and policymakers.

### Box 2 Case study

In **Lao PDR**, Save the Children is developing a multi-year project with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the World Health Organization and Healthcare Without Harm to make the country's health system climate-resilient. This means integrating climate and health information to produce early warnings of vector-borne disease risk for communities living in areas highly vulnerable to climate change. This adaptation action goes with mitigation action. We also support the government's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in health care facilities and their supply chains.





## 2 Safe back to school and learning

The changing climate is threatening children's access to quality education and their achievement of essential learning and well-being outcomes. This impact is particularly evident among children already experiencing other forms of exclusion from education including children with disabilities. Climate-related extreme events disrupt education through school closures for millions of children each year. Children's learning, physical safety, mental health and psychosocial well-being is threatened by damage to, and destruction of, early childhood education centres, schools, learning facilities, and education systems. When children and their families are displaced by environmental threats and climate impacts, the risk of dropping out of school dramatically increases.<sup>8</sup> Increases in temperature have also been shown to decrease educational outcomes. These outcomes can be further impacted by other inequities such as gender and disability. Communities may use coping strategies such as the early and forced marriage of girls, the recruitment of boys into armed groups or pulling them from education into employment; and children with disabilities may have less access to assistive technology or needed infrastructure.

On current trends, by 2025 the climate emergency will contribute to 12.5 million girls annually not completing their education.<sup>9</sup>

Save the Children's work around climate change and education includes:

### Green and safe schools

We work to ensure all children are safe, healthy, and protected in and around schools always. This includes safe school construction, sustainable meal programmes, health services, safe water management and conservation, and green spaces for recreation and play. We assess risks and work with local and national authorities to ensure protective policies and systems. We help teachers and children to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to process their emotions about climate change, and to act.

### Resilient education systems at all levels

We ensure education is prioritized and that learning continues during and after a crisis occurs. Using forecasting and early warning mechanisms, and constructing safe and climate resilient schools or learning spaces are key. We are shifting our education response, and instead of reacting to crises, we are proactively reducing the risks through better planning. Our education anticipatory action approach, Day 1, will help teams decide and prepare tools to quickly start an initial Education in Emergencies programme after an acute crisis and the possible subsequent conflict and displacement, to ensure education programmes respond to all risks children face, including those related to the climate crisis.

<sup>8</sup> 75 million children have their education disrupted – half as a result of environmental threats, such as floods and droughts. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/build-forward-better-how-the-global-community-can-protect-education-from-the-climate-crisis/>, Pg.1

<sup>9</sup> On current trends, by 2025 the climate emergency will contribute to 12.5 million girls annually not completing their education. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/build-forward-better-how-the-global-community-can-protect-education-from-the-climate-crisis/>, Pg.1

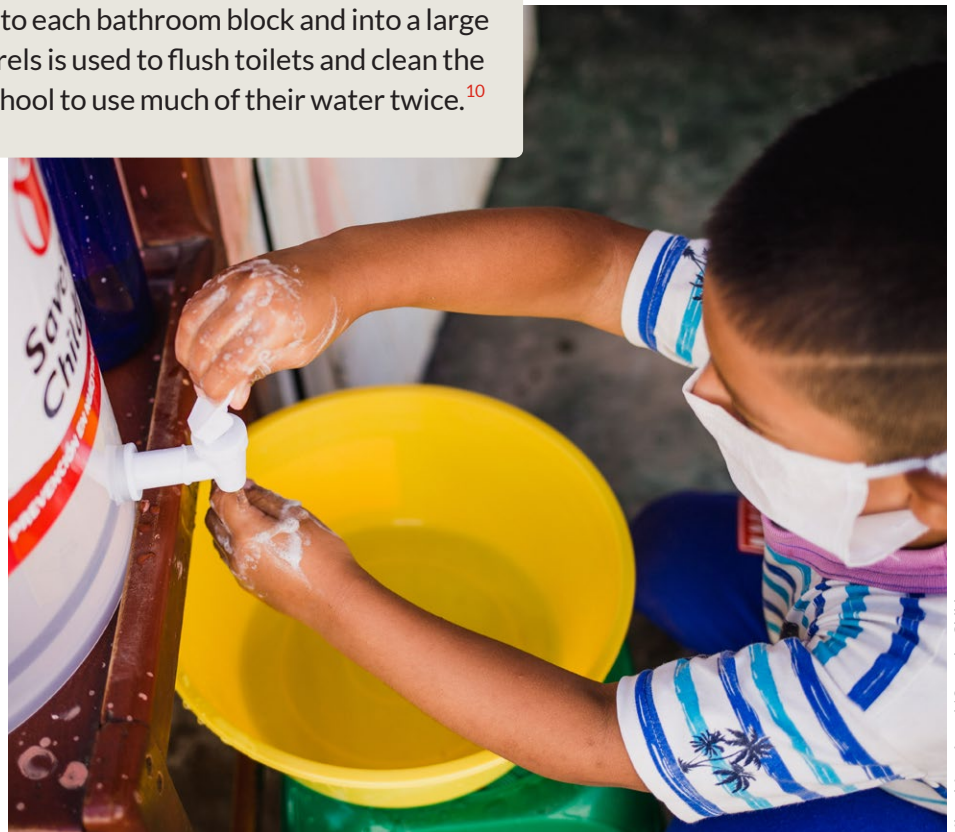
We also advocate increased financing to fund and institutionalize policies and programmes that help prevent, and respond to, future climate-related extreme events and their impact on education. We see Early Childhood Care and Development as part of a sustainable approach to addressing the impacts of climate change on young children and their families. We are working with climate experts, across disciplines, and diverse partners, to develop a strategy to optimize early childhood interventions so they build climate resilience and community centred social justice.

### Education for climate action

We are partnering with science-based organizations with climate experience, like World Wildlife Fund to deliver after school environmental clubs. They are child-led and build knowledge about climate change, foster caring behaviours toward nature and preservation of natural resources, and develop skills, including leadership, to support children's action on climate change.

#### Box 3 Case study

**Cochabamba, Bolivia** is known for its complex relationship with water. Today, within Cochabamba, there are very few schools with a continuous flow of piped water. Most schools are not guaranteed water every day and when water is available there is wastage. As a result, an expanded water re-usage strategy is being piloted. A system was designed to reroute water from handwashing stations into another underground tank. The tank pumps water back to each bathroom block and into a large barrel. Water collected in the barrels is used to flush toilets and clean the school, effectively allowing the school to use much of their water twice.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Evidence from Drawdown: *The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*, edited by Paul Hawken, highlights education girls as the 6th out of 100 top strategies to not only mitigate global warming but actually reverse the trend.



### 3 Live free from violence

Climate change is a key driver for exacerbated levels of violence against children and affects women and girls significantly. Also, as children flee climate-related disasters, they face increased risks of separation from caregivers, sexual and gender-based violence, and abuse and exploitation. Climate change impacts also create more pressure on caregivers which can result in more violence in the home and hinder prevention and response initiatives addressing child protection issues. As such, interventions demand a more holistic and multi-sectoral approach. Our work will include both climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches and will be mainstreamed and integrated across sectors in development and humanitarian contexts.

#### Climate-informed and responsive child protection systems

Gender sensitive, inclusive protection systems can equitably protect all children from climate-induced violence, exploitation and negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and early marriage. Our child protection work will embed greater awareness of the link between climate change and protection risks in our response, mitigation and prevention initiatives, and in our climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches. This includes our flagship common approach on case management (Steps to Protect) and violence prevention in homes and communities (Parenting without Violence). Our child protection work will also pilot social and behavioural change approaches as climate change mitigation strategies, working in coordination with CUBIC and social and behavioural change specialists. Work will either be through stand-alone pilots or common approaches and community-led interventions. Our child protection interventions will prioritize the needs of children who are most affected by the impact of climate change events including children with disabilities and those affected by migration and displacement.

#### Promoting well-being and mental health in climate-affected communities

The climate and environmental crisis has a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of children of all genders, including girls, children with non-binary gender identities and children with disabilities. The Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) is an integrated and cross-sectoral initiative and from a protection perspective, focuses on community and family strengthening and non-specialized MHPSS support such as child- and community-led climate actions and our existing Child and Youth Resilience Programmes. Our parenting programmes support caregivers to better understand and manage their own stress as well as supporting their children to do the same. We put a strong focus on developing resilience towards environmental and climate-related shocks and stresses.



Habiba Ummay / Save the Children

In addition, case workers are trained on family tracing and reunification; our work with communities at risk of climate emergencies ensures that children and families understand what to do in the event of a disaster, how to prevent separation and what to do if a child is separated from his or her family.

### **Integration across thematic sectors in development and humanitarian settings**

Our climate change-child protection work will be coordinated with all thematic sectors in development and humanitarian settings. For example, in education we will include protection risks in climate action and awareness programming, and in youth resilience programmes we will ensure green life skills are incorporated. In humanitarian settings, our work will cut across preparedness, anticipatory actions and response to both prevent and respond to protection risks and vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change, such as sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and exclusion on the basis of disability and gender. This includes ensuring that all sectors are working to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and provide holistic support to child survivors. Our programmes will link with existing disaster risk reduction programmes to the greatest extent possible and we will also continue to explore mainstreaming, joint programming and integration opportunities with all sectors.



**Box 4**  
**Case study**

The **Solomon Islands** is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change and is ranked 4th in the 2019 World Risk Index. Through the project 'Strengthening Climate resilient Child Protection Systems in and around schools' Save the Children strengthens existing community-based systems to ensure safety and protection of children from harm, violence, disaster and climate impacts in and around schools. The project identifies and address climate-sensitive risks through strong involvement of community members, families, school personnel and children. Capacity building initiatives targeting the social service workforce are integrated with climate change approaches. Also, communities form Village Disaster Climate Risk Committees ensure implementation and accountability of climate change-related action. Finally, we are running contextualized [Parenting without Violence](#), [Safe Schools](#) and some elements of [Steps to Protect](#) Common Approaches.



Collin Leafasia / DailyMirror



## 4 Safety nets and resilient families

Climate change and child poverty are inextricably linked. Children living in multi-dimensional poverty are the least responsible for global emissions, but at the highest risk of experiencing negative impacts of the crisis. Our approach to addressing climate and poverty is multi-faceted and includes:

### Adaptive and shock-responsive social protection systems

Social protection systems should reach all children as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and SDG 1. Social protection schemes – if designed to be child-sensitive, inclusive and shock-responsive – have the potential to effectively and efficiently reach many children and their families with basic cash support before, during and after climate shocks. Significant evidence exists on the effectiveness of cash to help children survive, learn and be protected.<sup>11</sup> Recent actions taken by governments across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic show how expanding national systems is possible where political will exists.

### Improving and protecting food security and livelihoods

We work to strengthen the resilience of livelihoods for parents and care-givers, including more climate-resilient and regenerative agriculture and natural resource management, but also diversification of livelihoods into sectors that are either growing (e.g. as part of the green economy) or are potentially more resilient to economic and climate shocks. We use long-established frameworks and forecasting information to predict and respond early to the risk to livelihoods and income that the world's poorest communities face from climate-driven shocks.

### Green jobs for young people and access to clean energy

Save the Children's work on clean energy includes delivering clean energy solutions across our programmes – from solar-powered water pumps to simple things like solar lamps for children to use to do homework at night, or fuel-efficient stoves. We also work in partnership with others – such as clean-energy providers – to take advantage of jobs and other opportunities created when access to energy is improved.

Linked to the above, we are using our significant experience of working with adolescents and youth to transition into meaningful and decent work to expand our work on green jobs. This directly supports young people, particularly women, to gain work in expanding sectors such as renewable energy and the circular economy. If properly managed, green growth can provide opportunities to address the need for youth employment opportunities and diversification into less climate-sensitive opportunities while preserving the environment and increasing climate resilience.



Sacha Myers / Save the Children

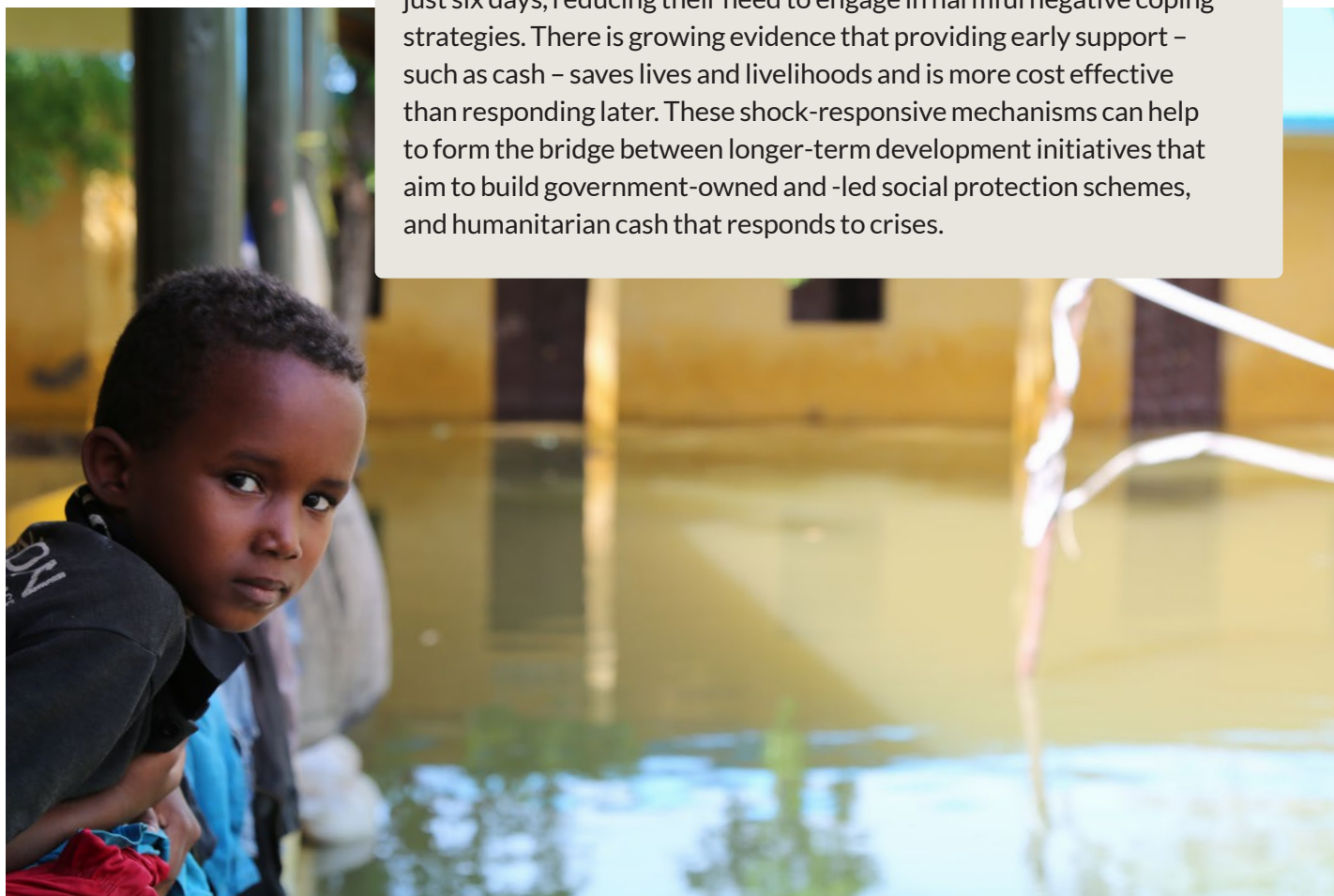
<sup>11</sup>  
[The Effectiveness of Cash Transfer Programming for Children](#)  
 (Save the Children, 2020)

## Sustainable food systems

Food production is one of the largest drivers of global environmental change by contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, and land system change. Moving towards sustainable and resilient food systems is an urgent priority and includes conserving the natural resources base vital for food production, climate adaptive practices and the consumption of locally-sourced nutritious diets. We support children to eat nutritious and healthy food by working with farmers to build sustainable food systems, adopt practices that preserve local environments, and adapt to climate change.

### Box 5 Case study

Save the Children was an early adopter of the **Early Action model**, which draws on climate-focused data to respond to indicators that a shock is about to hit, instead of just reacting to emergencies after they happen. This can help to mitigate a full-scale humanitarian crisis in the wake of a climate event. For example, we supported four shock-responsive safety net pilots in **Somalia**. Each pilot relies on agreed early warning indicators that are triggered through a consultative process with local actors. By having systems in place before shocks hit, we were able to deliver cash to people in need in just six days, reducing their need to engage in harmful negative coping strategies. There is growing evidence that providing early support – such as cash – saves lives and livelihoods and is more cost effective than responding later. These shock-responsive mechanisms can help to form the bridge between longer-term development initiatives that aim to build government-owned and -led social protection schemes, and humanitarian cash that responds to crises.



Mohamed Osman / Save the Children

# CROSSCUTTING WORK

Save the Children has four main areas of cross-cutting work across all our programming (see the green boxes in Figure 3 on page 9).

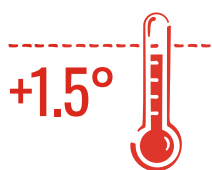
## 1 Children's voices for climate action – advocacy and campaigning for and with children

Our advocacy and campaigning seeks to achieve impact for children at scale by tackling the root causes of the climate crisis, and putting children at the heart of how the world responds.

We stand alongside children in calling for ambitious and urgent action on climate change. High-income countries and historical emitters, who have a unique responsibility for the crisis, must lead the way towards a just transition as well as significant increases in climate finance, particularly for adaptation. The private sector should also play a key leadership role towards sustainable carbon-neutral economies, and support in closing the finance gap.

**Figure 4**  
Save the Children's call for urgent action on climate change

### THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST:



Limit global warming to 1.5°C – including by rapidly phasing out fossil fuels



Increase climate finance to help children and communities adapt to the climate crisis



Put children's voices, demands and rights at the centre of climate commitments



Invest in safety nets for children and families threatened by the climate crisis

### Supporting children's own climate campaigning and advocacy

Despite strong leadership in defending their rights in the face of the climate crisis, children are routinely excluded from and overlooked in decision-making. The views and actions of children of all genders, especially those impacted by inequality and discrimination, are at the heart of what we do.

We play a unique role in supporting children's voices and leadership in the climate movement. We ensure children's views and demands are heard during key national and international climate crisis discussions and defend children's right to participate, including against threats and intimidation. In 2021 we supported children to participate in a number of events with policy makers including at Youth COP and COP26. We developed our '[Born into the Climate Crisis](#)' report with the support of a dedicated Child Reference Group.

### **Influencing the scaling up and child-sensitivity of climate finance**

Without substantial increases in financing and child-sensitive investment, climate commitments and policies will remain empty promises to the millions of children affected on a daily basis. A significant scaling-up of investment in adaptation, including for shock-responsive social protection systems, is also needed to prevent millions of children in low- and middle-income countries suffering from climate impacts already in motion. The private sector is also in a position to contribute to closing the climate finance gap.

We advocate to governments to commit new and additional climate finance and create a new finance mechanism to urgently address rapidly escalating loss and damage (see Box 6), where climate impacts are not or cannot be avoided. As governments revise their Nationally Determined Commitments, Save the Children country offices can also work with government focal points to elevate child-centred climate change responses within national priorities. We also promote climate resilience building in recovery actions.

#### **Box 6 Loss and Damage**

Loss and Damage is the term used for climate impacts that cannot be or have not been mitigated or adapted to. The “loss” refers to things that are irreversibly lost such as lives, a way of living or a historical site, while the “damage” refers to things that can be repaired or recovered such as roads, buildings or crop yields.<sup>12</sup>

### **Securing political commitments and accountability to address the climate crisis and limit warming globally to 1.5 degrees in ways that secure the rights of children**

We will continue to hold States to account, including through strategic litigation and engagement with international accountability mechanisms such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child. We released the report *Born into the Climate Crisis*, which documents the devastating impact of the climate crisis on children. We influenced the final text of the Glasgow Climate Pact to include additional references to child rights and intergenerational equity, and we pushed for progress on emissions by intervening as a third-party in a climate change case brought by children and young people before the European Court of Human Rights.

<sup>12</sup> [What to Know About 'Loss and Damage' from Climate Change | World Resources Institute \(wri.org\)](https://www.wri.org/publication/2022/07/what-to-know-about-loss-and-damage-from-climate-change/)

## Campaigns

### Generation Hope

Our global campaign ‘Generation Hope’ is designed to urgently address the connected crises of economic inequality and climate change. Over at least the next five years, Save the Children is working with partners and children to harness the power of our influencing at global and national levels in Country Offices and among Members. We will:

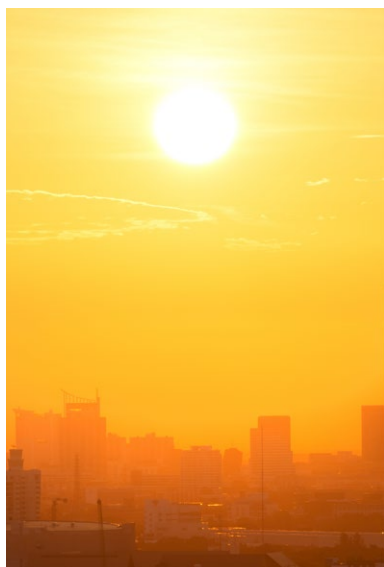
- Support children in 20–30 countries to campaign for the changes they demand on climate and economic inequality including through Children’s Hearings
- Contribute to shifting the dominant public narrative and make green, fair action for children inevitable
- Aim for at least 20 countries to make and implement financial commitments to improve climate sensitive social protection; and for 10 to unlock domestic finance for investment in child rights/services
- Contribute to unlocking the \$1.3 trillion per year investment needed in emerging and developing economies through shifts in the global financial system
- Ensure at least 10 governments or institutions accelerate urgent investment in children including by stopping harmful spending that threatens child rights.

#### Box 7 Case studies

In support of the child-led Red Alert campaign, Save the Children organized climate activism contests for children in nine countries – **Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam** – and for **Afghan** and **Rohingya** refugee communities (in **Pakistan** and **Bangladesh** respectively) in July-August 2021. Approximately 1000 children submitted their climate crisis messages using poetry, paintings, videos, songs and rap, and the best entries were publicized through national online or offline exhibitions and media coverage. An eye-catching digital gallery – [The World in Their Hands](#) – exhibited children’s messages to more audiences, promoting them alongside the Youth-4Climate event in Milan in September and COP26 in November. This regional gallery has reached 828,000 people with 27,000 social media engagements.

## 2 Child rights and accountability programming for climate change mitigation and adaptation

Getty Images / Stockphoto



As the leading independent child rights organization, we are mandated under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to strengthen international and national legal commitments to children of all genders and their human rights. As noted above, climate change is already having a profound effect on the claiming of child rights across the planet, particularly children most impacted by inequality and discrimination. Our child rights and governance programmes seek to support and influence governments, and other actors, to address climate change in a manner consistent with their obligation and accountability to respect, protect, promote and fulfill children's rights.

Operationally we drive this approach as follows:

- **Children's political and civil rights and child environmental rights defenders.** We directly support the development of national and international policy frameworks for child participation. We facilitate sustainable structures for children to exercise their civil and political rights, including through participating in climate related decision-making processes. We also support child human rights defenders, particularly where there is a risk of reprisals for expressing their views on the climate crisis.
- **International law development linked to the climate crisis.** We contribute our expertise and support children to be heard within human rights processes related to the environment and climate crisis. Most recently supporting the Human Rights Council resolution in 2020 on realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment, and the development of General Comment 26 to the UNCRC (on Children's Rights and the Environment with a Special Focus on Climate Change).
- **Human rights monitoring and reporting on climate change.** We support civil society actors and children's networks directly to monitor and report to human rights treaty bodies on the situation of children. We follow up with state actors on treaty body recommendations, including flagging where mitigation and adaptation violate children's rights.
- **Accountable governance and public investment in children.** We support governments to strengthen governance and accountability to children. Examples include: revisions to child laws to include sensitivity to climate change; undertaking budget analysis in support of local budgets that include proportionate investment in children as part of mitigation and adaptation; direct support to child rights' impact assessments for new climate legislation and policy; supporting inter-governmental coordination so that child rights laws, policies, strategic plans, are clearly joined-up with new and emerging government responses to climate change.

- **Social accountability dialogue.** We support civil society actors and children to engage directly with public service providers and local government decision makers through social accountability frameworks that focus on increasing the quality and access of public and private service provision to children and their communities.

### Box 8 Case study

The Children Stand Up project implemented by Save the Children **Albania** connects youth groups and schools in Albania and Italy to raise awareness on climate change and build networks. Through working with municipalities and the ombudsman in Albania, the project also promotes children's right to be heard in climate and environmental conversations and to inform policy development. The project supports children's regular monitoring of State actions on the climate through developing their own human rights report on environmental impact to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (complementary to the Albanian State's periodic report of the implementation of the Convention, 2021).

## 3 Anticipatory action

Children and their families cannot cope and adapt to climate change without access to climate risk information and early warnings whenever possible. Early cash transfer and shock-responsive social protection are one of most effective answers to help families to act promptly based on anticipated alerts and warnings – but are not the only forms of anticipatory action. We take an “end-to-end” approach – that is data analytics and forecasting, combined with pre-identified triggers, plans and pre-positioned funds to respond, as well as impact evidence generation to drive systems change.

Save the children already works at the frontline of humanitarian and conflict disasters, many of which are increasingly being fuelled by climate and environmental degradation. Working effectively requires building resilience to help communities cope and respond to ever increasing shocks. Save the Children also supports the [principles for locally-led adaptation](#), developed by a partnership of organizations led by the Global Commission on Adaptation, which starts from the assumption that local communities are best placed to lead sustainable and effective adaptation to climate change at the local level. We are adding a range of cutting-edge adaptation programmes to our portfolio in partnership with national governments, local communities and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), focusing on scaling up locally-led approaches to adaptation.



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In **Senegal**, the Start Network – a global network of NGOs, including Save the Children – purchased its first ARC Replica policy in 2019 to protect against drought, alongside the Senegalese government, and a payout was triggered later that year. The ARC (African Risk Capacity) is a specialized agency of the African Union working to make humanitarian funding available to governments before a state of emergency is declared. To do so, a payout is triggered when certain predictive metrics are met as opposed to the actual catastrophic event.

## 4 Equality and non-discrimination

Children’s rights, like all human rights, are grounded in the principle of equality. We know that children who are impacted by inequality and discrimination have increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change at individual, institutional and societal levels. States must fulfil their international obligations to equality and non-discrimination while addressing climate change. Our climate work considers the additional burdens and barriers faced by children who are further marginalized because of their gender identity, disability, race, ethnicity, citizenship, and sexuality, among others. We support duty-bearers at all levels to realize the rights of these children who are at the intersections of climate change and discrimination.

### Gender- transformative programming

The evidence is clear that “the climate crisis is not gender neutral”.<sup>13</sup> Women, girls and people with non-binary gender identities are both disproportionately affected by and less resilient to the impacts of climate change, further increasing existing gender inequalities and creating grave risks for their health, safety, livelihoods, education, wellbeing and survival. Our commitment to gender-transformative programming must exist at the centre of all efforts on climate change.

Recognizing the inextricable link between climate change and gender inequality, our work to address climate change will concurrently tackle the structural drivers of gender inequality. We will deliver gender transformative climate change programming that works across all levels of the socio-ecological framework to nurture empowerment and transform the discriminatory norms, systems and structures that are root causes for gender inequality. We ground our work to foster climate justice on gender and power analysis in order to generate transformative data and identify fresh insights and innovative solutions to the climate crisis not possible without an intersectional gender-focused approach. Diverse, intersectional and feminist leadership is shown to have a positive impact on climate action, and we support women, girls and children with non-binary gender identities to be leaders in the design and implementation of climate actions; and partner with women’s and girls’ rights and gender equality organizations to build alliances and take part in collective action advancing climate justice.

<sup>13</sup>  
<https://www.iucn.org/news/gender/202106/climate-change-not-gender-neutral>

### Box 9 Case study

In **Mozambique** we tackle food insecurity through a gender transformative approach to Linking Agriculture and Nutrition (LAN). In partnership with Helen Keller, we combined gender transformative social behaviour change to reduce gender-based violence and improve relationships in the home. We also supported economic and food production and processing techniques to increase supply and quality of food and resources through the lean season to reduce stunting.

## Climate change and disability

Climate change, together with its consequences including disasters, decreasing food and nutrition outcomes and extreme weather events, increases the prevalence and incidence of impairments that lead to disability. People with disabilities, including children with disabilities, are disproportionately affected by climate change and yet approaches to adaptation and resilience building have often excluded people with disabilities. People with disabilities and their families are already facing broad-based exclusion from food security systems, healthcare and participation in community activities. The intersection of disability and other forms of discrimination including gender and age means that people with disabilities are likely to be among the worst affected by climate change.

Our response focuses on the following:

**Inclusion and participation** – we foster the meaningful participation of children with disabilities in designing, planning and implementation of climate change adaptation mechanisms.

**Partnerships** – we build partnerships with the entire disability movement including organizations of persons with disabilities to ensure our interventions, are informed by real life experiences of children with disabilities and their families.

**Data Driven Targeting** – our approach collects, analyses and interprets disability-disaggregated data to inform our interventions on climate change and disability



### Supporting displaced children

Climate change is an increasingly important driver of migration. The World Bank estimates that in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America alone, 216 million people are at risk of internal displacement by 2050 due to climate change.<sup>14</sup> We plan to build into our program of work, in a selection of climate-vulnerable communities, improved data collection, monitoring and research to understand displacement trends due to climate change, and also conflict that may be driven by it. We listen to and consult with children who have been displaced due to climate change and incorporate their feedback into our program designs. We also aim to work with local authorities, particularly in urban areas where many people move, on local development plans to scale service provision to this anticipated influx.

### Social Behaviour Change

We recognize that the world's most pressing environmental and climate challenges are also behavioural challenges. Save the Children has considerable experience working on Social Behaviour Change – from supporting practices like breastfeeding to optimize child nutrition, to building the confidence and 'growth mindset' of adolescents to help them access new green job opportunities, to helping farmers adapt to changing climatic conditions. Our work with children and youth is particularly relevant – and our experienced youth activists demonstrate the importance of engaging young people in identifying solutions and inspiring change. We are lucky to be able to draw on the experience of our Centre for Utilizing Behavioral Insights for Children (CUBIC) in developing future activities.

<sup>14</sup>  
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248>



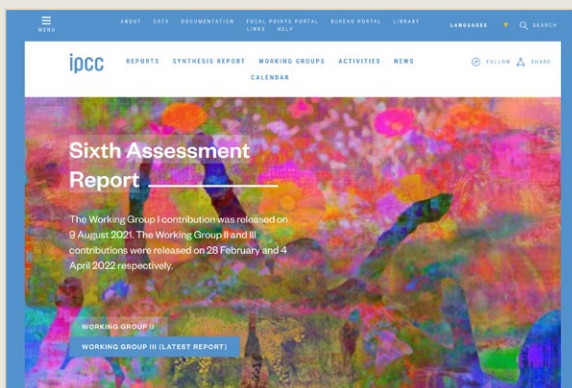
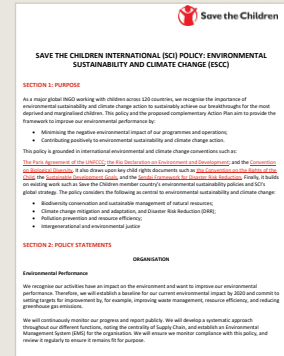
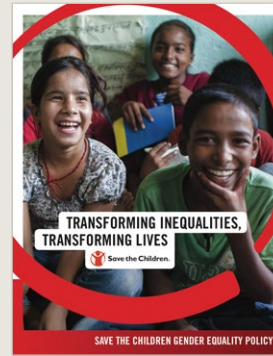
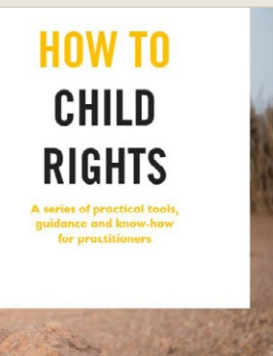
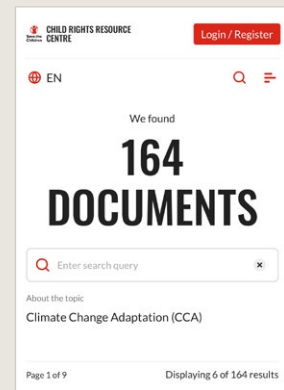
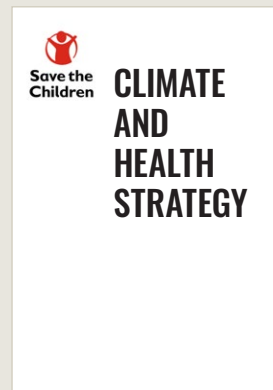
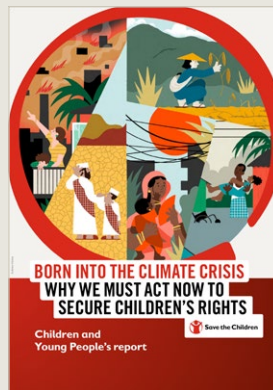
## WALKING THE TALK: 'GREENING' OUR OPERATIONS

Save the Children recognizes our activities have an impact on the environment. Our Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change (ESCC) policy provides a framework to minimize the environmental impact of our programmes and operations so that we deliver impact for children with minimal carbon footprint. Our carbon footprint is measured every year and in 2021, Save the Children committed to reducing our carbon emissions resulting from our programmes and operations to at least 50% of our 2019 levels, by 2030 at the latest. We are working with all Save the Children countries to determine annual carbon reduction targets so that we can monitor our progress. Tools and initiatives will be shared so that countries can continue to “green” their offices by implementing specific actions.

In addition, an Environmental and Social Management framework is being designed to ensure Save the Children has a systematic review and management of environmental and social risks. This framework is increasingly becoming a donor requirement for many institutional donors.

# Key resources

- 1 [Born into the climate crisis](#)
- 2 [Climate and health strategy](#)
- 3 [Save the Children Child Rights Resource Centre](#)
- 4 [How to child rights](#)
- 5 [Save the Children's Gender Equality Policy](#)
- 6 [Save the Children's Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Policy](#)
- 7 [UN Women/CSW; Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change](#)
- 8 [Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change \(IPCC\) Sixth Assessment Report](#)





Kate Stanworth / Save the Children



## Save the Children

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Save the Children International  
St Vincent's House  
30 Orange Street  
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WC2H 7HH  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0)20 3272 0300  
[www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)

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