



WE NEED TO DO BETTER

**CLIMATE RELATED DISASTERS
AND CHILD PROTECTION IN
EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**IFRC and the Global Child
Protection Area of Responsibility**



This analysis report has been developed through a partnership between the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the IFRC.

We thank the over 2,000 children and youth from across Eastern and Southern Africa who took time and shared their thoughts and experiences. Their perspectives are the primary basis of this analysis report.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terminology	4
Methodology	8
Climate Change and Climate Related Disaster Trends in the Region	10
Children in the Region	13
Child Participation	21
Access to Child Protection Services	26
Child Protection Frameworks	29
Coordination for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action	33
Disaster Preparedness and Anticipatory Action	37
Recommendations	39

Terminology

Access to education are actions that enhance children's ability to attain education, such as the (re) construction or renovation of education facilities or of water and sanitation facilities; the distribution of education supplies or of meals and food in education facilities; education-related cash programming; the provision of psychosocial support; the provision of safe transportation services from, to or around education facilities; and the tracing of education-related documents. ¹

Adolescent are children who are between the ages of 10-19 years.²

Anticipatory action is a set of actions taken to prevent or mitigate potential disaster impacts before a shock or before acute impacts are felt. The actions are carried out in anticipation of a hazard impact and based on a prediction of how the event will unfold. Anticipatory actions should not be a substitute for longer-term investment in risk reduction and should aim to strengthen people's capacity to manage risks.³

Best Interests of the Child is a foundational principle to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It means that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. This principle should guide the design, monitoring and adjustment of all humanitarian programmes and interventions.⁴

Children are a human beings below the age of 18 years.⁵

Child abuse refers to a deliberate act with actual or potential negative impacts upon the child's safety, well-being, dignity, and development. It is an intentional act that takes place in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.⁶

- **Emotional or psychological abuse** is when a caregiver acts or behaves in ways that have an adverse effect on the emotional health and development of a child. Such acts include restricting a child's movements, denigration, ridicule, threats and intimidation, discrimination, rejection, and other nonphysical forms of hostile treatment that deny the child an appropriate and supportive environment in which to thrive. They are acts that may result in psychological and social deficits in the growth of a child.
- **Physical abuse** is a caregiver's use of physical force to cause actual or possible physical injury or suffering.
- **Sexual abuse** is when a caregiver involves a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society.

Child exploitation refers to when an individual in a position of power and / or trust takes or attempts to take advantage of a child for their own personal benefit, advantage, gratification, or profit. This personal benefit may take different forms: physical, sexual, financial, material, social, military, or political. Exploitation may involve remuneration in cash or in kind (such as social status, political power, documentation, freedom of movement, or access to opportunities, goods, or services) to the child or to a third person/s.⁷

¹ IFRC. (2019). *Strategic Framework on Education*.

² IFRC. (2013). *Youth Engagement Strategy*.

³ IFRC and CP AoR. (2021). *Anticipatory Action and Child Protection: Acting Early to Better Protect Children in Emergencies*.

⁴ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2012). *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action* (2019 edition).

⁵ UN. (1991). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 1.

⁶ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2018). *Discussion Paper on the Review of Existing Definitions and Explanations of Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation, and Violence against Children*.

⁷ *Idem*.

Child exploitation may be divided into three categories, namely:

- Economic exploitation – slavery and slave-like practices, servitude, bonded or indentured labour.
- Harmful or hazardous labour – work that, by virtue of the child’s age or the nature of the work, is prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare, among other things the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. This includes the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and children's association with armed forces and armed groups.
- Sexual exploitation – child prostitution, the trafficking or sale of children for sexual purposes (including forced marriage), child pornography and grooming for sexual purposes – including online.⁸

Child participation refers to the manifestation of the right of every child to express their view, to have that view given all due consideration, to influence decision-making and to achieve change. It is the informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalised and those of different ages, genders, and disabilities, in any matter concerning them.⁹

Child protection is the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children.¹⁰

Climate change means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.¹¹

Disaster refers to a serious disruption of the functioning of a community that exceeds its capacity to cope using its own resources. There are many potential causes of such disruption, including natural and technological hazards, industrial accidents, mass movements of populations and infectious and contagious diseases, as well as various factors that influence the exposure and vulnerability of communities.¹²

Disaster preparedness and response activities is an umbrella term for any facilities, services, processes, distributions, resources, training, education, or information that are conducted or provided for the purpose of preparing for and/or responding to disaster.¹³

Violence against children means all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, as listed in article 19, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It encompasses all acts that involve the intentional use of power or verbal or physical force, threatened or actual, against a child or against a group of children that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child or children’s health, survival, development, or dignity. Possible forms of harm include injury; death; disability; decreased psychological, psychosocial, or mental health; or maldevelopment.

8 *Idem.*

9 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2012). **Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action** (2019 edition).

10 *Idem.*

11 UN. (1992). **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**.

12 IFRC. (2019). **Disaster Risk Management Policy: From Prevention to Response and Recovery**.

13 UNDRR. (2017). **Terminology**.

14 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 13 (2011), The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence. CRC/C/GC/13, 18 April 2011.

Key takeaways

This analysis report, “We Need To Do Better: Climate Related Disasters and Child Protection in Eastern and Southern Africa” is a partnership between the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the IFRC. It aims to enhance the protection of children in climate related disasters. In particular, the analysis seeks to understand child perspectives about climate change, climate related disasters, and the risks they face. It provides practical ways to enhance coordinated and localized child protection approaches in preparing for climate related disasters in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The focus of this report includes the countries of Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The analysis is centered around an online survey with 2,174 children and youth aged 10-30. In addition, 33 adult stakeholders from Red Cross National Societies and local and international non-governmental organizations were interviewed. Moreover, the analysis report draws on existing climate change, disaster preparedness, and child protection research from across the region.



Eastern and Southern Africa is a region highly impacted by climate change and climate related disasters. The majority of its population is young and has risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation.



Climate related disasters are a threat multiplier elevating the potential risk of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, as well as mental health concerns. It also enhances disparities already induced by widespread poverty and other humanitarian crisis.



Children already marginalized, such as those on the streets, who work, are out of school, are migrants or refugees, have a disability, are separated, or live-in residential care, are most at risk to violence, abuse, exploitation in climate related disasters. Climate change disproportionately magnifies vulnerabilities for these children. Girls are at particular risk to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, as well as barriers in accessing education because of gender-based inequalities.

Despite progress and the development of disaster and climate sensitive legal frameworks, countries in the region lack comprehensive laws, policies, and regulations for child protection.

Local coordination between relevant agencies and actors needs to be strengthened, at all levels, to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, and exploitation against children in climate related disasters.

The humanitarian response to child protection is coming too late. Earlier action within disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action phases are needed so that the impact on protection is reduced once a disaster does occur. Key actions in advance of a climate related disaster include identifying relevant indicators in the design and development of anticipatory action triggers, contextualizing and translating early warnings into expected risks for children, strengthening local coordination between agencies and government, having children of diverse backgrounds participate in planning and decisions, and placing a focus on protection of children with high risks to violence, abuse, and exploitation.

Children participating in this analysis report highlighted a number of issues:

- Climate related disasters are overwhelmingly on their mind and they are deeply concerned
- Many children have already experienced climate related disasters
- Children believe that climate related disasters influence the risk of physical and mental abuse against children
- Many children do not know where to access help in case they are threatened or hurt by someone
- Most children want to be involved in local solutions and many feel they do have opportunities to participate, to some degree in decisions that will affect them. Although barriers include hesitation from adults, a lack of roles in leadership, and not knowing where to access opportunities.
- Children underline the need to be better prepared. In particular, they want to learn more on actions they can take including developing plans to remain safe in case of climate related disasters, learn where to get help and how to help others, and how to cope with difficult situations.



This study proposes a series of practical actions to improve actions to protect children in climate change disasters. In particular:

- 1. Recognize the impact of climate change related disasters on children**
 - a) Mandate the collection and analysis of sex-, age-, gender- and disability-disaggregated data on children's needs and vulnerabilities.
 - b) Ensure girls and children with particular risks are prioritized and included in protection programming.
- 2. Prioritize child participation**
 - a) In all assessments, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation regarding climate change related disasters, ensure children of diverse ages, genders, abilities, and backgrounds have meaningful opportunities to participate.
 - b) Develop safe spaces where children, especially adolescents, can discuss their concerns and ideas to stay safe during climate related disasters.
- 3. Improve access to support services and education**
 - a) Ensure that child protection and education services are functional and available to all children, including boys. Draw inspiration, as appropriate, from the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.
 - b) Co-design with children and make widely available child-friendly information on where and how to access local support for child protection, MHPSS, and SGBV.
- 4. Develop, implement, and enforce laws, policies, and regulations**
 - a) Include child protection in all relevant laws, regulations, and policies, notably on climate adaptation and disaster related laws, policies, and regulations.
- 5. Strengthen local coordination**
 - a) Ensure multi-level coordination between national authorities and local actors, in particular local authorities, child-, youth-led and community-based organizations, such as women-led organizations, faith-based networks, local NGOs, UN agencies, and Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies.
 - b) Train local disaster responders on child protection.
- 6. Include child protection within disaster preparedness and anticipatory action**
 - a) Integrate climate change and climate related disasters in child protection interventions, by investing in climate adaptation and resilience in key services for children and ensuring that the services are risk informed and climate resilient.
 - b) Include child protection within disaster preparedness, anticipatory action, and early response for climate related disasters.

15 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019).

Methodology



A NOTE ON QUOTES IN THIS REPORT

Quotes in *blue italics* represent statements made by children and youth who participated in this report.

Quotes in *red italics* represent statements made by adult key stakeholders who were interviewed for this report.

Methodology of the Survey

An online survey was carried out from July until December 2021 to gather the perceptions and recommendations of children and youth aged between 10 and 30 and living in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The survey consisted of 31 questions and was offered in Amharic, Chichewa, English, French, Portuguese, Somali, Swahili and Zulu.

A total of 2,174 responses were compiled, most of which were from Botswana (88%). The high respondent percentage from this country alone brings notable limitations regarding representation of the findings. The information analysed is mostly indicative of the opinions of the children and youth able to connect online, as well as those reached through localised outreach by Red Cross volunteers in communities of Botswana.

An examination of the data was explored through a bivariate analysis of key demographic variables (gender, age, education attainment) alongside research questions of interest from the perception survey in STATA. The most significant correlations are included in the below report, but constraints of analyst time available meant a more detailed statistical analysis was not feasible in the timeframe. The raw data has been cleaned and anonymized and is available for further analysis as needed.

The quotes disseminated throughout this publication have been gathered from the survey as well as individual interviews. Nuances in the meaning could have been lost in translation.

Demographics

Most respondents were from the Botswana (1,907), followed by Zambia (61), Kenya (57), Zimbabwe (55), Burundi (31), Rwanda (21), Lesotho (19), Uganda (7), Namibia (6), Somalia (3), South Sudan (3), Angola (2), and Eswatini (2).

This analysis report uses the terms “children and youth” to describe the respondents given that children aged 12-17 made up 15% (330) of the respondents, and the remaining were youth up to the age of 30.

18–24-year-olds were the most frequent age group filling out the survey. This is likely influenced by the fact that children are less likely to be connected whereas youth often have increased access to mobile devices as they grow older, as well as individual agency, and the wish to contribute and make their voices heard. This could also have been influenced by the dissemination methodology, with local organizations frequently targeting this audience through their programming and communication, as well as by the algorithms influencing the selection of the target groups on the various social media platforms.

Fifty per cent of the respondents respectively identified as females and the same percentage for males, indicating similar interest in the topic. Combined, 684 (31.5%) of the respondents self-identified as belonging to a non-majority group. Breaking this figure down, there were 635 identifying as minority (29.2%), 36 as a member of migrant group (1.7%) and 13 as refugee (0.6%).

“ Thank you for the survey on climate change because it allowed me to see more the impact that our habits and especially the ignorance that many have about pollution and climate change can harm us and the generations to come if nothing is done to prevent these disasters. It also allowed me to express myself and give my suggestions on how to fight these disasters.”

“ Through these questions, your initiative is an effective way to facilitate awareness.”

“ Great that you involve children and youth in the research, that’s a good approach. It is not adult centered.”

Climate Change and Climate Related Disaster Trends in Eastern and Southern Africa

Urgent actions are needed to protect children against the consequences of climate-related disasters in the region where the frequency, magnitude, and impact of climate change and related disasters is already increasing and will continue to do so.¹⁶

Eastern and Southern Africa hosts several climate change hotspots, where strong physical and ecological effects of climate change intersect with large populations of poor communities with particular vulnerabilities.¹⁷

Floods and droughts represent over 64% and 14.2% of all climate- and weather-related disasters in Africa.¹⁸ Floods and storms, followed by droughts, also contribute the most to internal disaster-related displacement in the continent.¹⁹



Climate related disasters in the region

In 2017, the severe drought in the Horn of Africa led to at least 17 million people in need of assistance across Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda.

In 2019, two tropical cyclones – Idai and Kenneth – battered the African east coast, affecting Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.²⁰ Cyclone Idai affected over 1.85 million people in Mozambique, including 1 million children.

Currently, severe drought conditions in Southern Madagascar are driving an estimated 1.35 million people to the brink of survival.²¹

“ People must know how to protect themselves from storms, floods, etc.”

“ Climate change is a life-threatening phenomenon and so individuals and governments should work jointly to curb the end product. Climate change should as well be declared a global crisis so that the attention it needs should be given to it in order to secure lives today and lives of many generations to come.”

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicated that flood hazards are likely to rise, particularly in tropical parts of Africa.²² Many weather stations have indeed recorded their highest amounts of rainfall in 40 years,²³ and sea-level rise is projected to increase flooding, particularly on the coasts of Kenya, Madagascar, and Mozambique in Eastern Africa, as well as around Lake Victoria where 10 million children may be impacted.

16 IFRC. (2021). *Urgent action needed to protect children against climate-related disasters in Africa*.

17 UNICEF and UN Habitat. (2020). *Analysis of Multiple Deprivations in Secondary Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

18 IFRC. (2020). *World Disasters Report. Come Heat or High Water: Tackling the Humanitarian Impacts of the Climate Crisis Together*.

19 WMO. (2021). *The State of the Climate in Africa*.

20 IFRC. (2020). *World Disasters Report*.

21 WFP. (2021). *Climate Change in Southern Africa, A position Paper for the World Food Programme in the region*.

22 IPCC. (2014). *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)].

23 OCHA. (2020). *Eastern Africa Region: Floods and Locust Outbreak Snapshot*.

With Southern Africa warming at twice the global rate,²⁴ the region is expected to be increasingly affected by heat stress, wildfires, and droughts. Impacts of changes in temperatures and rainfall patterns include increased water scarcity and pest infestations.²⁵ An analysis carried out by Save the Children indicated that over 1,200 people lost their lives as the result of cyclones, floods and landslides in Mozambique, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, and Malawi (not including the thousands of lives lost to drought) in 2019 alone.²⁶

Moreover, climate change-associated extreme weather events are affecting livelihoods, economies, and the environment, in turn exacerbating existing vulnerabilities in the region.²⁷

Namely, since 2020, several countries are being affected by one of the worst infestations of locusts in decades.²⁸ The insects are breeding and spreading across thousands of acres of farmland and especially concentrated in Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, and South Sudan, having an extremely worrying impact on the food security and livelihoods situations.²⁹

In fact, the climate crisis is estimated to have already contributed to at least 33 million people – including 16 million children – at emergency levels of food insecurity or worse in East and Southern Africa.³⁰ Climate change is also predicted to increase the number of undernourished children under 5 years by an additional 2.4 million in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2050,³¹ while food insecurity increases by 5–20 percentage points with each flood or drought in sub-Saharan Africa.³²

In addition, global warming and climate change already contribute to rural-urban migration. Climate change is expected to exacerbate the environmentally induced migration patterns. This is already the case, notably with nomadic populations altering their traditional migration patterns to cope with the impacts of desertification,³³ the relocation of families to faraway places during farming seasons in search of pastures or to find temporary shelter when there are floods,³⁴ and subsistence farmers abandoning their land and migrating into towns and cities to seek alternative income-generating opportunities.³⁵

By June 2020, an estimated 12% of all new population displacements worldwide had occurred in the East and Horn of Africa region, with over 1.2 million new disaster-related displacement. Among the worst affected were refugees, internally displaced and stateless people, and migrants, as well as the poor, women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.³⁶

Another threat is that deviations from normal rainfall and temperature increase the likelihood of conflicts.³⁷ A deeper understanding needs to be developed of how the transformation of the environment and competition for scarce resources in conflict situations fuel intercommunal tensions and violence. Namely, while climate change may not cause conflict, it may contribute to exacerbating and prolonging conflict and instability by further weakening institutions and systems, including for children, and people's coping mechanisms.³⁸

24 Save the Children. (2019). *2019: Climate shocks claim more than 1200 lives across East and Southern Africa*.

25 WFP. (2021).

26 Save the Children. (2019). *2019: Climate shocks claim more than 1200 lives across East and Southern Africa*.

27 WFP. (2021).

28 OCHA. (2020).

29 IFRC. (2020). *IFRC Information bulletin - Africa: Multiple disasters and hazards*.

30 Save the Children. (2021). *Born Into the Climate Crisis – Why we must act now to secure children's rights*.

31 WFP. (2021).

32 WMO. (2021). *The State of the Climate in Africa*.

33 IOM. (2019). *Climate Change and Migration in Vulnerable Countries: A snapshot of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States*.

34 Plan International. (2021). *Adolescent Girls in the Climate Crisis: Voices from Zambia and Zimbabwe*.

35 WFP. (2021).

36 WMO. (2021).

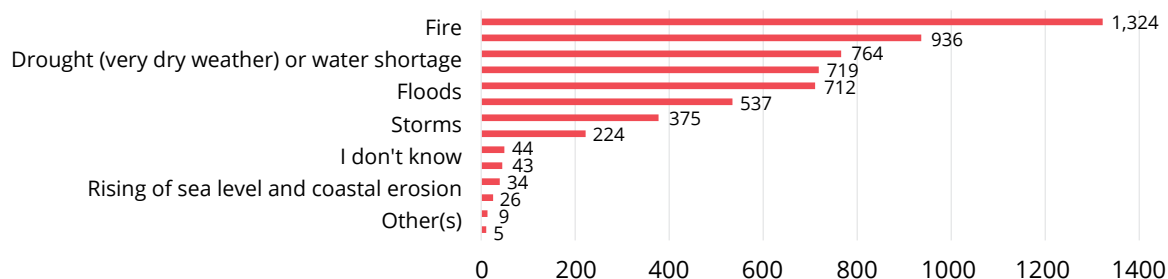
37 Akresh, R. (2016). *Climate change, conflict, and children*. Future of Children.

38 ICRC. (2020). *When rain turns to dust*.

Experiences about Climate Change and Climate Related Disasters

Participants to the survey identified the climate-related concerns they had experienced in recent years. Several options could be selected, and the main ones highlighted change in weather seasons or patterns (61%), fire (43%), heat wave or extreme temperatures (35%), drought or water shortage (33%), and pollution (33%).

Figure 1: Have you experienced any natural disasters in your community in recent years?*



* Respondents could select multiple options

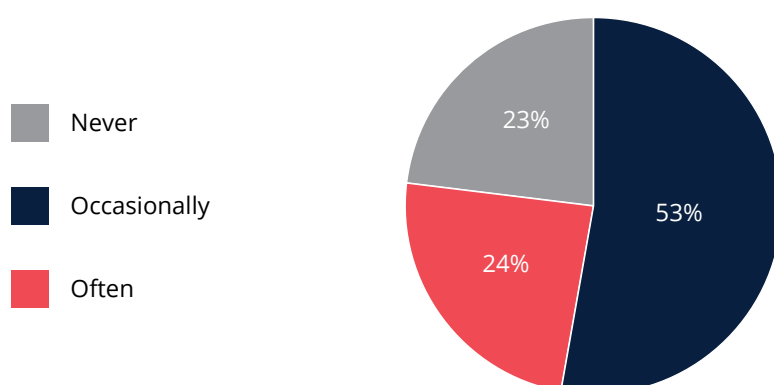
Ninety per cent of the children and youth believed that all or some of the natural disasters they have experienced were caused by climate change.

Preoccupations with Climate Change and Climate Related Disasters

A majority of children and youth consulted (approximately 76%) think about climate change, with about a quarter of them thinking about it often.

Seventy-seven per cent of children and youth either occasionally or often think about disasters related to climate change. Children tend to think slightly more about the disasters related to climate change than climate change itself.

Figure 2: How often do you think about disasters related to climate change?



“ It seems everyone else does not care about climate change and they are just going on with their lives. What if one day we wait for the rain season and it never comes?”

“ For these children to be safe, we need points of interaction. There is no one who receives them, no place to take refuge. Create institutions to take responsibility for receiving these children: if they can inform me, supervise me, warn me, I can feel better and know that they will help me.”

Children in the Region

Close to half of the 1.2 billion African people are under the age of 18.³⁹

By the year 2050, African children will make up 40 per cent of the world's children,⁴⁰ the child and youth population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to more than double to 945 million,⁴¹ becoming the only region in the world with a positive increase in its child and youth population.⁴²

But children and youth are bearing the brunt of urbanization in the world's least urbanized yet fastest urbanizing subregion, as urban areas lacking access to adequate infrastructure and basic services are more likely to be affected by natural disasters.⁴³ Namely, by 2050, more children and youth will be living in secondary towns and cities than in rural areas. The lack of policies to support child-friendly-cities coupled with growing gaps in physical and socio-economic development create socio-spatial inequalities and multiple deprivations,⁴⁴ in particular when it comes to housing, water, sanitation, health, and education.

In this way, climate change is further driving inequality and creating and prolonging poverty traps, with children and adolescents particularly exposed.⁴⁵

Climate change-related drivers have a significant impact on the sexual and reproductive health of children and adolescents as extreme-weather events aggravate the sexual violence, sexual exploitation, abuse, trafficking and domestic violence during and after disasters, increase sexually transmitted diseases and mental health issues, and expand sexual exploitation, sexually based violence, and child marriage.⁴⁶

What is more, the region faces multiple crises that exacerbate the risks of violence and abuse⁴⁷ and erode the gains in protecting children.⁴⁸

“ I appreciate your ideas of making children free from violence.”

“ Teach us about child abuse.”

“ Help us on how to take care of ourselves during these times.”

Children's understanding of climate change and climate related disasters

Self-assessed levels of relative understanding of climate change and climate related disasters, were around 76%, seem to indicate a correlation between gaining some understanding of these topics and having them in mind.

39 UNICEF. (2020). *Review of Progress in the Advancement of Child Rights in Africa: Reflecting on the past and future challenges and opportunities*. Report submitted by the UNICEF Office to the African Union and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and UNICEF Evaluation Office.

40 UNICEF. (2020). *Review of Progress in the Advancement of Child Rights in Africa*.

41 UNICEF, EU, AU. (2021). *#YourVoiceYourFuture. Turning Challenges into Solutions*.

42 UNICEF and UN Habitat. (2020).

43 *Idem*.

44 *Idem*.

45 UNICEF ESARO. (2020). *The Climate Crisis: Climate Change Impacts, Trends and Vulnerabilities of Children in Sub Saharan Africa*.

46 IFRC. (2021). *Reducing the Health and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Wash) Impacts of Climate Change – Setting the Scene on Health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Wash) Response in a Changing Climate*.

47 ACPF. (2014). *The African Report on Violence Against Children*.

48 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *National Capacity To Address Violence Against Children: Assessment in Ten African Countries*.

Approximately one third of the participants consider themselves as having a good understanding of both climate change and climate related disasters, while 45% felt they had some understanding but at a low level. Only 3% felt strong about their understanding and those indicating no understanding at all represent 20% of children and youth.

Figure 3: How would you rate your understanding of climate change?

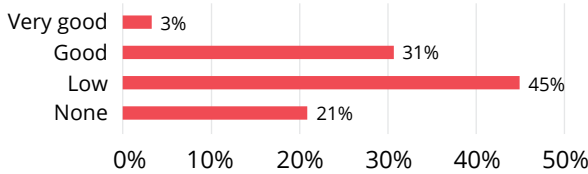
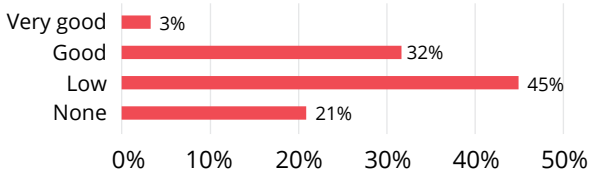


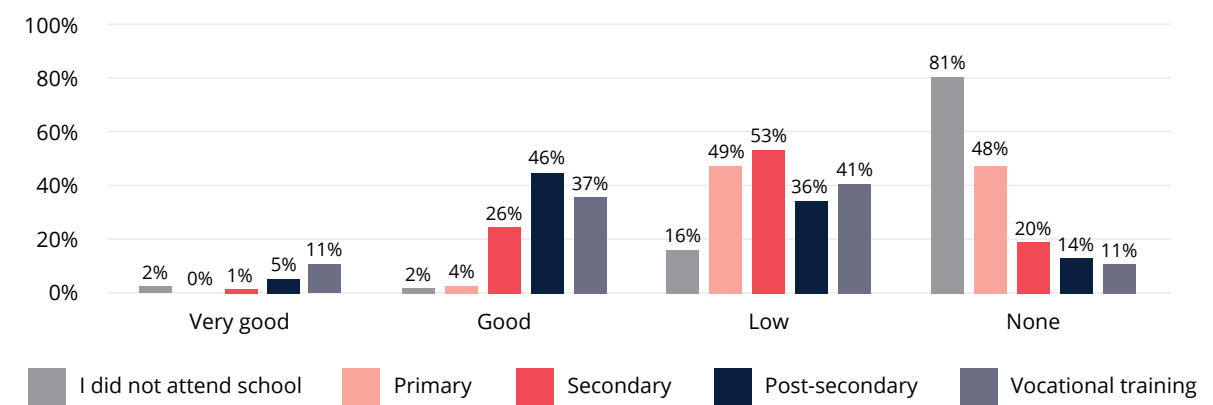
Figure 4: How would you rate your understanding of disasters related to climate change?



Both climate change and climate related disasters were understood in equal proportions, suggesting that children and youth may perceive them as strongly correlated.

Almost all the participants who reported not attending school or attending only primary school declared no understanding, or at best a low understanding of climate change. For those reporting having attended schooling at higher levels, the understanding was greater, and further increased from secondary to vocational and post-secondary studies.

Figure 5: Understanding of climate change by education completed



Comments from the participants reflect an understanding of the interconnectedness and significance of both climate change and child protection:

- “ Climate change affects children also. We tend to think of entire countries and not about people as individuals, taking into account age considerations.”
- “ People just need to understand the dangers and detrimental effects of those issues on children: on child marriage, health, especially mental health, teenage pregnancies and schools: help them have an insight of all.”
- “ I feel there is need to engage the public more. Because in my community few people understand the effects of climate change.”

“ Everyone, especially young people, must get involved.”

“ It is actually alarming to know

Violence, abuse, and exploitation of children

Prior to the COVID19 pandemic, 50% of children in the region were estimated to have experienced or witnessed physical, sexual, or emotional violence.⁴⁹ Children are often subject to multiple risks exposing them to violence. These include natural disasters, armed conflicts, displacement, harmful practices, neglect,⁵⁰ and poverty⁵¹.

Sample statistics: Violence against children in Eastern and Southern Africa

- Every second, an African child reaches out to child helpline services to report abuse and violence.
- Over 60 % of children experience physical punishment from family members and caregivers in many countries in Africa.
- One in four children experiences sexual violence.
- Each year three million girls are at risk of genital cutting in Africa.
- Five million more girls are married every year, with 40 % of girls in sub-Saharan Africa married before their 18th birthday.
- Four out of ten boys in residential care institutions suffer physical violence, while two in ten experience sexual violence of one form or another. Violent and degrading punishment of children has been documented in care settings and penal institutions in many countries.
- Child trafficking is increasing: Sub-Saharan Africa reports the highest share of child trafficking in the world, with girls and boys more or less equally affected.

Violence is not always perceived as an abusive act, unless it exceeds a level of generally accepted severity. As such, socio-cultural norms, prevailing practices, and power relations largely condone violence, even despite developing protective laws and sanctions.⁵³

Sample statistics: Female Genital Mutilation

Five countries in East Africa recognize and report the existence of female genital mutilation practices, with the highest percentages recorded in Eritrea and Ethiopia (88.7 and 74.3 per cent respectively).⁵⁴

49 Hillis S, Mercy J, Amobi A, Kress H. *Global Prevalence of Past-year Violence Against Children: A Systematic Review and Minimum Estimates*. Pediatrics. 2016 Mar.

50 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

51 The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. (2019). *Keeping the Promise: Ending Violence Against Children by 2030*.

52 The African Partnership to End Violence against Children (APEVAC).

53 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

54 UNFPA. *Regional Interventions Action Plan for East and Southern Africa 2018-2021*.

According to the report on Progress and Challenges in Violence Against Children in Africa, children with specific vulnerabilities to violence, abuse, and exploitation include girls, children with disabilities, children growing up in poverty, children living and/or working on the street, indigenous children, children belonging to minorities, and children with albinism.⁵⁵ Children in residential care and children living in other people's homes to perform domestic work also present vulnerabilities.⁵⁶

The risk of harm is magnified where children are especially young, and/or female, or have two or more vulnerability factors.⁵⁷

“ I believe there is a group of children impacted by this, especially those living in rural areas. Because in urban area, they have an aunt or uncle who can help.”

“ Those living mostly with grandparents are most affected.”

“ Government to reach us and teach us about abuse in general because at our village we are facing disaster and end up losing our home and stay with the relatives.”

Access to education

Lack of access to protective services in school as well as barriers to education compound protection risks for children during climate related disasters.

Overall in Eastern and Southern Africa, the proportion of out-of-school children remains high, school completion continues to be a key challenge, while there is limited access to and participation in technical and vocational education and training. Data on basic service and school infrastructure is not available in more than half of all countries across Africa. Direct, indirect, and opportunity costs, notably those linked to gender and social cultural norms, remain significant barriers to children, especially girls, in continuing their education.⁵⁸

High levels of out-of-school children were observed prior to the pandemic in the Horn of Africa countries of Somalia (44%), Eritrea (47%), and South Sudan (62%) where the climate crisis contribute to exacerbating the situation. In Southern Africa, the rate of urbanization and climate change induced floods and droughts threatened to undo the inroads made in giving out-of-school children an education.⁵⁹

As of July 2021, UNICEF estimated that some 69 million children – 40% of all school-aged children across Eastern and Southern Africa – were not in school due to pre-pandemic levels of out of school children and COVID19-induced closures.⁶⁰ Children from the poorest households⁶¹ and children with disabilities⁶² were disproportionately affected by a lack of access to education. Nearly half of the children in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be reached by remote educational programs.⁶³

55 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

56 ACPF. (2014).

57 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

58 UNICEF and the African Union Commission. (2021).

59 UNICEF and UN Habitat. (2020).

60 UNICEF. (2021). Press Release of 27 July 2021. **40 per cent of children in Eastern and Southern Africa are not in school.**

61 UNICEF. (2020). *COVID-19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures? A Global Analysis of the Potential Reach of Remote Learning Policies*. Fact sheet.

62 Education Development Trust and UNICEF ESARO. (2016). *Eastern and Southern Africa regional study on the fulfilment of the right to education of children with disabilities*.

63 UNICEF. (2020). *COVID-19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures? A Global Analysis of the Potential Reach of Remote Learning Policies*. Fact sheet.



The role of gender

By magnifying patterns of gender inequality, climate change impacts affect girls disproportionately compared to boys.⁶⁴

Notably, restricted access to radio, television, newspapers, or social media often imply that girls have limited information about weather conditions and early warnings, are less able to contribute, rendering them more vulnerable.⁶⁵

Education continuity is a challenge for girls as climate change implies that:

- Parents' attention is diverted from sending children to school to sourcing food;
- Where parents can only afford to pay two fees for some of their children, they give priority to boys;
- Household chores are either before or after classes and there is no time for homework or after school studies;
- Girls miss classes during their menstrual cycle especially in instances where they don't have access to water;
- Girls from poor families cannot afford clothing for climate induced weather extremes.⁶⁶

From adolescent girls' perspectives, climate change significantly increases their risk of sexual violence, especially when:

- Girls are tasked with fetching water from long distances;
- Extreme weather conditions mean that schools are inaccessible, or their school attendance is low because of climate change induced challenges;
- Homes are destroyed, and girls are forced to shelter in unsafe places.⁶⁷

Emergency situations can give rise to high-risk behaviours and negative coping strategies, including transactional sex, child marriage, and dropping out of school, while access to support services and contraceptives may be disrupted.⁶⁸ The adolescent birth rate in the region is double the global rate, and adolescents face significantly higher rates of maternal morbidity, including obstetric fistula.⁶⁹

64 UNICEF ESARO. (2020).

65 IFRC and CP AoR. (2021).

66 Plan International. (2021).

67 *Idem*.

68 UNICEF and UN Habitat. (2020).

69 UNFPA. **Regional Interventions Action Plan for East and Southern Africa 2018-2021.**

Sample statistics: Climate disasters, girls, education, and risk to violence

- Studies in Lesotho have indeed shown that drought conditions are significantly linked with riskier sex behaviours and higher prevalence of HIV rates among rural girls and women aged 15-19.⁷⁰
- GBV was overall reported to have increased following periods of reduced rainfall and droughts in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda;
- In Uganda, enrolment in the highest grade of primary school for girls was reduced by 5 % following a 15 % reduction in rainfall;
- In Mozambique, the El-Niño-induced drought increased rates of child marriage, school drop-out among girls, reports of SGBV, and women and girls having to trade sex for food and money.⁷¹
 - Girls are at greatest risk of child, early, and forced marriages and unions with more than a third (37%) of young women aged 20-24 years married as children in East and Southern Africa.⁷²
 - Although there are no official figures on child marriages resulting from climate change or weather-related disasters, more organisations and governments are starting to bring attention to these issues;
 - In Ethiopia, the number of girls sold into early marriage in exchange for livestock increased as families struggled to cope with extreme drought conditions;
 - In South Sudan, due to crop failure and the death of cattle, which exacerbated hunger in the region, families resorted to marrying off their daughters; and
 - In Malawi the '2015 Floods Post Disaster Needs Assessment' report listed child marriage as a heightened risk for women and girls resulting floods.⁷³

“ There was a severe drought: because of lack of food and water, they resorted to marrying off their daughter to get food as dowry.”

Mental health and psychosocial support

Nearly 37 million adolescents (aged 10–19) live with a mental disorder in Africa.⁷⁴ Anxiety and depression account for almost 50 per cent of mental disorders among adolescents aged 10–19 in the region.⁷⁵

“ In African homes, mental health is not really considered: so many kids are fighting depression in silence. This is not considered as valid.”

“ Kids are not able to air their concerns, what they feel.”

“ People don't really understand. Somebody can be abused physically but also mentally at home. You can only get help when you go to a clinic and talk to someone: they are those who would understand and be able to visit the family, the house, and talk to the people forming part of the environment of the child.”

70 WFP. (2021).

71 IFRC and UNICEF. (2021). *Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Management, An analysis of gender integration in national and regional disaster risk management frameworks in Eastern and Southern Africa.*

72 UNFPA. *Regional Interventions Action Plan for East and Southern Africa 2018-2021.*

73 IUCN. (2020). *Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality.*

74 UNICEF. (2021). *The State of the World's Children 2021 – On My Mind: Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health – Regional Brief Africa.*

75 UNICEF. (2021). *The State of the World's Children 2021.*

“ They just need somebody to understand them from their point of view. But people push them away saying they are just trying to be spoiled.”

Suicide is the ninth most common cause of death among adolescents aged 15–19 in Africa.⁷⁶

“ My cousin had depression. Family members regarded the situation saying she was in as a spoiled bread. She ended up committing suicide. She just needed somebody to talk to. When my cousin stepped in, that was just too late.”

In 2021, mental health was the third most common concern (after violence and physical health) leading African children to contact a child helpline.⁷⁷ Questions on mental health concerned 15.8% of the calls and related mainly to behavioral problems (22%), emotional distress – fear and anxiety problems (19%), and emotional distress / anger problems (16%).⁷⁸

“ I need government to have free call numbers.”

“ There could be initiatives that tackle this type of problems, but they need to be strengthened.”

“ We should be taught how to cope with difficult situations.”

“ Give counselling to those who are affected by climate change.”

“ [We have a] Lack of structures and safe spaces.”



⁷⁶ *Idem.*

⁷⁷ Child Helpline International. (2021). *Voices of Children and Young People, Global Child Helpline Data for 2020.*

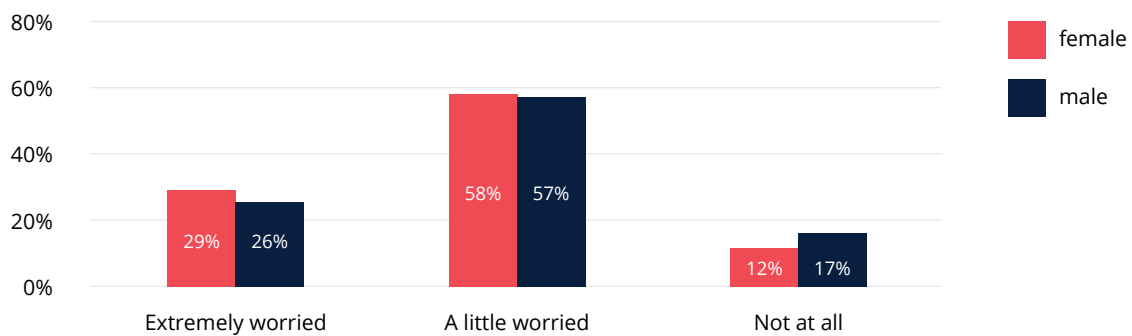
⁷⁸ *Idem.*

Levels of concern of children about disasters related to climate change

Eighty-six per cent of children and youth shared some level of concern (ranging from little to extreme) about climate change and disasters related to climate change, while 14% had no worries at all.

The gender breakdown of the rate of understanding and worry about climate change presents strong similarities between males and females.

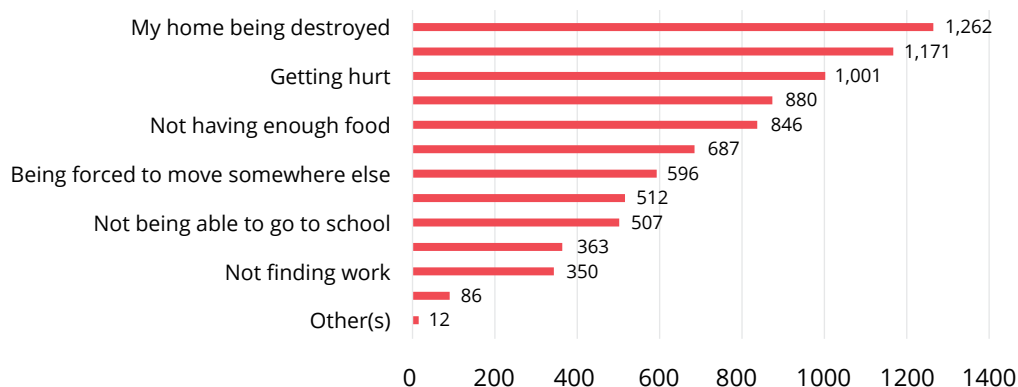
Figure 6: How worried do you feel about climate change? (share by gender)



What children worry about in relation to climate related disasters

The most common answer to children and youth's biggest worries in the event of climate change was fear of their home being destroyed (58%), the environmental impact (54%), getting hurt (46%), falling sick (40%) and not having enough food (39%).

Figure 10: If you feel worried about disasters related to climate change, what are you worried about?*



* Respondents could select multiple options

A majority of children and youth (63%) considered that disasters related to climate change either influenced or highly influenced the risks of physical or mental abuse to children and young people, while 19% did not know whether there was any impact at all. No participants indicated that disasters related to climate change do not influence those risks.

Child Participation



Although there is a general recognition of the right of children to participate, and the fact that participation enables self-protection, meaningful child participation remains limited in Eastern and Southern Africa.⁷⁹

There is no common strategy to ensure the achievement of child participation in the region,⁸⁰ and mechanisms to engage children are generally insufficient,⁸¹ inadequately coordinated, and not institutionalized through national structures and systems.⁸²

Some countries, such as Kenya and Uganda, have adopted child participation strategies and guidelines,⁸³ and others, such as Ethiopia and Malawi, have established youth Parliaments.

“ Invite us to decision making tables to hear our inputs, like on child protection and climate issues. Actually, I wouldn’t use the term “invite” as it would imply that the table has owners already, so I don’t know how to put it better... but being involved, collaborative engagement on climate and child protection issues with all stakeholders including children.”

Overall, when participation occurs, it is more likely to materialize at the community level,⁸⁴ for instance in child right clubs and local youth. But local governments in many places are yet to integrate issues of child participation in their local planning agenda.⁸⁵



Youth volunteers in Kenya

In the Kwale communities in drought-stricken areas of Kenya, young Red Cross volunteers raise awareness, provide necessary training, and mobilize young people in building community resilience in the face of recurring drought. With their help, communities improved their early warning and preparedness systems, updated the community disaster response plan, and strengthened food security through the promotion of climate-smart farming practices. Young volunteers also contributed to environmental conservation efforts and increased local access to clean water. As a result, Kwale communities were able to withstand the drought crisis better than many others in the region.⁸⁶

79 ACPF. (2015). *A Study on Child Participation in Eastern Africa*.

80 ACPF. (2015). *Child Participation Strategy for Eastern African Countries*.

81 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

82 ACPF. (2015). *Child Participation Strategy for Eastern African Countries*.

83 ACPF. (2015). *A Study on Child Participation in Eastern Africa*.

84 Global Center on Adaptation. (2021). *Young People and Drivers and Barriers to Climate Adaptation Action*.

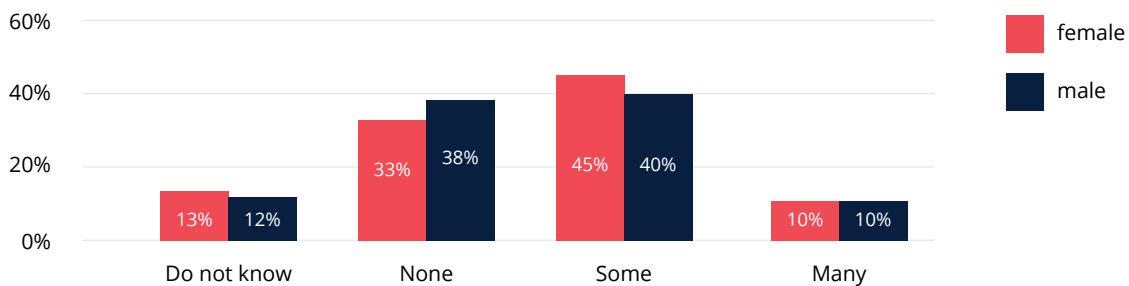
85 ACPF. (2015). *A Study on Child Participation in Eastern Africa*.

86 IASC. (2020). *Guidelines – With Us & For Us: Working With and For Young People In Humanitarian and Protracted Crises*.

Participation of children and youth in climate change and climate related disasters

Thirty-five per cent of the respondents considered that they have no opportunities to participate at all, while 42% indicated having some opportunities to share concerns and ideas to protect themselves and prepare for disasters related to climate. Females and males shared similar perceptions in this regard.

Figure 8: Do you feel you have opportunities to share your concerns and ideas to protect yourself and prepare for disasters related to climate change? (disaggregation by gender)



Despite a lack of existing opportunities, 61% of participants believe that someone their age can make a difference on climate change, while one third of them (31%) are unsure, and 8% think they cannot. Similar levels of confidence were shared by females and males.

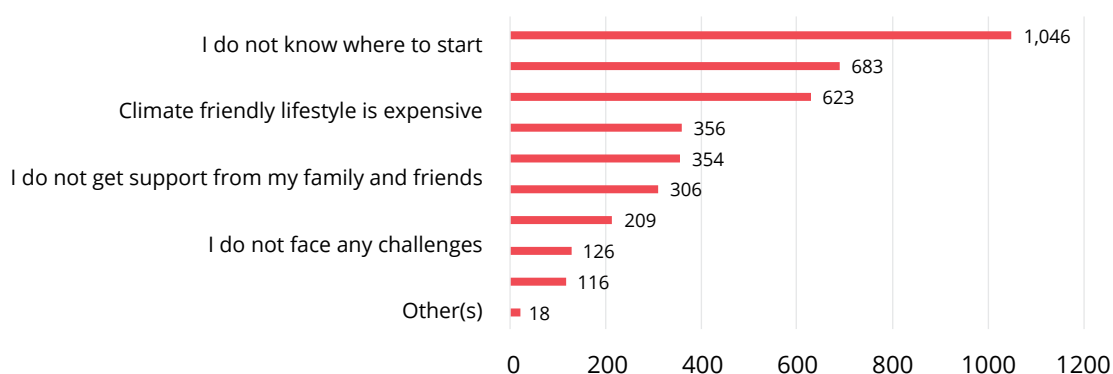
- “ I think it's our responsibility as youth and citizens of the world to act as swiftly as possible to curb the consequences of climate change on different lives.”
- “ I think people in the society can be taught on the safety measure precautions to follow when there is such an incident of climate change, both young and old.”
- “ Educating people on climate change and on preparedness to disasters.”
- “ We have to build some youth groups in the community and discuss how to overcome those challenges.”
- “ Having climate change expos and inviting youth members such as myself to speak and take part.”
- “ Establishment of child protection teams where children participate.”
- “ To establish a group which when these disasters occur we can assist in helping them.”
- “ My thoughts are to raise awareness on climate change issues and the risks associated with communities.”
- “ Nothing about us without us.”
- “ The families are key players, but children should also be empowered, not only in schools but also at the community level.”

Cleaning up rubbish (38%), planting trees (37%), reduce, reuse, and recycle (36%), participate in decision making process where possible (33%), equipping themselves with knowledge on climate change and related disaster risks (28%), and influencing peer / communities positively to address climate change and related disasters were the top selected answers for how children believe they can address climate change.

Challenges to children and youth’s participation

While children want to participate in actions for child protection and against climate disasters, they face barriers. The most common ones were not having enough information or knowledge (48%), not knowing where to start (31%) and not knowing where to share concerns or ideas (28%).

Figure 9: What challenges do you face when it comes to acting against climate change?*



* Respondents could select multiple options

Even where child participation happens, initiatives tend not to be sustainable, and the views of children not taken seriously or taken properly into account in decision making.⁸⁷ In part this may be due to children being viewed as helpless members of society,⁸⁸ not perceived as autonomous, hence considered incapable of decision-making,⁸⁹ and an expectation to show respect to their elders; voicing opinions that are contrary to elders may be considered “rude and disobedient”.⁹⁰

“**Adults believe that academia is the source of all knowledge ignoring that lived experience is not exactly knowledge by itself and children can give meaningful inputs.**”

“**Learning and unlearning for adults.**”

“**Tackle cultural practices.**”

“**I would have thoughts if had enough information.**”

“**Information should also reach those who did not attend school.**”

“**There should be places where youth can go get information and discuss about climate change and make it easy for them to know what they can do at their level.**”

“**People should be taught how to behave when disasters take place, so that they will be prepared.**”

87 ACPF. (2015). *A Study on Child Participation in Eastern Africa*.

88 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *National Capacity To Address Violence Against Children: Assessment in Ten African Countries*.

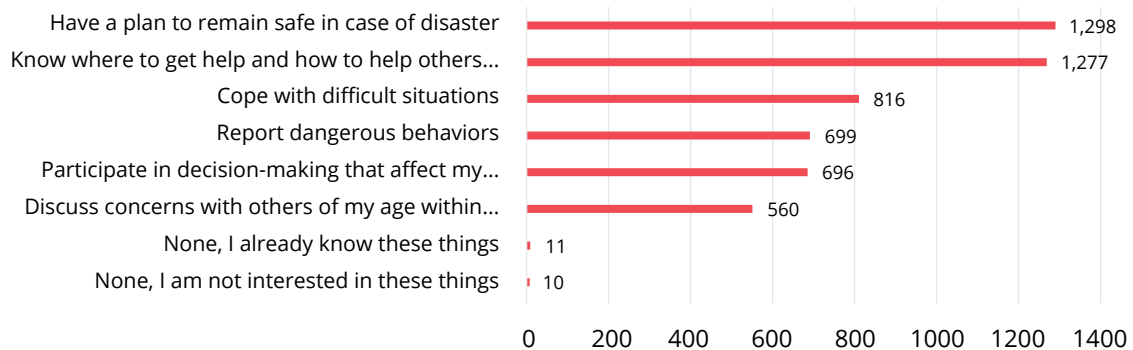
89 ACPF. (2015). *A Study on Child Participation in Eastern Africa*.

90 *Idem*.

What children need to act upon climate change and climate related disasters

Almost all the participants would be interested in learning more about how to protect themselves in climate related disasters. The top three interests concern having a plan to remain safe in case of disaster (60%), knowing where to get help and how to help others if needed (59%), and coping with difficult situations (38%).

Figure 10: Would you be interested in learning ways to...*



* Respondents could select multiple options



“ I want to teach other people about climate, but I don't know were to start from.”

“ Engagement of youth in decision making. And making them understand the importance of participation and gender in climate change.”

“ I would love to say that the youth should be engaged in the decision making and also have forums to curb the climate change effect.”

“ Youth are coming up with innovative ways to combat climate change related disaster. ”

“ There should be places where youth can go get information and discuss about climate change and make it easy for them to know what they can do at their level.”

“ Ensure we are engaged on decision making and good policies.”

“ Provide us platforms to express ourselves.”

Access to Protection Services

Rates of reporting violence, abuse, and exploitation are extremely low, often for fear of being disbelieved or blamed, fear of reprisal by the perpetrator, fear of public exposure/lack of anonymity, lack of faith in the police and courts, and absence of child-friendly remedial and response services.⁹¹ Capacity gaps in interpreting child related laws, coupled with the low levels of arrests of perpetrators, investigation, and actual prosecution⁹² also constitute strong deterrents to reporting violations.

Advocating for increased investments in Malawi

In Malawi, an analysis of the child protection budget carried out by UNICEF in 2020 highlighted that expenditure was primarily focused on response, with limited contributions to preventative services. These findings are now being used to advocate for increased investment and a greater focus on prevention.⁹³

“ *Children are not educated about contraceptives. Pregnancy rates are really high because they do not get the facilities and are not educated. The criticism about adolescents asking for condoms is so high. Nurses in hospitals are really rude. They do not want to give this to the kid: “Why do you want that?”. But it is not like children have any choice and they understand the situation they are in.*”

“ *If I would call on anything, it would be to educate children from a very young age: what exactly is violence, what does it mean when someone is violating as a child?*”

“ *I do not know where to report to.*”

“ *When it comes to going to someone to talk about those issues: think about confidentiality. Building of trust is key for children to be open to opening up to you. A lot of them don't trust the system.*”

“ *People are judgmental. They are those that should really understand the needs of children but are judgmental instead of doing their job.*”

“ *We need to report law breakers.*”

Law against child marriage in Mozambique

In 2019 Mozambique passed the Law on Preventing and Combating Premature Unions, outlawing marriages for persons under the age of 18. As part of implementation, the law contains sanctions for violation. This includes for: those who coerce a child into marriage, figures who authorize such a marriage, public servants who celebrate or authorize the celebration of early marriages, and the law adopts measures to end existing early marriages. Referrals to the police increased significantly after the implementation of the law.⁹⁴

91 ACPF. (2019).

92 Malawi. Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare Department of Child Affairs. *Supervision Report on Ending Child Marriage Covering Period from January to July 2021*. HS 9/3/2021.

93 UNICEF ESARO. (2021). *Strengthening the child protection system to end violence against children in Eastern and Southern Africa*.

94 Linha Fala Criança. (2021). *A Review of Early Marriage Cases*.

“ Everyone who breaks the law should be taken action against.”

“ Take action against those who act irresponsible.”

“ Government should enforce strict laws.”

Investments in child-sensitive mechanisms for reporting and making complaints about violence, abuse, and exploitation remain inadequate.⁹⁵ Although, child helplines are expanding their outreach and significantly improving their services since the Covid-19 pandemic.

“ We need to know where to turn to for help.”

“ It is not decentralized: you need to drive to a town to report a violence case.”

Child helpline supports

In 2021, the three African countries receiving the largest number of counselling contacts were Zambia, Mozambique, and South Africa, and the three main reasons for children to contact a helpline in the continent were 1. Violence, 2. Physical health, and 3. Mental health. Physical violence (24.7%), neglect (22.9%), and mental/emotional violence (15.2%) were the three main sub-reasons for the reported violence contacts. These three reasons accounted for nearly two thirds of the violence contacts (62.8%).⁹⁶

Response services are worryingly limited. Namely, where services to aid children’s recovery and reintegration exist, they fail to address all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation against children, and little information is available on their quality or impact.⁹⁷ Survivors of physical and sexual violence also indicate having limited opportunities of redress.⁹⁸

“ In my village we don’t get mobile clinics anyway to attend to such issues.”

“ Make sure those children have attention.”

“ Strengthen the services.”

“ There's no office to report when you come across the situation of disasters.”

Support for child survivors of violence, abuse, and exploitation

Surveys on violence, abuse, and exploitation of children indicate that many children who experience violence in Eastern and Southern Africa do not receive support. For example, in Tanzania, of those who experienced sexual violence prior to age 18, only 1 in 5 females and 1 in 10 males sought services, and about 1 out of 8 females and less than 1 out of 20 males actually received services.⁹⁹

95 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

96 Child Helpline International. (2021).

97 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

98 Plan International. (2021).

99 ACPF. (2020). *Africa's 30-Year Journey with the African Children's Charter: Taking Stock, Rekindling Commitment*.

Lack of access for boys

In particular, the protection of boys is a significant loophole in child protection services in the region as boys are perceived as immune to abusive acts, they are even less likely to report an assault to the authorities, and prevalence of sexual violence against them is not established. Gross neglect of boys as survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation is a hidden tragedy:

- boys are almost always considered as perpetrators of sexual exploitation, and their circumstance as victims is grossly ignored in laws, policies, and programmatic action;
- boys are far less likely to report their experiences of sexual violence than girls, hence remain hidden from crime and violence statistics;
- the neglect of boy-victims of sexual exploitation has negatively affected current efforts to disrupting intergenerational cycle of violence: two out three boys who experienced sexual violence in childhood are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence against a partner in adulthood.
- the neglect of boy-victims of sexual exploitation has negatively affected current efforts to disrupting intergenerational cycle of violence: two out three boys who experienced sexual violence in childhood are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence against a partner in adulthood.



100 Farm Orphan Support Trust of Zimbabwe. (2021). *Study On Sexual Violence Affecting Boys In Zimbabwe*.

101 ACPF. (2019).

Child Protection Frameworks

International and Regional Conventions on Child Protection

Both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) define a child as any human being under the age of 18.

While violence, abuse, and exploitation of children is a serious concern in the region, Article 16 of the African Children's Charter aspires for *"every child [to be] protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse."*

Africa's Agenda for Children: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children adopted in 2016 to accelerate efforts towards the implementation, lays out a 25-year vision of a continent where the rights of Africa's children are firmly protected: Aspiration 7 also states that *"every child is protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse."*¹⁰²

The Agenda envisions that by 2040:

- No child is exposed to any form of violence, including gender-based violence, in the public or private sphere;
- Children are free from physical and psychological abuse, sexual violence and exploitation, and sex trafficking;
- Harmful practices (such as breast ironing, female genital mutilation or cutting, and child marriage) have been ended;
- No child is exposed to sexual exploitation and/or used for child pornography;
- Harmful child labour practices and child trafficking for forced labour are eliminated;
- No child is subjected to corporal punishment.

Aspiration 9 also considers emergencies by stating that *"Every child is free from the impact of armed conflicts and other disasters or emergency situations."*

Child protection systems

Child protection systems require further consolidation across Africa. Despite widespread acceptance of the value of system strengthening, it is a relatively new concept in the region¹⁰³ and there is still a tendency to work on single child protection issues without considering the impact on the broader system.¹⁰⁴

Child protection systems strengthening involves making improvements to the entire system of support for all children across all settings,¹⁰⁵ avoiding a fragmented approach with potential for gaps and duplication and promoting large scale change with coordinated cross-sector interventions.

Child protection laws in Namibia

Namibia is an example of comprehensive legislation since the adoption of the Child Care and Protection Act 2015 that repealed and consolidated previous child protection laws and included, inter alia, protecting children from harmful social, cultural, and religious practices; corporal punishment; child labour and exploitation of children; and the unlawful removal and detention of children.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). (2016). *Africa's Agenda for Children: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children*.

¹⁰³ ACPF. (2020).

¹⁰⁴ UNICEF ESARO. (2021). *Strengthening the child protection system to end violence against children in Eastern and Southern Africa*.

¹⁰⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁰⁶ APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *National Capacity To Address Violence Against Children: Assessment in Ten African Countries*.

Although the primary responsibility to fulfil children's rights lies with State parties, civil society organizations (CSOs) continue to play a prominent role in delivering children's services – especially in remote rural areas.¹⁰⁷

Child protection efforts are plagued by the absence of dedicated ministries for children¹⁰⁸ or inadequate or disproportionately poor funds,¹⁰⁹ perpetuating the chronic shortage of human and financial resources for implementation strategies.¹¹⁰ This is also the case during emergencies.¹¹¹

What is more, the ministries frequently operate seemingly in a silo and struggle to hold other departments and agencies to account.¹¹² In addition, child protection systems generally lack skilled social workers and often place too heavy a burden on the shoulders of the workers they already have.¹¹³ Compounding this, links between community protection and formal child protection systems are often weak.¹¹⁴

Child protection in disaster laws, policies, and regulations

Countries in the region do not have in place specific laws, policies, or regulations, to adequately protect children in disasters. Yet, some do include child protection elements.

Disaster Risk Management in Somalia, Kenya, and Mozambique

Somalia Puntland's Disaster Preparedness Response Plan stipulates that all interventions meet the minimum standards for prevention of, and response to, child protection, SGBV, and address MHPSS needs. Children's protection and security needs are emphasized, and a section notably provides for a referral mechanism, training for health staff as part of the referral mechanisms, sensitizing communities for SGBV prevention and information to services through community workers, undertaking consultations with women, youth, and children, mobilizing communities to address GBV and strengthening community-based mechanisms.¹¹⁵

The Turkana County Disaster Risk Management Policy (2020) in Kenya includes youth led organizations and youth councils in the Steering Committee, and ensures extensive gender integration in communications strategies, early warning systems, risks analysis, collecting and managing sex and age disaggregated data (SADD), gender budgeting, and developing gender sensitive Disaster Risk Management plans.¹¹⁶

Noting increased rates and risks of SGBV among women, children and elderly people during disasters, the Strategic Gender Plan of the National Institute of Disaster Management in Mozambique contains target indicator to reduce SGBV cases.¹¹⁷

107 ACPF. (2020).

108 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

109 ACPF. (2015). *A Study on Child Participation in Eastern Africa*.

110 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

111 ACPF. (2020). *Africa's 30-Year Journey with the African Children's Charter: Taking Stock, Rekindling Commitment*.

112 ACERWC General Comment NO. 5 as cited in ACPF. (2020).

113 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

114 CPF. (2020).

115 HADMA. (2017). Puntland Emergency/Disaster Preparedness Response Plan. As referred to in IFRC and UNICEF. (2021).

116 Republic of Kenya, Turkana County Government. (2020). Disaster Risk Management Policy. Public Service, Administration and Disaster Management.

117 INGC. 2016. *Plano Estratégico de Género do Instituto Nacional de Gestão de Calamidades 2016–2020*.

Overall, 30% of the national disaster risk management frameworks included in a study carried out in 2021 were considered gender blind, and 83% SGBV blind. Where gender equality considerations were included, these were more in policies and strategies than legal frameworks, and merely referred to in the background as opposed to integrated in concrete measures.¹¹⁸

Making the most of ongoing Disaster Risk Management drafting or revision processes – notably in Burundi, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia, and Zimbabwe¹¹⁹ – could be an avenue for practitioners to advocate for the integration of protective outcomes, and in particular child protection and SGBV risk mitigation, prevention, and response in the Disaster Risk Management bodies.

Comprehensive School Safety

Adopted in 2017, the Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015-2030 in Africa expands the Comprehensive School Safety Framework and stresses the need for DRR to be incorporated into the education system.¹²⁰

In Kenya, the Education Sector Disaster Management Policy provides for child protection principles to be mainstreamed into Education in Emergencies interventions to ensure that children are provided with quality education as well as with physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that can be both life-sustaining and life-saving.¹²¹

Climate laws, policies, and children's best interests

As of 2020, only 15 of the 21 countries in the Eastern and Southern Africa region had developed their National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs).¹²²

Since governments are expected to develop policies and frameworks on climate change, opportunities also arise to integrate climate change and child protection considerations and provide child-centered adaptation activities/projects into development planning, budgeting, and implementation in all sectors and at all levels.

Most countries (38) in Africa mention in their Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) the need for early warning systems to respond to weather-, water- and climate-related hazards. In particular, the vast majority of the parties identified disaster preparedness and response as the top priority for disaster risk reduction, followed by detection, monitoring, analysis, and forecasting.¹²³

Child protection outcomes would benefit from similar inclusion. This would align with the continent's strategic framework for inclusive and sustainable development, **Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want**, that commits to act with a sense of urgency on climate change and the environment, including through programmes on climate change targeting women and youth.¹²⁴

118 IFRC and UNICEF. (2021).

119 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

120 *Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Africa*. (2017).

121 Government of Kenya, Ministry of Education. (2019). *Education Sector Disaster Management Policy*.

122 UNICEF ESARO. (2020).

123 WMO. (2021). *The State of the Climate in Africa*.

124 AU. (2014). **Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want**.



Climate Change Response Strategy in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's 2014 National Climate Change Response Strategy and its 2017 Action Plan were generated through extensive consultation with stakeholders, including children and youth. The Strategy recognizes the need to mainstream children's issues and the various risks that climate change poses for children and to put children at the forefront of national climate change adaptation policies and programmes.¹²⁵

Acknowledging that children exhibit relatively high levels of awareness and concern about climate change which affects their visions of and anxieties about the future, and have the right and responsibility to participate in decisions that affect them and to take adaptive action on climate change, the strategy commits to:

- a) Understand the impacts of climate change on children and youth in Zimbabwe and create an enabling environment that prevents harm to them emanating from pressures of these impacts.
- b) Ensure the inclusion of children and youth in the policy formulation process for climate change, and in adaptation and mitigation activities.

A child-friendly version of the policy has been developed to introduce children to its key provisions.¹²⁷

“ Ensure we are engaged in decision making and good policies.”

“ Create a network of young activists who could mobilize decision makers.”

“ Provide us platforms to express ourselves.”

“ We can increase awareness, that will tackle the issue for a short period of time but that won't tackle the long-time things. So, we need to tackle from a systemic point of view that would be long term.”

“ Governments need to amend an act on climate change.”

“ We can invest in climate change related policies and implement them. We should as well consider disseminating those policies.”

“ Personally, I would like to give presentations where possible on mainstreaming climate change into developmental planning.”

¹²⁵ UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy. (2020). *Are climate change policies child-sensitive? A Guide for Action*.

¹²⁶ Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate. (2014). *National Climate Change Response Strategy*.

¹²⁷ UNICEF Zimbabwe. (2017). *Child Friendly Climate Policy*.

Coordination for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

According to the African Child Policy Forum, the lack of effective coordination lies at the heart of monumental child rights system failures in Africa.¹²⁸

National Action Plans to End Violence Against Children

Surveys on violence, abuse, and exploitation against children have been carried out in many Eastern and Southern African countries and comprehensive or thematic national action plans to end violence, abuse, and exploitation have been developed in Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia¹²⁹ and Zimbabwe.¹³⁰

Coordination mechanism in Tanzania

The Tanzania National Action Plan (2016–2025) addresses the rights of children and women through a single unified multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism with accountability in the Office of the Prime Minister to ensure responsive collaboration across ministries. This system obviates the fragmentation and duplication of policies and strategies and wastage of resources.¹³¹

In addition to Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have become Pathfinding countries and use the **INSPIRE Seven strategies for Ending Violence Against Children** to understand the drivers of violence and build integrated responses that improve the lives of children and young people.¹³²

Nevertheless, the quality of progress so far is mixed,¹³³ as the National Plans of Action and responses to the recommendations in surveys on violence, abuse, and exploitation against children are impeded by lack of funding, uncoordinated structures at national and subnational level, and corruption.¹³⁴

Data on child protection

Lack of data on children is one of the major challenges to implementing the ACRWC. This is partly due to a lack of capacity to generate data on different child protection concerns¹³⁵ and data and research on the extent and impact of violence, abuse, and exploitation, the risk factors, and the underlying attitudes and social norms perpetuating violence are also much needed.¹³⁶

The lack of data undermines protection efforts especially as over 1 in 2 (55%) of the persons in need of humanitarian support in the region are children.

128 ACPF. (2020). *Africa's 30-Year Journey with the African Children's Charter: Taking Stock, Rekindling Commitment*.

129 **Government launches National Prevention and Response Plan to Address Violence Against Children.**

130 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

131 *Idem*.

132 <https://www.end-violence.org/progress-map>.

133 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

134 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *National Capacity To Address Violence Against Children: Assessment in Ten African Countries*.

135 ACPF. (2020). *Africa's 30-Year Journey with the African Children's Charter: Taking Stock, Rekindling Commitment*.

136 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

The higher percentage of children in some contexts is reflective of a younger population structure. For instance, in Somalia, half of the population are under 17 years old, in Mozambique and Burundi half are under 18 years old. In South Sudan half are under 19 years old, and in Ethiopia half are under 20 years old.

“ **Governments must:**

- 1. Show more concerns about climate and engage in youth friendly talks on how it affects health and livelihood;**
- 2. Data availability on climate change;**
- 3. Research on climate change.”**

Monitoring and evaluation in South Africa

In South Africa, the Ministry and Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DWCPD) established a government-wide monitoring and evaluation framework to collect disaggregated data covering all areas of the Children’s Charter for all children up to 18, but specifically those who are especially vulnerable.¹³⁷

There is also an urgent need to address the near total absence of information and data on children most at risk from the impacts of climate change.¹³⁸ The limited collection, analysis, and sharing of SADD namely hinders the potential to assess and monitor Disaster Risk Management programming or engage in advocacy based on findings of the impacts of disasters.¹³⁹

“ **Ask the elders, they know: “In 19xx there was such or such disaster”: this is information.”**

“ **We need to map out the stressed regions and have maps of children in these areas to increase access.”**

Child specific analysis in Madagascar

UNICEF is developing country Climate Landscape Analysis for Children, like the one on Madagascar,¹⁴⁰ to better understand how climate, energy and environment issues affect children, and share recommendations to address those.

“ **In the 5Ws used for mapping and monitoring, we collect information, but very little is done for climate affected people.”**

“ **For internally displaced persons for instance, we don’t really mention the cause for displacement – whether it is conflict, climate, or anything else.”**

“ **Local partners are probably addressing the effects of climate change and related disasters using their knowledge and mechanisms, but this is not reported anywhere. When the partners, identify themselves as emergency partners, they identify themselves as conflict emergency partners.”**

137 ACPF. (2020). *Africa’s 30-Year Journey with the African Children’s Charter: Taking Stock, Rekindling Commitment*.

138 UNICEF ESARO. (2020).

139 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

140 UNICEF Madagascar. (2019). *Climate Landscape Analysis for Children in Madagascar*.



Barriers to coordination

Linkages between care and the wider child protection system are not always made.¹⁴¹ Coordination between sectors can also be challenging, especially as agencies that do not have a specific child protection remit often fail to recognise that they play a role in addressing violence.¹⁴²

“ Having better coordination in disaster management and environmental conservation can be crucial in meeting the rising needs.”

“ Involve the communities in the decision concerning activities on child protection.”

Coordination between actors remains problematic,¹⁴³ especially at subnational and community levels, and even more so in rural and remote communities.¹⁴⁴

“ We need government to help with permanent structure.”

“ There should be free organizations that help in times of disasters.”

“ Engage stakeholders to assist where the government can't reach.”

“ Find a way to release help quickly when people are affected.”

Overall, Disaster Risk Management tends to be conducted at the national level, in a centralized and often top-down manner, with insufficient space for local actors to contribute. This concerns legal frameworks, but also policy development and strategies, budget allocation, coordination, and service provision.¹⁴⁵

“ If governments and officials can improve bottom-up communication, that can make things easier for people to communicate their thoughts and ideas.”

Emergencies often involve a rapid roll-out of a complex array of services, and multiple new actors involved in service provision.¹⁴⁶ Ideally, the response should make use of, and strengthen, existing mechanisms rather than creating parallel systems.¹⁴⁷ However, this can be challenging, especially when it comes to creating links to existing community structures and government services.¹⁴⁸

141 UNICEF ESARO. (2021). *Caring Systems: Maximising Synergies Between Care Reform and Child Protection System Strengthening in Eastern and Southern Africa*.

142 ACPF. (2020). *Africa's 30-Year Journey with the African Children's Charter: Taking Stock, Rekindling Commitment*.

143 UNICEF ESARO. (2021). *Strengthening the child protection system to end violence against children in Eastern and Southern Africa*.

144 APEVAC and ACPF. (2021). *Violence Against Children in Africa: A Report on Progress and Challenges*.

145 *Idem*.

146 ACPF. (2020). *Africa's 30-Year Journey with the African Children's Charter: Taking Stock, Rekindling Commitment*.

147 UNICEF ESARO. (2021). *Caring Systems: Maximising Synergies Between Care Reform and Child Protection System Strengthening in Eastern and Southern Africa*.

148 UNICEF ESARO. (2021). *Strengthening the child protection system to end violence against children in Eastern and Southern Africa*.



Children's needs in humanitarian response plans

An analysis of the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plans in Eastern and Southern Africa¹⁴⁹ indicated that the vast majority (90%) of funding to Child Protection in Emergencies in the region was allocated to response plans, highlighting the necessity to duly reflect climate related needs in those strategic documents.

Somalia and South Sudan, both on the front line of climate change,¹⁵⁰ represented 69% of funding to Child Protection in Emergencies in the region (with respectively 46% in Somalia, and 23% in South Sudan).

So far, between 7% (strongly certain) and 47% (somewhat certain) of child protection requested funding in the region present a climate component, with climate either acknowledged in the needs that the project responds to or considered in the project design. This is significantly greater than between 9% (strongly certain) and 23% (somewhat certain) of requested child protection funding at the global level, indicating once more the importance of the issue in this context.

With more data on the actual impact of climate change and climate related disasters on children and better coordinated approaches in the future, anticipated increased needs are likely to see themselves reflected in both humanitarian and development strategies.

¹⁴⁹ This looks at all response plans in the respective contexts, including HRPs in Somalia, South Sudan, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, a Flash Appeal in Madagascar, and Regional Refugee Response Plans covering Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania as extracted on November 26th, 2021.

¹⁵⁰ Government of Somalia and UNCT Somalia. (2021). Press Release. **Humanitarian Partners release 2022 Response Plan for Somalia, UN announces US\$17 Million towards immediate drought response efforts.**

Disaster Preparedness and Anticipatory Action

Multi-hazards contingency plans addressing children's needs are not in place, and preparedness is too rarely conducted. Even when the humanitarian response is activated, climate risks remain insufficiently anticipated in the region.

“ Children are uninformed and suffer from some climate related disasters.”

“ There seems to be a disconnect between the role of protection and the impact of climate.”

“ We need to do more on preparedness. Even for conflict, we are still acting reactively.”

“ We focus more on conflicts than other emergencies because this is where the efforts and money are being put. Donors are less interested in events occurring every year. We need to shift the narrative.”

“ Even where we identify those risks, our strategy doesn't really provide the response for specific impacts or shocks.”

“ Even when we have data on climate affected people in our Humanitarian Response Plans, there is very little in our response.”

Stakeholders and experts consulted for this research noted that children rarely contribute to the development of early warning mechanisms or receive child friendly information ahead of emergencies. Child protection outcomes will benefit from being automatically connected to early warning mechanisms, disaster preparedness, anticipatory action, and early response.

Early action in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, Save the Children triggered an Early Action Fund (EAF) based on projected below-average rainfall likely to impact food needs and livelihoods. Protective actions included maintaining household income, access to clean drinking water, food consumption, nutrition, and school attendance.¹⁵¹

UNHCR is also working with UN partners to train staff and to mainstream child protection and prevention of gender-based violence across all sectoral interventions of its anticipatory action framework.¹⁵²

Early action and response could thus be designed to better meet the particular needs of children and youth on the basis of detailed risk and capacities analysis. The linkages between child protection and anticipatory action still need to be developed, notably through inclusion of child protection within anticipatory triggers and indicators, child participation in decisions that affect them, local coordination between agencies and government from the anticipatory stage through to recovery stage, understanding local laws, ensuring access to helping services, advocacy with communities and authorities, having internal organizational protection systems, and evaluating responses with children's leadership.

151 WFP. (2020). *The evidence base on Anticipatory Action*.

152 UN CERF. (2021). *Ethiopia. Allocation project summary* | CERF (un.org).

153 IFRC and CP AoR. (2021).

- “ The country needs to draw contingency plan as well as response plan in relation to climate change and child protection.”**
- “ Communities should be educated on climate change and early warning signs on forecast based action.”**
- “ We do not have preparedness initiatives which include children themselves.”**
- “ The selection of the beneficiaries is done by the adults.”**
- “ Disaster issues are taken as a family problem; the focus is on households, so children are marginalized.”**
- “ If we miss the preparedness for children, we miss the response. There is no way we can meet their needs in recovery activities.”**
- “ We need to prepare some drills for the children.”**
- “ Child protection practitioners need to know about Anticipatory action and mainstream protective outcomes.”**
- “ Including child protection in awareness raising and capacity building for all actors involved in climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action is important if we want to make a difference.”**
- “ We are already doing awareness raising about family separation in conflict settings, adapting the approach for flood and drought would be very interesting.”**
- “ We need to understand more how children are affected to tailor anticipatory action”**
- “ If we want to do any anticipatory action, it should be community led.”**



Recommendations

In order to better meet children's best interests in climate related disasters and to enhance their protection from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, a series of actions can be undertaken.

These recommendations recognize that there are a complexity and a variety of national frameworks for child protection and that approaches need to be locally relevant. The recommendations will assist governments, donors, communities, development, and humanitarian partners, to ensure domestic implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in such contexts, and can be supported by the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and other partners, where needed.

1. Recognize the impact of climate change related disasters on children

- a) Mandate the collection and analysis of sex-, age-, gender- and disability-disaggregated data on children's needs and vulnerabilities.
- b) Ensure girls and children with particular risks are prioritized and included in protection programming.

2. Prioritize child participation

- a) In all assessments, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation regarding climate change related disasters, ensure children of diverse ages, genders, abilities, and backgrounds have meaningful opportunities to participate.
- b) Develop safe spaces where children, especially adolescents, can discuss their concerns and ideas to stay safe during climate related disasters.

3. Improve access to support services and education

- a) Ensure that child protection and education services are functional and available to all children, including boys. Draw inspiration, as appropriate, from the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.¹⁵⁴
- b) Co-design with children and make widely available child-friendly information on where and how to access local support for child protection, MHPSS, and SGBV.

4. Develop, implement, and enforce laws, policies, and regulations

- a) Include child protection in all relevant laws, regulations, and policies, notably on climate adaptation and disaster related laws, policies, and regulations.

5. Strengthen local coordination

- a) Ensure multi-level coordination between national authorities and local actors, in particular local authorities, child-, youth-led and community-based organizations, such as women-led organizations, faith-based networks, local NGOs, UN agencies, and Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies.
- b) Train local disaster responders on child protection.

6. Include child protection within disaster preparedness and anticipatory action

- a) Integrate climate change and climate related disasters in child protection interventions, by investing in climate adaptation and resilience in key services for children and ensuring that the services are risk informed and climate resilient.
- b) Include child protection within disaster preparedness, anticipatory action, and early response for climate related disasters.

¹⁵⁴ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2012).



The vision of the IFRC is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.