



Child-sensitive climate policies for every child

How Nationally Determined Contributions can be more inclusive and rights-based for children and young people and ensure child-critical social services are climate and disaster resilient

Research Brief | November 2022



Key acronyms

ACE	Action for Climate Empowerment
CCRI	Children’s Climate Risk Index
CEED	Climate, Environment, Energy and Disaster Risk Reduction
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
SIDS	Small-Island Developing States
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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Contact: climate@unicef.org

Acknowledgements

Research brief lead author: **Dr. Tamara Plush**, UNICEF HQ Climate, Environment, Energy and Disaster Risk Reduction (CEED) group.

Lead researchers and findings authors for this report: **Zachary Cohen** and **Lisa Nyamadzawo**, UNICEF HQ CEED.

Lead technical expert: **Amy Wickham**, UNICEF HQ CEED.

Additional technical expertise: **Gautam Narasimhan**, **Jen Stephens**, **Sophie Lee**, **Nicholas Rees** and **Joni Pegram**, UNICEF HQ CEED; **Zoraya El Raiss Cordero**, UNICEF Pacific Islands; **Eleonora Gatti** and **Amelia Premfors**, UNICEF Office of Innovation.

Case studies and technical input: **Rebekka Perdereau**; UNICEF Public Partnerships; **Elizabeth Wabuge**, UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnerships; **Michele Paba**, UNICEF Cambodia; **Geovanna Reinoso** and **Ana Belen Veintimilla Proano**, UNICEF Ecuador; **Ihab AbdelAziz**, UNICEF Egypt; **Hanna Berhe** and **Jackson Ndayizeye**, UNICEF Malawi; **Nasha Chia Hwee Lee**, UNICEF Malaysia; **Jairus Ligo** and **Nilgün Çavu o lu**, UNICEF Türkiye; **Dario Fuletti** and **Natalia Camiruaga**, UNICEF Uruguay; and **Leandro Vigna**, Climate Watch.

Design by **Paolo Ciampagna**.

Cover photo

Climate policy decisions made today for and with children and young people around the world will dictate the trajectory of their lives — including for students like Petronie, 11, a fourth grader in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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Executive summary

Bridging the gap between ambition and action with solid funding commitments is paramount to overcome the climate crisis for every child

The climate crisis is a child rights crisis.¹ Children and young people need urgent and meaningful action and innovations to adapt to this changing world and reduce climate and disaster risk, including for child-critical social services.* The views, concerns and solutions of the youngest generation must be part of policies and actions that move towards a net-zero emissions world.

UNICEF recognizes that children and young people often experience the most serious consequences from climate and environmental hazards, shocks and stresses. It also recognizes government-led climate policies can influence and direct local, regional and national finance and action. Thus, it recently conducted a child-sensitivity study of a sub-set of national climate plans: Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)² submissions from countries party to the *Paris Agreement*.³ NDCs detail their commitments to meeting the targets of the agreement.

*** For the study, child-critical social services in the NDCs are disaster risk reduction, education, energy, food security and nutrition, health, information systems, social protection, water and sanitation.**

The child-sensitivity study was developed to support governments and other stakeholders in evidence-informed decision-making through two objectives:

- Identify **opportunities in child-critical social services** for greater attention, including financial investment; and
- Identify where climate policies can increase **engagement with children and young people** as stakeholders, rights holders and agents of change, including those from vulnerable populations.

The study findings highlight that governments are making progress to incorporate more child-sensitive commitments in their NDCs, including in countries where children are exposed to high levels of climate risk. However, critically, it points out that the funding for such commitments is often lacking. This research brief elaborates on this and other study findings.

It also provides examples and opportunities for greater attention including through sector-based programming, youth-driven campaigns, UNICEF partnerships, and stories of how young people are raising climate awareness and participating in advocacy platforms.

What is child sensitivity?



Policies, plans and actions that strengthen child-critical social services to be more climate and disaster resilient.

Plans, policies and actions that are inclusive of all children's and young people's rights, participation and roles as stakeholders and drivers of change.

Overall, the intention of this research brief is to not only provide evidence on the value of child-sensitive climate policies. It aims to also encourage greater prioritization of young citizens in the NDCs and all national and sub-national climate and environment policies.

This can include National Adaptation Plans (NAPs); Adaptation Communication submissions⁴ to the UNFCCC; and policies related to climate finance; disaster risk reduction (DRR); climate-resilient education systems; climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); air pollution; sustainable energy; technology and innovation; shock-responsive social protection; and more.



“The climate crisis is a human rights issue, because our present and our future is at risk... We are not just passive victims of the climate crisis, but we also are part of the solution.”



Nicole Becker (20), a co-founder of Jóvenes Por El Clima (Youth for the Climate) and a UNICEF Argentina youth advocate

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Governments drive meaningful climate policies

Around the world, governments are the driving force for climate policies that can meaningfully address the unique needs of their countries' youngest citizens. Many are already integrating the needs and priorities of children and young people into actionable, sufficiently financed policies and plans. However, much more can be done, especially in providing reliable financing in the countries and areas where it is needed most.⁵

A report introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI)⁶ highlights that the best investments for children and young people are to prioritize the resilience of social services which they rely on most.

Youth activists, students and volunteers participate in a global climate strike. UNICEF Nepal supports a network of national youth groups, many who organized the climate strike event (watch the [video](#)).

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UNICEF promotes and applies two key principles in its child-sensitive climate, environment, energy and DRR policies and programming

Prioritizing climate adaptation and resilience is critical to strengthen child-critical social services



Climate adaptation focused on social services is especially urgent in countries where children and young people are most at risk of climate and environmental shocks. Their lack of access to essential services, such as in health, nutrition, education, social protection, water and sanitation, makes them particularly susceptible.

While reducing emissions and pollution is the only long-term solution for a liveable planet for every child, it will come too late for the world's most vulnerable children and young people.

Unless we invest heavily in adaptation and resilience of social services for the 4.2 billion children born over the next 30 years, they will face increasingly high risks to their survival and well-being.

Investing in children's and young people's needs, rights, participation and action benefits all of society



Communities are more resilient when children and young people can go to school; are physically and mentally healthy; are protected at home and in the community; are skilled for future work; and can participate in decisions that affect them. They grow and thrive when living with prosperity; eating nutritious food; and are able to access the essential health, education and protective services they need for their age, ability, gender and life situations.

Children and young people are safer when they are prepared for and have an overall reduced risk for disasters, and when their environment is free from pollutants that affect them cognitively, psychologically and physically.

UNICEF works alongside governments and other partners to support children and young people, who can be especially vulnerable to structures that marginalize certain groups and put them at higher risk of death, injury, illness, exclusion and loss.

Vulnerability risk is especially high when children and young people are living in conflict, poverty or hard-to-reach areas. Risk can be exacerbated by deep-seated attitudes, behaviours and norms related to gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomics, migration status, or being part of linguistic or other minority groups.

Attention on the most vulnerable countries for sectoral commitments is critical in climate finance decision-making. While many NDCs of countries with high children's climate risk include plans to build more resilient child-critical social services, financing has often fallen short to move general social sector commitments into action — let alone those focused on children and young people. Targeted funding is needed.

Governments are prioritizing children and young people in many of their policies, but more can be done to lower vulnerability and increase resilience through adaptation and mitigation strategies. Actions for and with the youngest generation have been growing in climate policies — due in no small part to local and global advocacy and activism by children and young people themselves. This includes groups, fora and platforms like Fridays for Future,⁷ YOUNGO,⁸ the NDC Partnership Youth Engagement Forum,⁹ the Climate Youth Negotiator Programme (CYNP),¹⁰ Care About Climate (CAC)¹¹ and many others.

National governments too are acting, with 34 states as well as 2 national and sub-national partners¹² pledging to uphold priorities identified by children and young people across the world as defined in the **Intergovernmental Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action**.¹³ As one of the custodians of the Declaration, UNICEF works with governments to support its implementation.

The increasing number of countries signing the Declaration each year is encouraging as its commitments are well aligned with the *Paris Agreement* commitments many countries include in their NDCs (as illustrated in the Declaration Commitment 2; see right). All Member States of the United Nations and national and sub-national partners are invited to sign.

Governments are also actively incorporating **Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)** commitments into their NDCs (see page 34 on ACE findings). ACE is a term adopted by the UNFCCC to denote work under Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the *Paris Agreement* to empower all members of society to engage in climate action through climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and international cooperation.¹⁴

To prioritize children and young people in decision-making, governments often rely on evidence on where and how they are most impacted in their country. Data can allow them to more reliably develop equitable policies and actions for people of all ages. For instance, a landmark study by UNICEF and partners is being used to inform high-level policy discussions in Malaysia (see page 9).

According to the Children's Climate Risk Index,¹⁵ Malaysia is rated as a medium children's climate risk country (5.4) with an extremely high risk for exposure to climate and environmental shocks (7.2) and low child vulnerability (2.8). In the child-sensitivity study, Malaysia's NDC includes targeted commitments for children and young people in the health, water and DRR sectors.



Supporting children and young people as both **highly impacted victims in a changing climate** and **critical partners for innovative solutions in adapting to and reducing climate and disaster risk** helps advance their rights as young citizens

36 Countries

Signed the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action*

'Commitment 2: Enhancing efforts to respect, promote and consider the rights of children and young people in the implementation of the *Paris Agreement* at all levels, including recognition of their specific vulnerabilities, as well as their status as key stakeholders and implementers, in countries' national climate adaptation and mitigation measures, NDCs, NAPs, and long-term greenhouse gas emissions development strategies, including consideration of the particular role and responsibilities of the private sector.'

*As of November 1, 2022

In ACE action planning, UNICEF advocates for:

- Countries to embed a specific focus on children's and young people's climate change education and participation in climate action.
- Local networks and platforms that support ACE activities at national and sub-national levels to engage children and young people.



Malaysia

Evidence on climate and environmental impacts underpins the urgency for action

The *Impact of Climate Change on Children: A Malaysian Perspective* report,¹⁶ developed by UNICEF Malaysia together with its partners Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in 2021, highlights the disproportionate impact climate change is having on children and young people in Malaysia.

The technical study revealed a lack of explicit attention given to children and young people in the existing climate and environment policies and plans, and proposed recommendations on ensuring children's rights are upheld and protected; especially in response to high climate and environmental shocks in Malaysia.¹⁷

The study, released in 2021, increased UNICEF Malaysia's engagement with a high-level cross-ministerial council, as well as with youth. Discussions have identified specific climate policies, legislation and initiatives that can be made more child sensitive. They also have identified areas for more meaningful engagement with children and young people as key actors in the policy formulation process.

Youth dialogues — informed by the report's evidence and led by young people and UNICEF Malaysia — have identified key areas for more ambitious action, such as in the areas of youth representation in decision-making, disaster preparedness in schools and more.

To inform policymaking and action, the report highlights current and potential climate and disaster impacts on students at government schools and Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs), such as the one here in Pulau Gaya.

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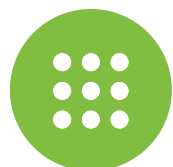


The UNICEF child-sensitivity study approach

UNICEF recognizes that children and young people are better able to survive, grow and thrive when child-critical social services are more climate and disaster resilient, and when children and young people are recognized, included and influential in decisions that affect them.

Below are the four criteria UNICEF developed for recognizing child-sensitivity in climate and environmental policies, plans and actions that it applied in this study.

Criteria



Holistic and Multisectoral

The criterion addresses the specific risks and vulnerabilities of children and young people by including child-sensitive multisectoral commitments in child-critical sectors.



References

The criterion includes explicit and meaningful references to children and young people, including those who are disadvantaged and marginalized.



Rights-based

The criterion considers children and young people as rights holders and includes meaningful references to children's rights or intergenerational justice and equity.



Inclusive

The criterion identifies inclusiveness and the recognition of children and young people as important stakeholders for climate action, including in ACE.

Data set

To explore child sensitivity in climate policies, researchers reviewed the text of 167 Nationally Determined Contributions (submitted to the UNFCCC NDC registry between September 2019 and October 14, 2022¹⁸).

The research firstly selected NDCs as the main data set for this study as they are designed to provide a framework for UNFCCC Parties to report on the financial, technical and capacity-building support within their countries to meet their commitments to the *Paris Agreement*. Secondly, NDCs are a vehicle for engaging young people as a pathway to successful climate action, as promoted by the NDC Partnership and its Youth Engagement Plan (YEP).¹⁹

Thirdly, in developing their NDCs, governments are expected to respect, promote and consider their human rights obligations, including child rights (*see right*). Most countries have committed to child rights through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)²⁰ which was ratified by 196 countries. The UNCRC not only guarantees rights to education, protection and safety. It includes the right to their free expression and meaningful participation in decisions that impact them.

In the streets, in person and online, children and young people around the world are telling their leaders that there are no greater decisions in their lives than those on how to mitigate and adapt to the existential threat of climate change.



The perspective and interests of children, young people and future generations must be integrated into climate policies, plans and actions, and in the concrete implementation of the transition to climate neutrality and resilience

The Paris Agreement

Preamble

*'Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, migrants, **children**, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and **intergenerational equity**.'*

Indicators and analysis

For the study analysis, UNICEF assessed the 167 NDCs against 22 indicators to determine the degree to which they could be categorized as child sensitive. Individual indicators were clustered into four groups to derive specific findings under each of the criterion outlined on page 10 (holistic and multisectoral, references, rights-based and inclusive). The NDCs were also assessed against an additional 19 indicators, which are complementary to the core data set used to determine whether the NDC qualified for meeting the four study criteria. The [study methodology section](#) describes this in greater detail.

For the overall determination of an NDC's child sensitivity, the researchers listed each NDC as being in Category A, B or C depending on how many individual criterion were satisfied (*see below*). The study methodology section includes a full list of the indicators as well as how the researchers analyzed the results for additional indicator mapping under each criterion.

Category A	_____	4 of 4 criteria
Category B	_____	3 of 4 criteria
Category C	_____	0-2 of 4 criteria

Findings

The study conducted two analyses using a subset of the data set and the full data set, as related to the two objectives (see page 4):

→ To better understand gaps and opportunities in **child-critical social services**, the study analyzed 54 of the 167 NDCs to focus on child sensitivity in NDCs from countries with high children's climate risk, including sectoral commitments.

→ To better understand child sensitivity as related to **children's and young people's representation, rights, inclusion and empowerment**, the study analyzed data from 167 NDCs.



How can you use the child-sensitivity study findings?



ACT

Identify gaps and opportunities for greater child-sensitive policies and action



INVEST

Identify areas for increased climate financing, especially in countries with high children's climate risk



INFORM

Use evidence for decision-making in climate, environment, energy and DRR and recovery planning to be more child sensitive



PARTNER

Develop partnerships that increase the child sensitivity of climate commitments and action



MONITOR

Observe areas that could be more child sensitive in commitments and action to advocate for and track improvement

A focus on social services

Study objective 1

Identify opportunities in child-critical social services for greater attention, including financial investment

Data set

54 NDCs from countries with high children’s climate risk, as identified by the CCRI. The map on page 15 shows the 54 countries and provides details. It also describes that due to data limitations, this part of the analysis does not include Small Island Developing States [SIDS] and microstates with a land area less than 20,000 km². That said, many SIDS and microstates face serious and existential threats due to a changing climate. In this study, their NDCs are included in the larger data set of 167 NDCs.

Analysis

Determines the child-sensitivity of the 54 NDCs overall and sectoral commitments.

Use

Data on child-sensitive sectoral commitments in NDCs can lead to better informed decisions — especially for domestic and international financing for countries with high children’s climate risk.

Overview

In 2021, UNICEF declared the climate crisis as a child rights crisis in education, health, water, sanitation, nutrition, protection and participation; and, increasingly, a crisis for survival.²¹ UNICEF’s Children’s Climate Risk Index (CCRI) examined child vulnerability and exposure to climate and environmental hazards, shocks and stresses to provide the first comprehensive view of risk from a child perspective.

The CCRI revealed that almost every child (>99%) is now exposed to at least one climate or environmental hazard, shock or stress, such as heatwaves, cyclones, pollution, vector-borne diseases, flooding and water scarcity. And more than a third of all children — approximately 850 million — are exposed to four or more stresses. To reduce climate and disaster risk, strengthening the resilience of child-critical social services is one of the best investments funders can make for the youngest and future generations.²²

The CCRI data²³ helps governments understand and measure the likelihood of climate and environmental shocks or stresses leading to the erosion of development progress, the deepening of deprivation and/or humanitarian situations affecting children or vulnerable households and groups. Thus, it was a good fit to tie countries identified by the CCRI as having high children’s climate risk to UNICEF’s NDC analysis.

UNICEF Children’s Climate Risk Index

The CCRI provides the first comprehensive picture of children’s exposure and vulnerability to multiple climate and environmental shocks and stresses, using a multilayer structure, where the Index is built by bringing together a set of indicators across two pillars:

- **Pillar 1** measures exposure to a range of climate and environmental shocks and stresses. It is important to note here that these are current hazards, shocks and stresses.
- **Pillar 2** examines child vulnerability and coping capacity. It captures child-specific dimensions that make children particularly susceptible to shock or stress. It includes four components that capture 1) child health and nutrition, 2) education, 3) WASH and 4) poverty, communication assets and social protection.

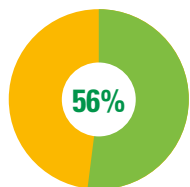
For climate policies and plans to be child-sensitive, they must include and address the specific and overlapping climate risks and vulnerabilities of children, including to disasters. Thus, tying the child-sensitivity study data to the CCRI data shows where children and young people might be facing the most serious consequences from climate risk; whether governments have child-sensitive NDCs on which to build for funding and programming; and where more attention can be paid in high-risk countries to build greater resilience for and with the youngest generation and where more attention can be paid in high-risk countries to strengthen sectoral and ACE commitments in NDC plans and actions, and build greater resilience for and with children and young people.

Study Findings

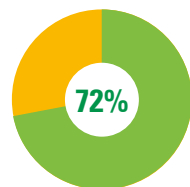
The child-sensitivity study applied the study criteria to 54 NDCs from countries where children face the highest levels of vulnerability and exposure (a.k.a. climate risk), as identified by the CCRI.²⁴ In its analysis of this data set, the study first looked at overall child sensitivity in the NDCs from the 54 countries. It then reviewed sectoral commitments.

Through this approach, the study found that 56 percent of NDCs from countries with the CCRI's highest children's climate risk met at least 3 of its 4 criteria (i.e., holistic and multisectoral, references, rights-based and inclusion); and that 72% have child-sensitive commitments in at least 2 of 9 sectors in the study (i.e., disaster risk reduction, education, energy, food security and nutrition, health, information systems, social protection, water and sanitation).

Child sensitivity of 54 high climate risk country NDCs*



**Meet at least 3 criteria
for child sensitivity**



**Holistic
and Multisectoral**

*High to extremely high CCRI rating of children's climate risk

Partnership accelerates evidence-based decision-making

For the Children's Climate Risk Index, the Data for Children Collaborative with UNICEF provided technical guidance and expert support. This included completing a literature review; developing the CCRI methodology; conducting data and statistical analyses, including predictive analysis on climate change forecasting models; and mapping climate risk, vulnerability and exposure.

The Data for Children Collaborative with UNICEF is a unique academic-UN-government partnership between UNICEF, the Scottish Government and the University of Edinburgh's Data Driven Innovation Programme.

The partnership serves as a platform to provide multisector teams with the appropriate data and expertise to answer challenging questions targeted at improving the lives of children. To support this work, its members provide expertise in the social context of child vulnerability, social statistics, biophysical processes and statistics, child welfare and child poverty.

In the past year, worldwide interest in the CCRI data has led to an increased discussion in global and regional fora and agendas, as well as an increase in data-driven programming and preparedness that helps to ensure children's and young people's well-being in the face of inevitable and unannounced disasters.

Child sensitivity of 54 Nationally Determined Contributions

from Countries with High to Extremely High Children's Climate Risk

The map shows the child sensitivity of NDCs from 54 countries that have high or extremely high children's climate risk, according to the CCRI. The countries are listed as being in **Category A** (30% meeting 4/4 criteria); **Category B** (26% meeting 3/4 criteria) and **Category C** (44% meeting 0-2/4 criteria).

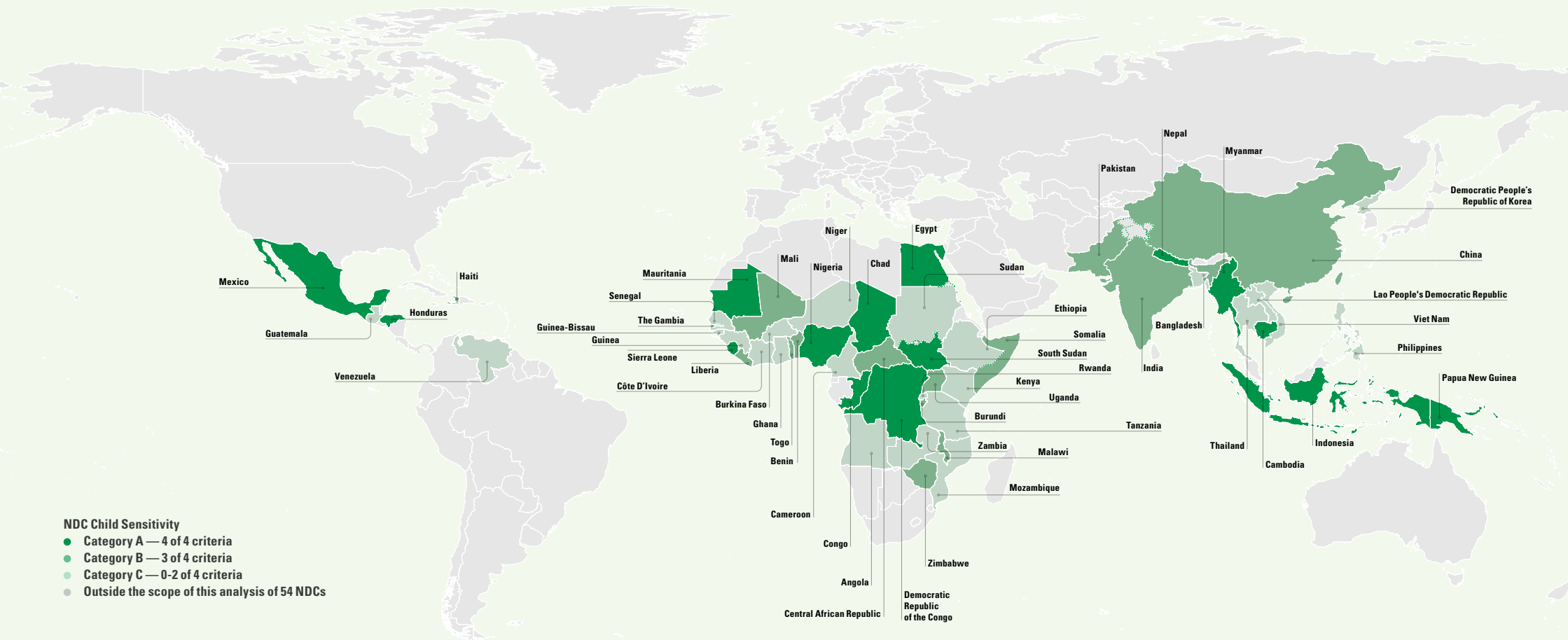
For this map, it is important to note that it does not include analysis from six countries identified in the CCRI as being at high or extremely high climate risk: Madagascar, Afghanistan, Equatorial Guinea and Djibouti (their NDCs were submitted prior to September 2019) and Yemen and Eritrea

(they are not UNFCCC Parties to the *Paris Agreement*).

As of November 2022, the CCRI does not include Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and microstates with a land area less than 20,000 km² due to data availability limitations. However, many SIDS and microstates face serious and existential threats due to climate change that are not adequately reflected in the data, and not captured appropriately in a multi-hazard index. Future versions of the CCRI will aim to address the data requirements for these contexts.

That said, the following SIDS and microstates are part of the larger 167 NDC data set in the child-sensitivity study. However, because they were not analyzed in the CCRI due to limited data availability, they are not included in this analysis of 54 NDCs reflected in this map.

This includes Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, Comoros, Seychelles, Cabo Verde, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Andorra, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Barbados, Fiji, Nauru, Singapore, Grenada, Maldives, Jamaica, Monaco, Samoa and Tonga. (See page 43 for a full list of the 167 countries whose NDCs are part of the study).



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

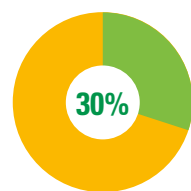
As the visualization of data showed on the map on page 15, 56 percent of NDCs from the highest climate risk countries meet at least 3 of the 4 criteria for child sensitivity (see below).

Because climate adaptation needs are extensive in countries with the highest children’s climate risk, this attention on child-sensitive criteria in more than half of the 54 NDCs bodes well for those countries to implement child-sensitive programming for and with children and young people facing the most severe consequences of disasters and wider climate impacts.

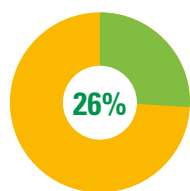
For the 44% of NDCs meeting 0-2 of the criteria, their respective governments can use the study data to identify areas for improvement, investment and partnership across sectors and in collaboration with children and young people.

The child-sensitivity study findings can also be used in other ways. For instance, when CCRI data is combined with the child sensitivity study on NDCs, there are four countries with both extremely high risk and Category A NDCs (4/4 criteria): Chad (8.5), Nigeria (8.5), South Sudan (8.2) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (8.0); and two countries with extremely high risk and Category B child sensitivity (3/4 criteria): Central African Republic (8.7) and Somalia (8.4).

Of the 54 high climate risk country NDCs



Meet 4 of 4 criteria for child sensitivity



Meet 3 of 4 criteria for child sensitivity

Countries with high children’s climate risk and heightened child sensitivity in NDCs

High-risk country NDCs	Child sensitivity*	CCRI
Chad	C-A (4/4)	8.5
Nigeria	C-A (4/4)	8.5
South Sudan	C-A (4/4)	8.2
Democratic Republic of the Congo	C-A (4/4)	8.0
Sierra Leone	C-A (4/4)	7.4
Myanmar	C-A (4/4)	7.1
Papua New Guinea	C-A (4/4)	7.0
Central African Republic	C-B (3/4)	8.7
Somalia	C-B (3/4)	8.4
Pakistan	C-B (3/4)	7.7
Benin	C-B (3/4)	7.6
Togo	C-B (3/4)	7.6
Liberia	C-B (3/4)	7.5
India	C-B (3/4)	7.4
Haiti	C-B (3/4)	7.3
Mali	C-B (3/4)	7.3

*C-A = Category A; C-B = Category B

This knowledge can inform financial investment and decision-making to build resilience where it's needed most for the youngest generation. Similarly, having a baseline for child sensitivity in NDCs can inform governments in high climate risk countries where to prioritize programming for the most vulnerable children and young people in their climate planning.

Importantly, while this high level of child sensitivity is encouraging in NDCs in the most vulnerable countries to climate impacts for children, commitments must be translated into action and innovative solutions. This includes in disaster risk reduction activities, market shaping, infrastructure and other areas that protect children and young people at threat of death, disease, violence and other impacts from climate and environmental hazards, shocks and stresses.

Turning sectoral commitments into action in high children's climate risk countries requires funding, which is often lacking at all levels with serious consequences for the youngest population (*see right*).

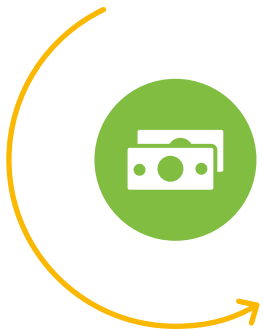
Investment opportunities in NDCs from countries with the greatest children's climate risk

- Green skills training and capacity building
- Climate- and disaster-resilient water and sanitation systems at schools
- Engaging children and young people in policymaking fora
- Climate- and disaster-resilient healthcare systems
- Agriculture and food security
- Circular economy models that create employment for young people
- Strengthened early warning systems
- Research and innovation
- Infrastructure improvement
(e.g., WASH, education, energy, transport, information communication technology [ICT], etc.)

Monitoring the Social Costs of Climate Change for Low- and Middle-income Countries

A recent report by UNICEF's Office of Research, Innocenti²⁵ states that: 'The climate crisis has had and continues to have, a serious economic impact on the poorest countries, and adapting to the impact of climate change will bring added costs. Current estimates of adaptation costs do not include the significant climate bill facing the social sectors.'

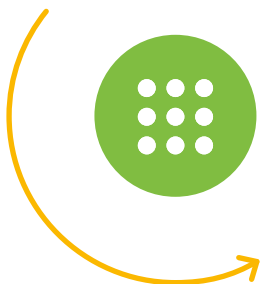
It is crucial that future social sector spending requirements are adequately costed for and financed as part of climate financing mechanisms... Failure to invest adequately in the social sectors can exacerbate poverty and inequalities resulting from climate change and undermines the potential contributions these sectors can make to climate change adaptation and mitigation.'





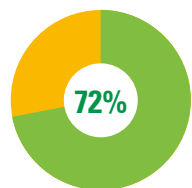
Child-sensitive sectors prioritize actions that can benefit them the most. For instance, decentralized and reliable energy at healthcare facilities can power vital life-saving medical equipment 24/7 (e.g., vaccine refrigerators, diagnostic equipment, ventilators, emergency and operating rooms) and ensure access to maternity treatments, safe births any time of day, postnatal care and reproductive health. Electricity provides lighting, heating, cooling, and clean and safe water. At this Primary Health Centre (PHC) in a hard-to-reach area of Rajasthan, India, with a severe electricity shortage, UNICEF installed solar direct drive refrigerators to help easily store vaccines. This resulted in increased vaccination in the area, which lowered child morbidity. © 2022 UNICEF/UN0651471/Vinay Panjwani

Criterion 1 Holistic and Multisectoral



UNICEF recognizes that prioritizing the resilience of social services that children and young people rely on is one of the best investments governments can make.²⁶ Thus, to identify areas for investment and improvement, the child-sensitivity study explored if NDCs from the 54 countries with high children’s climate risk include child-sensitive sectoral commitments in nine social sectors critical in the lives of children and young people (see *study methodology section*).

Holistic and multisectoral commitments are key criteria of child sensitivity, as children’s needs and rights are often crosscutting between sectors. Accordingly, the study findings provide insight for investments and action in sector strengthening. For the 54 NDCs, the findings show which sectors are included in their NDCs, which of those services address the specific risks and vulnerabilities of children and young people, and the gap between general inclusion of sectoral commitments, indicators and targets, and those that are child sensitive.



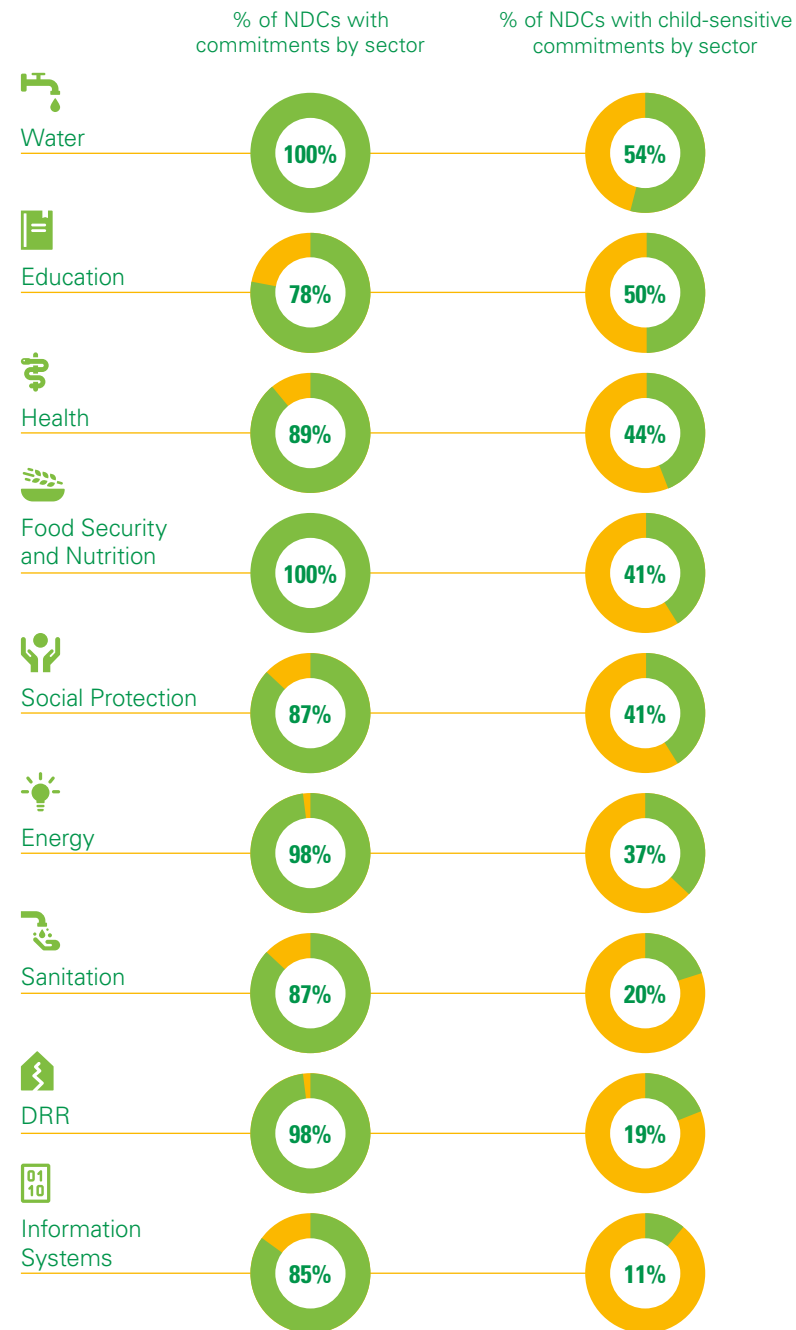
NDCs meet holistic and multisectoral criteria for child sensitivity

While it is notable that most NDCs in high-risk countries include sectoral commitments in their NDCs to strengthen climate change adaptation, including for and with children and young people, they must have resources to be able to implement their plans. The data thus holds the potential to inform and advocate for greater climate financing to move commitments in the NDCs into action.

In assessing the 54 countries’ NDCs, the study found:

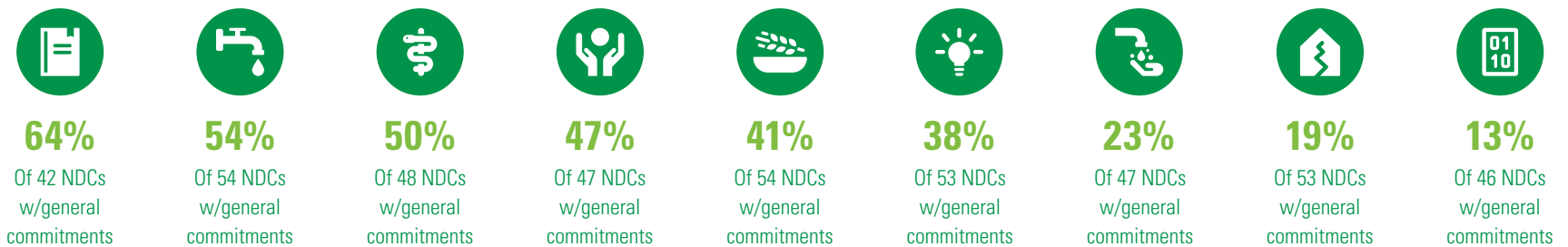
- 72% of the countries’ NDCs (39/54) meet the criteria for being holistic and multisectoral, meaning they have child-sensitive commitments in at least two of the nine sectors in the study.

NDCs from 54 countries with high children’s climate risk



- Two critical sectors for children and young people — education (50%) and water (54%) — have the highest percentage of child-sensitive commitments. This means at least half of the 54 NDCs have plans to address children’s and young people’s needs in these sectors.
- As all sectors connect to efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the data shows strong general commitments in key areas such as SDG6 (water: 100% NDCs) and SDG7 (energy: 98%), with opportunities for greater attention on children and young people (54% NDCs have child-sensitive commitments in water and 37% NDCs in energy).
- The findings highlight that all sectors in the study could benefit from greater child-sensitive sectoral commitments. For example, only 11% and 19% of the general sectoral commitments in information systems and disaster risk reduction respectively are child sensitive.
- It is worth noting that one in five of the 54 NDCs (22%) did not include general commitments in the education sector. Thus, linking climate actions to a sector critical in the lives of children and young people is an area for improvement, such as through implementing climate-smart schools²⁷ and the Comprehensive School Safety Framework.²⁸
- The study also identified what percentage of each sectoral commitment was child sensitive. For example, just under two-thirds (64%) of the 42 NDCs with sectoral commitments to education are

Percentage of child-sensitive sectoral commitments as a proportion of general commitments



also child sensitive. This is important to ensure the climate resilience of the education sector, including for both climate-resilient infrastructure and individual staff and student resilience.

- At the same time, approximately one in five NDCs with disaster risk reduction commitments (19%) are child sensitive. Considering the disproportionate negative impacts of disasters on children and young people, this shows a heightened need to prioritize and include them in risk reduction efforts, such as in emergency drills, hazard mapping, needs assessments, school safety activities and more.²⁹

These study findings make a case for ensuring NDCs are more holistic and multisectoral, as well as ensuring other policies that include children and young people also prioritize their needs in the social services essential in their lives.

For instance, the Children’s Climate Risk Index identifies Malawi as a high-risk country (6.7 CCRI rating)³⁰ with a high risk for exposure to climate and environmental shocks (5.7) and extremely high child vulnerability (7.5). The child-sensitivity study found Malawi’s NDC to meet 3 of the 4 criteria, including the inclusion of targeted commitments for children and young people in the water and food and nutrition security sectors.

UNICEF Malawi has a long history in this area (*see page 21*) in how it is building more resilient child-critical social services through infrastructure improvements, awareness raising, capacity-building and advocacy in the education, health, water and sanitation sectors.



Malawi

Climate-smart and disaster-resilient social sectors improve child health and well-being

Child-sensitive sustainable energy commitments play a critical role in improving outcomes for children and young people.³¹ For example, to improve safe water services, UNICEF Malawi and its partners are constructing new solar powered water systems and upgrading existing water sources into climate-resilient water supply systems.³²

From January 2018 to September 2022, UNICEF and partners constructed 116 climate resilient water supply systems for 63 schools, 49 health centres and 4 child-friendly spaces in Malawi. The efforts reached more than 230,000 children, leading to improved outcomes in health, education, water and sanitation.³³

UNICEF and District Councils mobilized, formed and trained water management committees on operations and maintenance³⁴ to help ensure the sustainability of the climate-resilient water supply systems.

UNICEF Malawi's sustainable energy efforts aim to reach those most marginalized and vulnerable in the country, which aligns with calls for climate justice for all by the Malawi Youth Climate Action Campaign. In their first Local Youth Conference on Climate Change in September 2022 they promoted urgent action on including climate education in school curricula, improving green energy policies and reducing costs for eco-friendly energy sources.

In Malawi, young people are also leading innovations in early-warning systems,³⁵ emergency response using drones,³⁶ climate forecasting,³⁷ greening schools³⁸ and more.

Eneless Charles (20), mother of one-month old Kelis Innocent, accesses safe water from a solar-power system at Chilobwe Health Centre. UNICEF and USAID funded the system installation. Before the solar water system was installed, sanitation and waste management was a huge challenge for hospital users, with many using local health centre staff houses to access safe water during their visit.

© UNICEF Malawi/HDPLUS



A focus on representation, rights, inclusion and empowerment

Study objective 2

Identify where climate policies can increase engagement with children and young people as stakeholders, rights holders and agents of change, including those from vulnerable populations

Data set

167 NDCs submitted to the UNFCCC between September 2019 and October 14, 2022 (including the 54 NDCs from high children's climate risk countries in the objective 1 analysis).

Analysis

Determines the child sensitivity of commitments, targets and indicators in the references, right-based and inclusive criteria categories.

Use

The data helps to identify opportunities to increase and fund engagement that ensures young citizens' needs, ideas and sufficient resources are included in climate policies, actions and innovations; and that all children and young people can participate in the climate decisions they care about most.

Overview

For this analysis, the study recognizes that low-, middle- and high-income countries and those with differing children's climate risk may approach developing their NDC content differently. For instance, the research found that countries with low children's climate risk and/or developed countries often focused their NDCs on emissions reduction and thus may have chosen not to include social sectoral commitments in their NDCs (this information may be in their NAP, Adaptation Communication³⁹ submission to the UNFCCC or other national plans).

In contrast, countries with high children's climate risk and/or developing countries more often included national commitments on climate adaptation in their NDCs, likely reflecting that they contribute least to greenhouse gas emissions and that their climate change adaptation needs are more acute. This is why the first study on sectoral commitments focuses on NDC from countries with high children's climate risk.

This part of the study analyses 167 NDCs from low-, middle- and high-income countries. The NDCs not only advance the *Paris Agreement* by establishing climate targets and goals for parties to the agreement, but they also can serve as a critical reflection of national priorities.

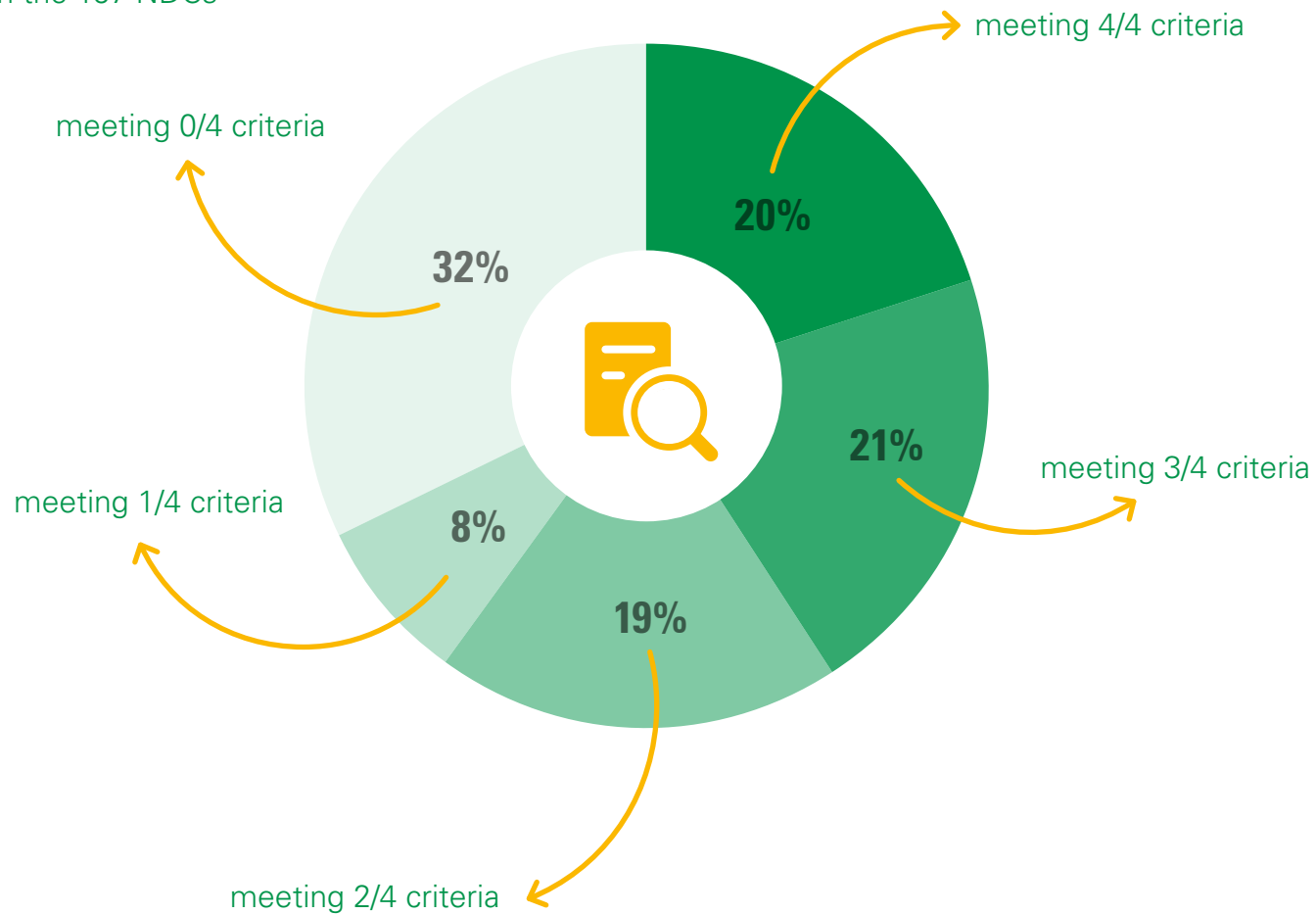
As such, it is important that all NDCs engage stakeholders of all ages in their development and establish credible commitments that recognize and address the needs and rights of children and young people. To meet the goals of the *Paris Agreement* and other global agreements — and in the movement towards a green economy — all of society will need to be engaged, educated, healthy and resilient.

Study Findings

The child-sensitivity data from the 167 NDCs in the study identifies that 41 percent of the NDCs meet at least 3 of the 4 study criteria. Conversely, the study identified 59 percent of the 167 NDCs as meeting no criteria (32%), one criterion (8%) or two criteria (19%), highlighting opportunities for improvement in NDCs from every region. Findings on the references, rights-based and inclusive criterion from the analysis of the 167 NDCs continues in the next section.

Canada's NDC stands out as a good practice example from a developed country with low climate risk for children that meets all 4 criteria for child sensitivity (see page 24). The Children's Climate Risk Index identifies Canada as a low-risk country (3.7 CCRI rating)⁴⁰ with medium risk for exposure to climate and environmental shocks (5.4) and very low child vulnerability (1.5).

Child-sensitivity data from the 167 NDCs





Canada

Canada’s ‘Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy’ strengthened climate plan (SCP) integrated into its NDC⁴¹



Canada’s NDC commits to increasing action and investments in both mitigation and adaptation measures. This includes ‘federal policies, programmes and investments to accelerate emissions reductions and build a stronger, cleaner, more resilient and inclusive economy’ that supports vulnerable populations adapting to the changing climate.

The focus of Canada’s NDC on youth is across a wide range of sectors: education, energy and social protection. It also recognizes intergenerational justice and equity, particularly for Indigenous youth. The right to participate in climate action is also strengthened by identifying them as important stakeholders. The NDC also identifies youth as important stakeholders and commits to strengthening their right to participate in climate action.

Youth as drivers of change →  Yes

Reference to child rights →  Yes

Energy & Social Protection sectors →  +  Child sensitive

Training & Public Participation ACE commitment →  +  Child sensitive

The NDC states, ‘With a diversity of unique experiences and knowledge related to the environment and climate change, the voices of Indigenous women, youth, Elders, 2SLGBTQQA [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans, queer and questioning, intersex and asexual], and persons with disabilities are an essential part of climate leadership and action.’

Canada’s NDC also commits to particularly strengthening the participation of Indigenous youth in various federal initiatives as leaders and partners for delivering solutions. Where the NDC could still be strengthened is in extending youth-related commitments to include children and younger adolescents more explicitly.

In its NDC, the government of Canada also commits to safeguarding future work opportunities for youth by ensuring a just transition to a low carbon future within the workforce. This includes supporting Canadians — including youth and all Indigenous Peoples — as they build new skills in growing sectors by ensuring that they receive the education and accreditation they need. For instance, the NDC calls out specific programmes in which it will invest:

The Sectoral Workforce Solutions Programme

\$1.2 billion investment committed to provide ‘500 000 training and work opportunities which will help connect Canadians with the training they need to access good jobs in sectors, such as clean energy where employers are looking for skilled workers.’

The Future Skills Initiative

\$225 million investment committed align Canada’s skills development with the labour market.

Criterion 2 References



The inclusion of references to children and young people is a key principle for building child-sensitive policies. Thus, it is encouraging to see gains in this area. However, opportunities remain for improvement. Committing to work for and with all children and young people starts with a recognition that their needs and concerns are unique from adults. They are also not a homogeneous group and their diversity should be recognized as well in policies, plans and participation.

Meaningful climate action requires recognition of the group as stakeholders and rights holders in decisions that directly and often disproportionately affect them. Even though children and young people contributed the least to the climate crisis, they will experience the most long-lasting consequences throughout their lives. The references criterion also requires identifying children and young people as drivers of change and prioritizing them in age-appropriate curricula, training, skills-building and other actions that ensure they are informed, educated and able to influence decisions.⁴²

The references criterion identifies how and how much children and young people are referenced in NDCs, with the viewpoint that calling them out as a population is critical in climate policy as the existential threat of the climate crisis continues to grow. The study found that:

- 65% of the 167 NDCs contain meaningful references to children and young people, including direct references or references to related topics such as primary education, intergenerational rights and families.
- The 65% representation is an improvement over earlier NDC submissions from the 167 countries. Only 32% of first or prior NDCs from the same set of countries included meaningful references to children and young people.



“We, children, are the first victims of climate change and environmental degradation. They threaten our rights to education, health, nutrition, development and many more. It is therefore essential that the voice of children be heard on current climate and environmental issues. This year we want things to change”.



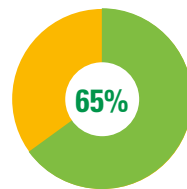
Ketsia Passou (18), UNICEF Young Climate Advocate, presenting the children’s plea during the preparatory activities for COP27 in Kinshasa, DR Congo.⁴³

© UNICEF Democratic Republic of the Congo

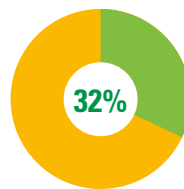
- 34% and 35% of NDCs identify children and young people as vulnerable groups, respectively. It is important that policymakers make greater strides to recognize children and young people as not only vulnerable groups or victims but also as participants and innovative leaders.
- In considering the role of children and young people as key stakeholders and drivers of change, NDCs more often speak to the agency of young people (39% of NDCs) than to the agency of children (11% of NDCs).

- 17% of NDCs include references to disadvantaged and marginalized children and young people, who may face unique vulnerabilities to climate change. This includes, but is not limited to, references to children and young people with disabilities; of traditional, Indigenous, and ethnic groups; of linguistic, racial or religious minorities; from households or neighborhoods experiencing poverty; and whose families have climate-sensitive livelihoods.
- Few NDCs, only 14%, include a specific section dedicated to commitments for children or young people.

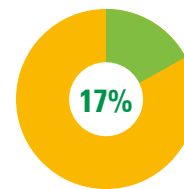
How much children and young people are referenced in NDCs



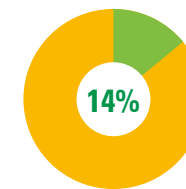
New and updated NDCs contain references to children and young people



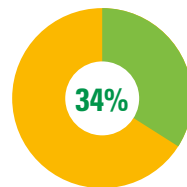
The first or prior NDCs submitted contained references to children and young people*



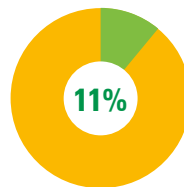
NDCs contain references to disadvantaged and marginalized children and young people



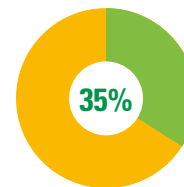
NDCs include a child- or young person-specific section



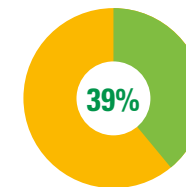
NDCs identify children as a vulnerable group



NDCs identify children as drivers of change



NDCs identify young people as a vulnerable group



NDCs identify young people as drivers of change

* This finding is from a review of first and prior NDCs vs. all other findings that are from new and updated NDC as per the data set parameters.

NDCs with specific sections on children and young people



Liberia's NDC section 2.3.3

This section describes the 'Ganta Declaration' as a response to Youth Dialogue that informed the NDC update process. The declaration commits that the youth population of Liberia will have continuous engagement throughout the NDC development and implementation process.

Pakistan's NDC section 6.2

The Youth & Volunteer Engagement section identifies young people in Pakistan as key agents of change and how they can foster a shared understanding of climate change and its impacts on youth. The section commits to increasing youth involvement and inclusion through greater opportunities for youth groups in both adaptation and mitigation as well as in research and innovation (i.e., engaging with them to develop solutions and ownership of climate-smart development).

Recognizing children and young people as drivers of change in policy matters, as well as actions that ensure they have the right knowledge, skills and opportunities to meaningfully participate. The story on page 28 provides examples of how to formalize platforms for young people to build capacities, as well as for including young citizens in formal decision-making spaces. The Children's Climate Risk Index identifies Türkiye as a medium-risk country (4.4 CCRI rating)⁴⁴ with a high risk for exposure to climate and environmental shocks (5.8) and low child vulnerability (2.7).



"Without our voices at the table, the ambitious agendas of major international events are just sweet talk."



Saher Rashid Baig from Pakistan. Saher is an international youth advocate for climate, human rights, gender and the right to a healthy environment

© 2021 Leigh Vogel/Connect4Climate



Türkiye

Youth engagement is building climate action momentum

Empowering young people to engage in climate action — through education, training and their participation in public issues — is driving the national response in Türkiye and contributing towards the global response.

In 2022, UNICEF, UN agencies and partners worked closely with the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change (MoEUCC) to equip 209 Youth Climate Envoys with climate knowledge and skills to effectively engage in policymaking. They were able to apply their learnings at Türkiye's first ever National Climate Summit.⁴⁵

At the event, the Climate Envoys deliberated and presented a *Youth Declaration*⁴⁶ that included their solutions for tackling the climate crisis. A partnership with the Nature Conservation Centre (DKM) has further resulted in the training of the Youth Climate Envoys as part of their preparation for COP27.

UNICEF supports the Youth Climate Envoys as an important public engagement platform for young people in Türkiye. The envoys interact with their peers, national leaders and other thought leaders on climate action, enabling Türkiye's young citizens to be a part of the efforts towards addressing the climate crisis.

UNICEF is also supporting the engagement of young people in other platforms such as the Generation Unlimited *Youth Leadership Council*, which is engaging peers, speaking out and leading actions for and with young people on climate issues.



Youth Climate Envoys attend Türkiye's first National Climate Summit.

Criterion 3 Rights-based



Children's rights and intergenerational justice and equity are key in ensuring that children and young people's interests and futures are safeguarded. This includes child rights to participate in issues that affect them; the right to access social services such as education, healthcare, water, sanitation and social protection⁴⁷ and most recently, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as recognized by the UN General Assembly.⁴⁸

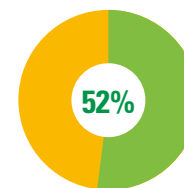
Including children and young people as rights holders in NDCs and other climate policies and strategies fosters a successful environment to shift laws, policies, practices and budgets. They are more equitable when children and young people's interests and participation are embedded.⁴⁹

Moreso, fulfilling child rights and intergenerational justice and equity in climate action accelerates meeting global goals in key sectors like education, healthcare and WASH. In turn, this improves resilience to future shocks and lessens the climate and environmental risk for children and young people.

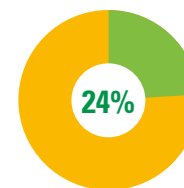
The study identified rights as a key area for improvement in future NDCs:

- While all 193 UN Member States have signed onto at least one international human rights treaty,⁵⁰ just over half (52%) of the 167 NDCs contain meaningful references to human rights or adopt a human rights-based approach.
- Even fewer (24%) of the 167 NDCs meaningfully reference or incorporate the rights of children or intergenerational justice and equity, despite the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child enjoying near-universal ratification.

For the 193 countries that have ratified the UNCRC, their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil child rights obligations in the face of climate change will soon be further clarified. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 'General Comment 26'⁵¹ responds to children's and young people's input and advocacy for a more robust child rights framework for ambitious climate action. General Comment 26 will provide authoritative guidance on requirements that State signatories are legally bound to take to protect child and adolescent rights amidst the climate crisis.⁵² It is expected to be published early in 2023.



NDCs contain references to human rights



NDCs reference the rights of children or intergenerational justice and equity

Ensuring attention on child rights takes a commitment by a government and its partners, as shown by UNICEF Uruguay. They supported youth NDC consultation workshops that led to a report to inform Uruguay's 2nd NDC, which the government aims to submit in December 2022. The Children's Climate Risk Index identifies Uruguay as a low-risk country (3.0 CCRI rating)⁵³ with a medium risk for exposure to climate and environmental shocks (5.3) and very low child vulnerability (2.0).



Adolescents and youth from across the country attend multiple seminars on climate action.
© 2022 UNICEF Uruguay



Uruguay

Second NDC development includes child rights and young citizen input

UNICEF and the Ministry of the Environment (MoE) of Uruguay have been working together to include child rights and inputs from young people in its second NDC. At a seminar entitled 'La perspectiva de infancia y adolescencia en las políticas de cambio climático y ambiente,'⁵⁴ government officials formally invited NDC input from young citizens.

At the event, UNICEF raised awareness of the climate and environmental degradation impacts on child rights. UNICEF also provided updates from the report, *The children's perspective in environmental and climate change instruments in Uruguay*.⁵⁵ The seminar was attended by leaders from the Ministry of Environment and other institutions from the National Climate Change Response System.

To influence the second NDC, UNICEF and the MoE designed a series of seven workshops⁵⁶ attended by 40 adolescents and youth (aged 14-22 years old) from across the country, including participants with disabilities. Experts in climate change and human rights and members of the National Climate Change Response System participated in each meeting.

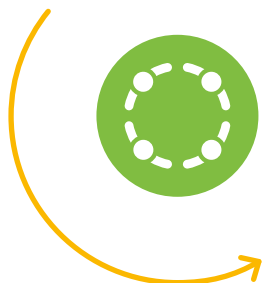
In the workshops, the young participants developed seven commitments and seven requests that they presented to the government, including the Minister of Environment, the Undersecretary of Environment, the National Director of Climate Change and the technical group leading the drafting of the second NDC. UNICEF and the MoE are working together to institutionalize young people's participation in the climate policies group and in 2023 activities.

Adrián Peña, the Minister of Environment (right), and other stakeholders listen to the views of Uruguayan youth.

© 2022 UNICEF Uruguay



Criterion 4 Inclusive



Children and young people are the single most affected group by the climate crisis. Climate change is an intergenerational issue, and young people have a role to play both as key stakeholders and as agents of change. Civic engagement by children and young people is a human right and is critical to ensuring that policies are well-targeted towards their needs.⁵⁷

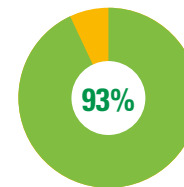
Participation in NDC development

Action on climate change benefits everyone in society when it is informed by children and young people, who are the major clients of its outcomes. However, they are consistently underrepresented in policies and policy discussions and are therefore limited in their ability to influence decisions that are critical to their future.

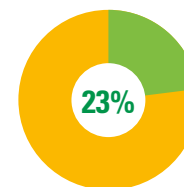
This was found to be the case in the 167 NDCs reviewed for the study as it identified a significant gap in the NDC planning processes. While most promoted participatory processes, only a quarter mentioned that they included young citizens in the development of their NDCs.

The findings promote the active role children and young people can play in crafting NDC commitments and acting on them. This would include ensuring all children and young people have the agency, capacities and opportunities to influence the NDCs in their countries.

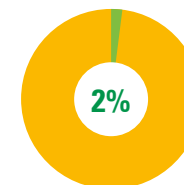
- 93% of NDCs reference that the process of developing or updating the document was participatory in nature. Key stakeholders in consultation sessions referenced across NDCs include the private sector, civil society, academia, government agencies and international NGOs.
- Only 23% of NDCs explicitly note that young people were participants in the consultation or review process — and only 2% mention the inclusion of children.



NDCs reference that the NDC development or update process was participatory in nature



NDCs mention that the NDC participatory process involved young people



NDCs mention that the NDC participatory process involved children

The participation of children, adolescents and youth from all sectors of society in informing government decision-making is critical to ensure more inclusive and innovative climate policies. As Ecuador develops its second NDC (for 2024 submission), UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition (MAATE) worked together to advance the participation of young people through workshops and lectures on climate action (*see page 33*).

The Children's Climate Risk Index identifies Ecuador as a medium-risk country (5.4 CCRI rating)⁵⁸ with a high risk for exposure to climate and environmental shocks (6.9) and low child vulnerability (3.5).



Ecuador

Young people contribute to the country's climate change commitments

Within the framework of 'child-sensitive climate policies,' 40 adolescents and youth from 13 Ecuadorian provinces generated proposals for climate action in the 'Youth Participation: Road to the NDCs' workshop⁵⁹ organized by UNICEF, UNDP and MAATE.

The event created a space for them to formulate and formalize recommendations for Ecuador's second NDC submission. In doing so, they strengthened their capacities in climate action and teamwork.

In the workshops, young people aged 13-28 years (including Indigenous Peoples, migrants and people with disabilities) learned from and worked alongside experts from UNICEF, UNDP, the Undersecretariat of Climate Change and teams from Ecuador's National Climate Change Mitigation Plan and National Climate Change Adaptation Plan.

The issues young people raised for inclusion in Ecuador's 2nd NDC focused on environmental education, disaster risk management, health, green energy transition, sustainable agriculture, young citizen participation in formal spaces in the national climate agenda, and additional actions related to fighting climate change with a special focus on children, adolescents and youth.



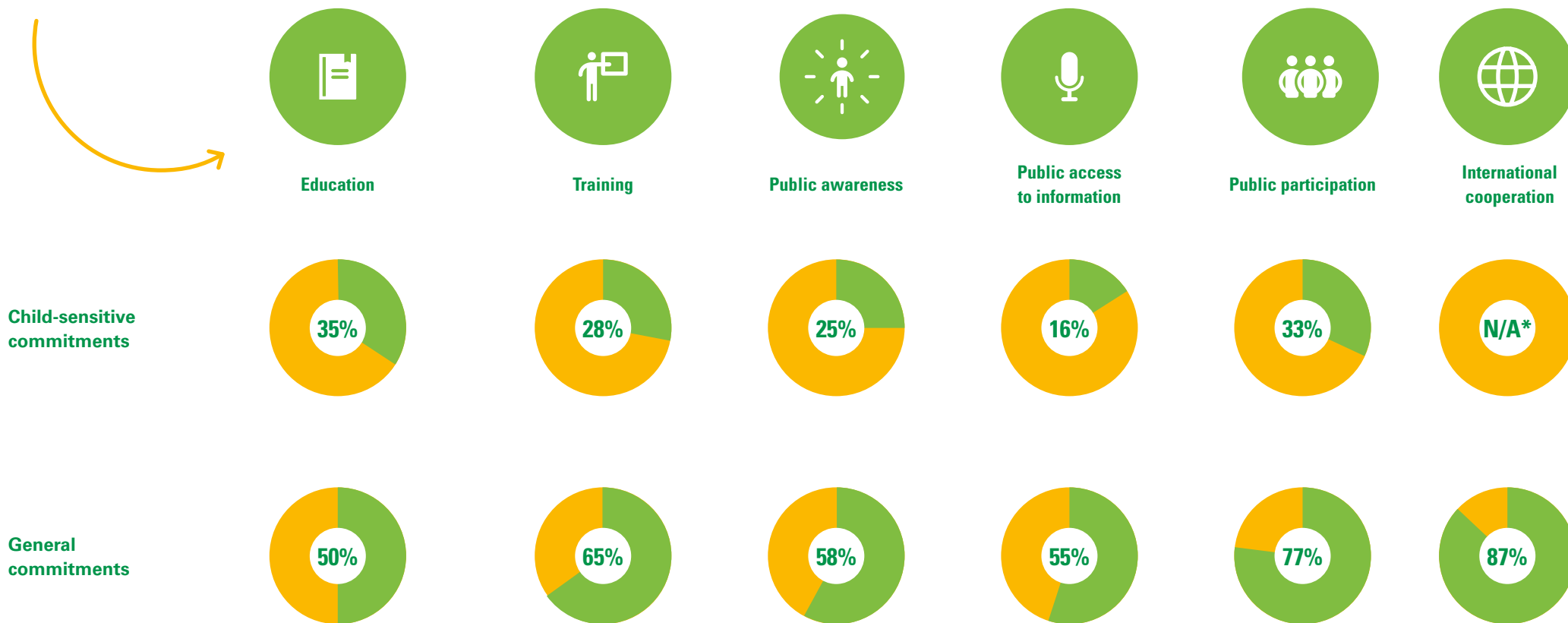
Young people develop climate action proposals in Ecuador.

ACE commitments in NDCs

The UNFCCC encourages parties to incorporate ACE into their climate plans as critical in the global response to climate change. The UNFCCC promotes ACE through dialogues, workshops, events, national ACE focal points,⁶⁰ youth engagement activities and an ACE hub⁶¹ launched in 2022.

The ACE hub places a special focus on supporting meaningful youth engagement, especially to 'develop new ideas and solutions to increase awareness, education and participation in climate action.' With this focus, it is valuable to understand where NDCs are child sensitive, and in which of the ACE areas child sensitivity can be improved.

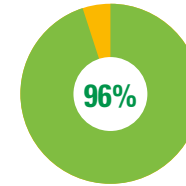
Action for Climate Empowerment commitments



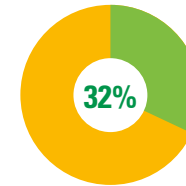
*Not applicable as the study did not analyze this data

The study found that:

- 96% of the 167 NDCs commit to at least one of the six ACE elements.
- 77% of NDCs include commitments on public participation, such as furthering engagement with stakeholders in debate and partnership.
- 33% of NDCs explicitly address expanding the participation of children and young people.
- 65% incorporate training for climate action into their NDCs, with only 28% focusing on building the skills of the youngest generation. Considering research that shows that policies supporting the transition to a green economy could create 18 million jobs by 2030,⁶² training young people in green skills could be a key growth area for both mitigation and adaptation planning.
- 50% of NDCs promote education as a means to empower society on climate action, and only a bit more than a third (35%) specifically target empowering children and young people through education. As a key sector for children and young people, education for climate action is a critical area for improvement.
- Raising awareness and access to information is higher than education at 58% and 55% respectively. However, attention on raising children's and young people's awareness (25%) and access to information (16%) is low. This area thus also offers an opportunity for greater investment so young citizens can more effectively support political action, develop sustainable solutions, and act in ways that they can, as the ACE website says: 'understand and participate in the transition to a low-emission, climate resilient world.'



NDCs with commitments, indicators or targets related to at least one ACE component



NDCs with child-sensitive commitments, indicators or targets related to at least one ACE component

Incorporating public awareness raising and access into established educational programming is one way to transform systems for greater climate action, as shown by a 2022 UNICEF Egypt summer camp programme for primary students (*see page 36*).

The child-sensitivity study categorized Egypt's NDC in Category A, meaning it met all 4 of its criteria. The Children's Climate Risk Index identifies Egypt as a high-risk country (5.6 CCRI rating)⁶³ with an extremely high risk for exposure to climate and environmental shocks (7.3) and low child vulnerability (3.0).



Egypt

UNICEF Egypt raises climate awareness with students from 70 primary schools

Children in public schools in Egypt are often disconnected from educational opportunities during the summer holidays. However, this year as part of summer camps in Upper Egypt,⁶⁴ children came back to school to learn about the environment and climate change, among other topics.

The camps had the objective to raise children's awareness on health and environmental issues through interactive activities. With Egypt hosting the global climate change Conference of Parties (COP27) in 2022, the camps added climate change to the list of other learning topics on hand washing, water and sanitation conservation, and personal and public hygiene.

UNICEF's WASH programme supported the summer camps in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Technical Education and two water companies from the Fayoum and Minya governorates.

To build sustainability in the camps for 2022 and beyond, UNICEF trained 20 water company employees and 60 teachers to implement the summer camp programme, including on the topics of climate change and child rights. Nearly 30,000 primary school children benefitted from the 2022 camps that ran over the summer in 70 schools.

At an Egypt summer camp, children learned how to plant and care for seedlings. They planted 30 trees in the schoolyard. Hana, a student, said her favorite plant is the sunflower, her hometown's signature flower.

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Visualizing NDC data

UNICEF and Climate Watch collaborate to share NDC child-sensitivity data

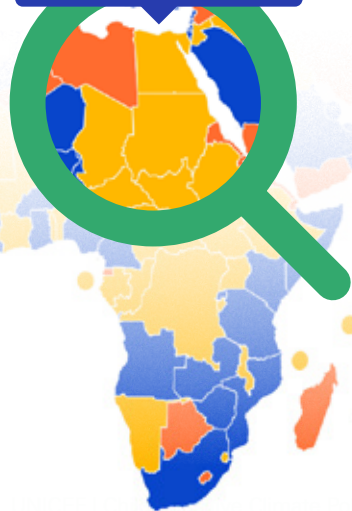
The innovative platform allows users to visualize up-to-date data from the child-sensitivity study.

Governments, funders and stakeholders can identify potential gaps and opportunities in NDCs that can be supported and improved.

To make evidence-informed decisions to decrease child vulnerability to climate change, governments and relevant stakeholders need to understand the value and elements of child-sensitive policies. Addressing this, UNICEF has partnered with Climate Watch to incorporate child-sensitive indicators into its existing digital platform, 'Explore NDCs'.⁶⁵ The data unveils gaps in considerations for children and young people in NDCs and provides guidance for improvement.

With this information on child sensitivity in NDCs, government ministries, partners, young people, UNICEF and other stakeholders can make evidence-informed decisions to decrease risks to children and young people. Easy access to the data allows decision-makers to develop effective responses for their unique contexts; existing protocols; and national to local strategies on climate change, disaster risk management, education, health, water, sanitation and more.

Egypt
The updated NDC includes commitments to expanding drinking water access.



With the Climate Watch map, users can visualize NDC data, such as on child-sensitive sectoral commitments, and find more information in pop out boxes.



Link to: [**Climate Watch 'Explore NDCs' child & youth sensitivity section**](#)

The data visualization can inspire innovation in how governments and key partners seek to increase the ambition of climate policies and act on their NDC commitments. This includes through actions that advance innovative climate actions within policies in ways that accelerate progress towards a sustainable planet for every child. The easy-to-navigate and engaging visualizations on country NDC data enable quick access to crucial information, and also provide unique approaches to monitoring and tracking progress.

The Climate Watch platform aims to complement and strengthen users' capacities to advocate for and implement policies that place intergenerational justice and equity at the centre of their work. That is, to integrate the needs and priorities of children and young people; thereby strengthening their resilience to the climate crisis.

Data on sectoral and ACE commitments can also be used to advocate for strengthening the climate resiliency of social services, as well as for greater inclusion of children and young people in participatory events, trainings and other ACE activities.

The UNICEF data on the Climate Watch platform lives in a Child and Youth Sensitivity Category that will allow users to view individual indicator data from the study for each country that submitted an NDC after September 2019. UNICEF and Climate Watch will be engaged in a continual analysis process, which keeps data current as NDCs are updated and submitted. The platform includes an interactive map, comparisons of data within or between countries, and more.

Prioritizing partnerships

Climate-focused collaborations advance the needs and innovations of children and young people⁶⁶

In its programming and advocacy, UNICEF prioritizes robust evidence and monitoring, especially to benefit hard-to-reach children, young people, their families and communities who are experiencing high levels of vulnerability and marginalization. Partnerships are foundational not only in the implementation of initiatives, but also in developing and sharing evidence that can inform, influence and ensure more reliable decision-making for and with children and young people.

For instance, UNICEF and its partners play a pivotal role in understanding how climate affects child well-being through producing actionable insights. They are using new technologies like artificial intelligence, satellite imagery and other remote sensing to develop innovations that can tackle the negative impacts of climate change on all children globally. Technical partners include research institutions, universities, UN agencies, civil society, businesses in the public and private sectors, sector-based experts and others.

UNICEF and its partners recognize that capturing data and analyzing, developing and providing technical expertise to analytical reports helps to ensure efficient and agile decision-making by policymakers and key stakeholders.

UNICEF's evidence-based decision-making approach extends to its longstanding relationships with adolescents and youth. UNICEF works with global organizations like YOUNGO, the Major Group for Children and Youth,⁶⁷ the Climate Youth Negotiator Programme, Care About

Climate, the SDG7 Youth Constituency⁶⁸ and more, as well as local student councils, youth clubs and local institutions. The young people often use and lead advocacy efforts with UNICEF evidence, or work in partnership to create it. The partnerships showcase the critical role young people play in contributing resources and expertise to scaling the innovative and technological solutions required to tackle the climate crisis.

Europe and Africa

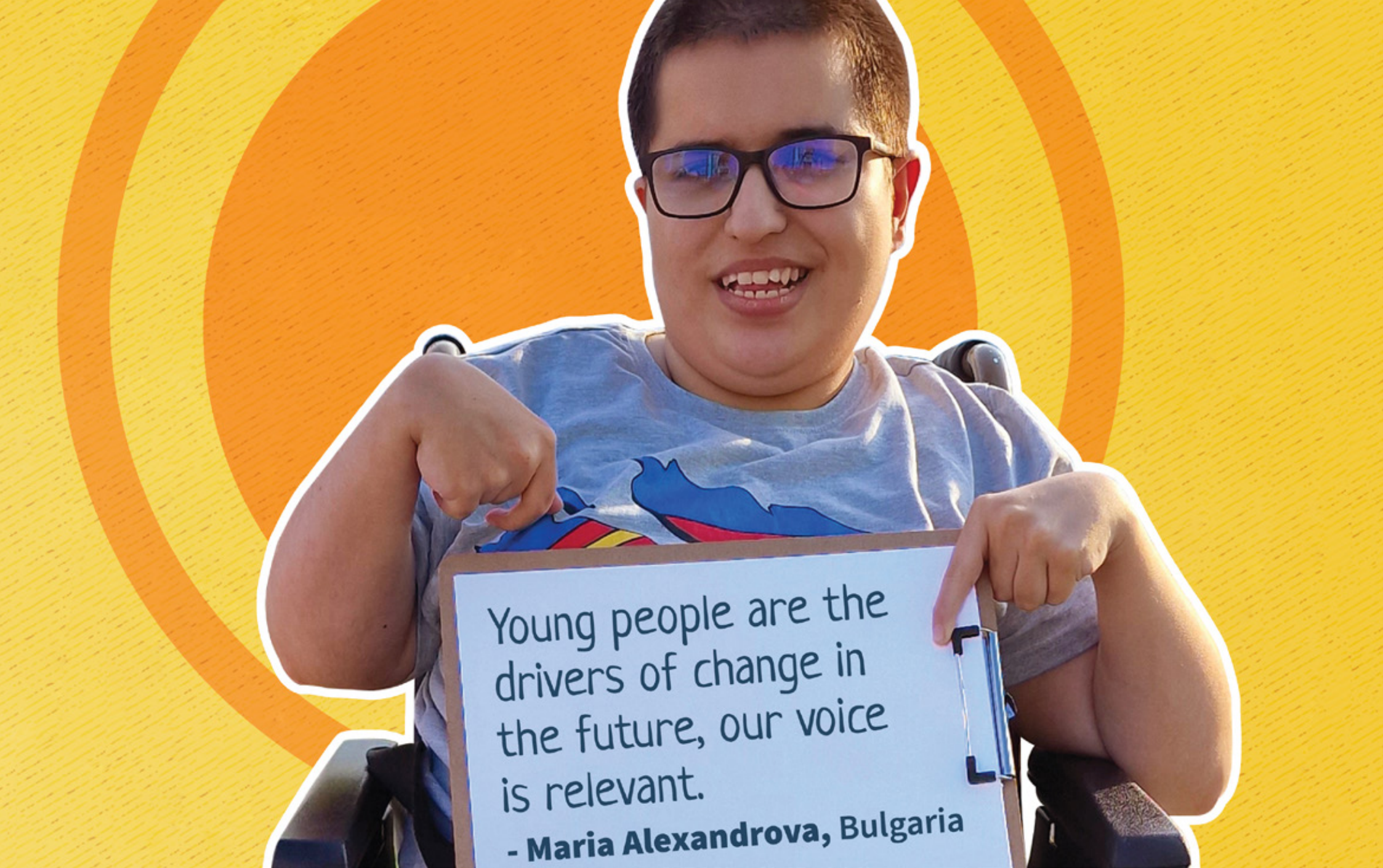


Partnerships elevate the voices of young people

UNICEF, the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) worked together on an initiative that gave a platform to young people from Africa and Europe to share their concerns and ideas. The two-year campaign, called *Your Voice Your Future*,⁶⁹ sought to elevate the voices of young people across both continents on the issues that matter most to them.

More than 450,000 young people responded to the related U-Report polls on topics such as climate and the environment. The findings were turned into a flagship report: *Your Voice, Your Future: Turning challenges into solutions*.⁷⁰ The findings were then championed by young people as calls to action for leaders and policymakers on both continents.

The campaign provided opportunities for young people to relay messages to decision-makers, as part of the 2022 AU-EU Summit in Brussels, and in petitioning European and African leaders directly to take urgent climate action.



Maria shares her views in a poster from the #YourVoiceYourFuture Campaign that was used to invite young people to respond to the U-Report polls. Maria has been a rights advocate for young people with disabilities for years, and is currently an Inclusive Education Advocate with UNICEF Bulgaria. © UNICEF

The time to act is now

With children and young people facing this increasingly dangerous and uncertain future, their needs, concerns, ideas and engagement are more critical than ever; especially through meaningful actions, innovations and funding for and with them.

Around the world, UNICEF is working with governments to take bold, targeted climate actions that ensure essential child services are safer, prepared and adaptive and child rights are more secure. The child sensitivity study of the NDCs and examples from countries around the world working for and with young people provide inspiring examples of opportunities and actions that can be used as guidance for developing a response worthy for a crisis.

Overall, the study aims to convey that child-sensitive climate policies matter. Meaningful engagement of children and young people not only in the NDCs but in all national and sub-national climate and environment policies is in itself policy innovation. It has the encouraging potential to lead to more innovative climate policies.⁷¹

Children and young people are not only facing a lifetime of climate chaos, but they are also living it now. In times of crisis, governments need an urgent and bold response. If governments fail to respond to and prioritize this population, we are failing 2.6 billion children, adolescents and youth younger than age 20 years — more than one third of the world's population.⁷²

As this study shows, there is a strong movement for improvement. Children and young people are demanding to have their experiences and ideas heard. Many governments are incorporating their unique needs, voices and pressing concerns into action.

The number of NDCs and other policies that recognize children and young people is growing, as well as worldwide efforts in child-sensitive, sector-based action. This is especially true in NDCs from countries where their young citizens are most at risk in a changing climate. As this research brief has shown, multiple opportunities exist to improve the integration of child rights in climate policies, including in the key sectors they rely on most.

In its climate, environment, energy and disaster risk reduction efforts, UNICEF promotes 'a liveable planet for every child.'⁷³ Core to this aspiration is integrating child-sensitivity into all its efforts from advocacy to programming to internal sustainability. Working alongside governments, we are — every day — moving closer to this ideal together. Please join us.



The time to take urgent action for a liveable planet for every child is now

UNICEF resources



[UNICEF Climate and Environment](#)

[A liveable planet for every child \(strategy\)](#)

[The climate crisis is a child rights crisis](#)

[The Children's Climate Risk Index \(CCRI\)](#)

[Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action](#)

[Actions for a liveable planet for every child
\(advocacy brief\)](#)

[What is climate justice?](#)

[And what can we do to achieve it?](#)

[A brighter life for every child with sustainable energy](#)

[DRR in action:](#)

[Every country protected; every child resilient](#)

[UNICEF partnerships](#)

UNICEF child-sensitivity study methodology

Data Set

The child-sensitivity study used 167 UNFCCC Parties' NDC submissions from September 2019 to October 14, 2022, for an analysis on child-sensitivity and the NDCs. The European Union and 193 states (named as Parties to the UNFCCC) have ratified or acceded the *Paris Agreement*, a legally binding treaty to limit global warming. Parties periodically submit NDCs to show progress and plans on their commitments within the agreement. To capture the most recent commitments by the Parties, the study limited the NDCs in the data set to those updated since September 2019.

Data Set Use in Research Brief

In the study, UNICEF researchers analyzed a total of 167 NDCs. It used the data from 54 NDCs from countries with high children's climate risk (as identified by the CCRI) to analyze general and sectoral commitments. It used the data from the 167 NDCs to analyze general commitments and review references, rights and inclusion. The child-sensitivity study did not review 27 NDCs submitted prior to September 2019 that have not been revised. Additionally, five countries are not Parties to the *Paris Agreement*, and thus did not have NDC submissions for analysis.

Research Type

The child-sensitivity study used keyword and semantic searches of the NDC texts to derive quantitative results (points) for 41 indicators under 4 criteria (see pages 42-43). The difference in the types of searches is that a keyword search relies only on the location of specific words. A semantic search takes their contextual meaning into account.

For instance, the holistic and multisectoral criterion looked at 9 sectors to develop data on each related to their child sensitivity. Here, even if an NDC mentioned a sector as a keyword, it would only be quantifiably valued if it specifically linked to a commitment (such as in a proposed plan or target) once semantics were considered.

As an example, a sentence talking about a 'health challenges due to a changing climate' would not have any value for the 'inclusion of commitments on the health sector' indicator. However, if an NDC listed a commitment to building or modifying health centres to be climate resilient, the 'health sector' indicator would be given a point. This approach was taken to overcome the limitations of a keyword search only as it can miss the multiple meanings that keywords can take, which can lead to false positives. This was done through researchers reading through the texts for the semantic search and analysis.

The child-sensitivity study criteria categories and indicators included the following. The indicators that were used to identify an NDC as child sensitive are marked with an * below.

Holistic and Multisectoral indicators: Identify sectoral commitments, including for and with children and young people.

- The inclusion of commitments on the health sector
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on health*
- The inclusion of commitments on the education sector
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on education*
- The inclusion of commitments on the energy sector
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on energy*
- The inclusion of commitments on the water sector
- The inclusion of child-sensitive water commitments*
- The inclusion of commitments on the sanitation sector
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on sanitation*
- The inclusion of commitments on the social protection sector
- The inclusion of child-sensitive social protection commitments*
- The inclusion of commitments on food production
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on food and nutritional security*
- The inclusion of commitments on disaster risk reduction (DRR)
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on DRR*
- The inclusion of commitments to implement or improve information systems and data
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments to implement or improve information systems and data*

References indicators: Identify explicit references to children and young people.

- Existence of references to children and young people – new or updated NDC*
- Existence of references to children and young people – former NDC
- Existence of references to disadvantaged and marginalized children and young people*
- Identification of children as a vulnerable group*
- Identification of young people as a vulnerable group*

Rights-based indicators: Identify the consideration of rights and children and young people as rights holders.

- The existence of references to human rights (right-based approach)
- The existence of references to child rights or intergenerational justice and equity*

Inclusive indicators: Identify children and young people as an important stakeholder, ensure inclusiveness and address ACE commitments, including for and with children and young people.

- Identification of children as drivers of change*
- Identification of young people as drivers of change*
- Reference to the NDC development or update process being done in a participatory manner
- Reference to the NDC development or update process being done in a participatory manner with children*
- Reference to the NDC development or update process being done in a participatory manner with young people*
- Commitments to monitor and evaluate the progress of the NDCs
- The inclusion of commitments related to the pillars of the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) framework
- The inclusion of commitments on training
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on training*
- The inclusion of commitments on public awareness
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on public awareness*
- The inclusion of commitments on public access to information
- The inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on access to information*
- The inclusion of commitments to improve public participation in climate action
- The inclusion of commitments to improve children's and young people's participation in climate action*
- The inclusion of commitments on international cooperation

* Indicators used in the study to determine the child sensitivity category of an NDC. (See page 43 for category descriptions).

Points-based analysis

Through a systematic method, researchers processed keywords and contents within the text of 167 NDCs as related to 41 indicators within the four criteria categories. The analysis used this information to quantify each indicator and criterion through a points system.

Each of the indicators within each criterion was assigned points according to a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Each 'yes' answer was given 1 point to indicate the presence of references to a commitment (dependent upon the indicator parameters). Each 'no' answer was given 0 points to indicate the absence of a commitment even if it was referenced. The points were added to an indicator matrix that could be used for further analysis.

For some indicators, the inclusion of a keyword alone led to a point (such as the indicator on 'references children'). For others, the indicator would only get a point after a semantic search of the text and further analysis.

Determining the overall child-sensitivity of NDCs

To categorize the child-sensitivity of each NDC, the researchers reviewed the point-based matrix of the indicators from the keyword and semantic searches of the texts. This part of the analysis included 22 of the 41 indicators: 9 indicators under the holistic and multisectoral criterion, 4 indicators under the references criterion, 1 indicator under the rights-based criterion and 8 indicators under the inclusive criterion.

To be identified as meeting the holistic and multisectoral criterion, 2 of the 9 sectors would need to have received a point. Two or more showed the multisectoral nature of the NDC. For the 3 other criteria (references, rights-based and inclusive), if one of their child-sensitive indicators received a 'yes' answer (and thus were assigned 1 point), that criterion was given a point.

The criteria points determined the NDC's child sensitivity category. To be listed in **Category A**, each criterion would have 1 point for a total of 4 points. For **Category B**, 3 criteria in an NDC would each have a point. NDCs with 0, 1 or 2 points out of the 4 criteria were listed in **Category C**.

For this research brief, UNICEF linked the overall child sensitivity of 54 NDCs to CCRI data to visualize the data in a map (*see page 15*).

Creating the findings under each of the four criteria

Within the four criteria categories, the researchers used the indicator points matrix of the 167 NDCs to develop percentages that represent the findings.

For instance, in the references criterion, the specific indicator 'Identification of children as a vulnerable group' led to the finding that '34% of NDCs identify children as a vulnerable group.' The same would be for sectoral commitments, references to children in former NDCs, references to NDCs being developed in a participatory manner, general ACE commitments, etc.

The rationale to analyze these indicators individually is that they are valuable for understanding gaps, strengths and opportunities in this area for future NDCs and related climate, disaster risk reduction and sustainable energy policies and sectoral planning. The indicators serve to provide a more holistic analysis as they act as prerequisites for child sensitivity rather than determinants.

Note on Climate Watch data

All data for this research brief was collected manually from the text of the NDCs. Analysis is a continuous process, especially as countries update their NDCs. Therefore, percentages in this research brief might differ from those in the Climate Watch data platform.

2022 climate-sensitivity study methodology history

The methodology for this research brief builds on the methodology of the 2019 UNICEF study *Are Climate Policies Child Sensitive?* The 2019 study conducted a systematic search of keywords to capture any direct or relevant reference to children and young people in NDCs in its data set, and assessed the nature of

the reference to evaluate whether it was 'substantive' or 'passive.' It included 160 NDCs submitted in 2015-2016. A 2021 UNICEF study also built on the 2019 methodology for the discussion paper, *Making Climate and Environmental Policies for & with Children and Young People*, which reviewed 103 new and updated NDCs submitted by Oct. 21, 2021, from countries who had signed the *Paris Agreement* and have UNICEF programming.

Note on 'children and young people'

Because the study focuses on children and young people, it is important to recognize that the study uses the terms 'children and young people' to include children (aged 0-18 years), adolescents (aged 10-19 years) and youth (aged 15-24). That said, countries around the world have different definitions for age. Thus, when a document from the NDC data set referenced 'children,' 'girls,' 'boys' or 'infants' in the text, the researchers attributed this data to 'children.' When document text referenced 'adolescents,' 'youth' or 'young people,' the study attributed this data to 'young people.'

NDCs in the climate-sensitivity study

Albania, Andorra, Angola,* Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh,* Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin,* Bhutan, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso,* Burundi,* Cabo Verde, Cambodia,* Cameroon,* Canada, Central African Republic,* Chad,* Chile, China,* Colombia, Comoros, Congo,* Costa Rica, Côte D'Ivoire,* Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea,* Democratic Republic of the Congo,* Denmark, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Egypt,* El Salvador, Estonia, Eswatini, Ethiopia,* European Union, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Republic of The Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana,* Greece, Grenada, Guatemala,* Guinea,* Guinea-Bissau,* Haiti,* Honduras,* Hungary, Iceland, India,* Indonesia,* Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya,* Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic,* Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia,* Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi,* Malaysia, Maldives, Mali,* Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania,* Mauritius, Mexico,* Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique,* Myanmar,* Namibia, Nauru, Nepal,* Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger,* Nigeria,* North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan,* Panama, Papua New Guinea,* Paraguay, Peru, Philippines,* Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda,* Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal,* Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone,* Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia,* South Africa, South Sudan,* Spain, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Sudan,* Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Tanzania,* Thailand,* Togo,* Tonga, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda,* Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela,* Viet Nam,* Zambia* and Zimbabwe.*

* 54 countries determined by the CCRI to have high or extremely high children's climate risk, and used in the objective 1 analysis (*see map page 15*).

The boundaries, names and the designations of countries listed in this research brief do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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- 32 www.unicef.org/malawi/stories/safe-water-chilobwe-health-centre. NOTE: Each solar-powered water supply system helps mitigate climate change through the reduction of 21 tonnes of carbon dioxide per solar system.
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- 34 Training on water resource management, general leadership, basic financial and resource mobilization, water point sanitation and hygiene, and more.
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