



WORLD VISION POLICY POSITION

# CLIMATE ACTION

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# INTRODUCTION

“ We, as children and young people, have an important role in ensuring good climate policies. It is very crucial that we can gain climate-related knowledge and equip ourselves with the skills to raise our voices to hold to account our leaders. Children can also come up with innovative solutions considering the climate crisis and environmental sustainability. ”

Dola, aged 15, Bangladesh

World Vision is a global Christian humanitarian, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. We are committed to the poor and are stewards of God’s creation. We care for the earth and act in ways that will restore and protect the environment.

World Vision has worked to end poverty and improve the well-being of the world’s most vulnerable children for over 70 years, but climate change in the 21st century is changing the world we live in. Human-induced global greenhouse gas (GHG) increases, land-use change and environmental degradation are increasing global temperatures, shifting weather patterns, and increasing the intensity of natural hazards, creating a crisis for the world’s most vulnerable children, families and communities.<sup>1</sup> Without urgent action, 100 million additional people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030,<sup>2</sup> threatening to reverse hard-won development gains achieved over the past 20 years, and putting the ambition of the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda to ‘leave no one behind’ at serious risk.

This paper outlines World Vision’s policy position on climate action, our response as a Christian global child-focused humanitarian, development and advocacy agency, and our recommendations for increased global action to respond to climate change and support the world’s most vulnerable children, families and communities.



“ 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. ”

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Paris Agreement, 2015

World Vision believes that responding to climate change is a justice issue. Climate justice represents the interdependence of human rights, development and climate action. We see climate justice as an approach that places children at the centre of the climate crisis and brings about solutions good for people and the planet by upholding their rights. Our Christian faith leads us to believe every person is created in God’s image and deserves life in all its fullness. In our work, we see children kept from reaching their full potential. We see injustice, inequality, corruption and disasters affect the lives and futures of children in every context, exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

We seek to protect the rights of the most vulnerable children and ensure that climate change decision-making processes are participatory, transparent and accountable, including for children and youth.

We believe that climate action must target the most vulnerable communities, including in urban and fragile contexts, be child-centred, inclusive and support women’s economic and social empowerment, and must protect and restore environmental assets that support the livelihoods and food security of vulnerable communities and mitigate climate change.

We believe that we must support communities to build their resilience, to adapt to climate change, and to prepare, mitigate, cope with and recover from the immediate impacts of climate-related disasters.

World Vision believes that every child has the right to both a healthy and safe environment today and a sustainable future.

## Key international policy instruments underpinning World Vision's position

A number of key international climate change and development frameworks, policy instruments and strategies are inextricably linked and fundamental to tackling the climate crisis and ensuring children's rights to a healthy, safe and sustainable environment and future.

- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC):** While children have a right to a healthy environment, climate change threatens their survival and development, undermining the full and effective enjoyment of their rights, as outlined in this convention.
- **Paris Agreement:** An agreement of the UNFCCC dealing with climate change mitigation, adaptation and finance aimed at strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping global temperature rise this century well below 2°C and as close to 1.5°C as possible above pre-industrial levels.
- **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:** Action to combat climate change is a specific priority in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, including SDG13 – Climate Action) and intrinsically linked to the achievement of all 16 other goals.
- **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030):** A roadmap to make communities safer and more resilient to disaster with the aim of reducing disaster risks and loss of lives, livelihoods and health.
- **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030:** A strategy to accelerate existing global restoration goals, such as the Bonn Challenge, which aims to restore 350 million hectares of degraded ecosystems by 2030.





# 3 CLIMATE CHANGE IS CREATING A CRISIS FOR CHILDREN

“*Climate change is affecting the agricultural productivity that is declining too much in our community. We see more insect pest infestation on grains and cereals. Another problem is the long drought and very high wind storms at the onset of the rainy season. When the annual flooding starts, it destroys our houses and livelihood.*”

Child Participant, World Vision Focus Group Discussion in Ghana

World Vision is witness to the unprecedented impact climate change is having on children, families and vulnerable communities around the world. The impact of this unfolding crisis disproportionately burdens the world's most vulnerable people – in particular children and those living in urban, fragile and developing contexts – despite being the least responsible for it. This is the injustice of climate change.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE THREATENS CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

Climate change is a key driver of extreme poverty, inequality and child vulnerability, and it impedes the realisation of children's rights as enshrined in the UN CRC. The climate crisis risks reversing 25 years of gains made in child health and reducing child mortality.<sup>3</sup> Children's unique metabolism and development needs mean they are especially vulnerable to climate change impacts.<sup>4</sup> Girls and boys face greater risk of vector borne diseases, under-nutrition, diarrheal diseases and heat stress than adults<sup>5</sup>—all of which are projected to increase with global warming.<sup>6</sup>

Unmitigated global GHG increases and environmental degradation are increasing global temperatures, shifting seasonal rainfall patterns, diminishing freshwater resources, and increasing the frequency and intensity of natural hazards such as droughts, floods and cyclones.<sup>7</sup> This is increasing competition for resources and contributing to conflict and displacement.<sup>8</sup> Disrupted livelihoods, diminished resources, displacement and conflict interrupt the delivery of essential public services and inhibit parents' and

caregivers' ability to meet their children's basic needs, heightening children's risks of malnutrition, hunger and child protection issues.<sup>9</sup> Climate-induced extreme weather events, disasters and displacement significantly impact children's access to education.<sup>10</sup> The longer children, in particular girls, are out of school, the less likely they will be to return.<sup>11</sup> Severe droughts and extreme weather also affect families' livelihoods, contributing to an increased risk of violence against children including child labour and child marriage.<sup>12</sup>

## **CLIMATE CHANGE IS A THREAT MULTIPLIER**

Climate change amplifies existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, including those based on age, gender, class, ethnicity, ability and land-rights. Climate-related shocks and stresses exacerbate inequalities between children in terms of health, education and long-term development outcomes.<sup>13</sup> Girls and boys living in urban slums and informal settlement often have much greater exposure and vulnerability to extreme weather events and climate change risk due to the location of their settlements on unsafe and marginal lands, lack infrastructure and basic services, poor quality housing and overcrowding within the settlements.<sup>14</sup> Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to climate change due to pre-existing gender inequalities and social norms.<sup>15</sup> Threatened livelihoods and competition for resources have proven to put women and girls at increased risk of sexual violence.<sup>16</sup>

Where conflict and climate change-induced disasters converge, humanitarian impacts are particularly devastating. In the past seven years, 11 of the 20 countries considered most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change have had humanitarian response plans each year and the world's eight worst food crises are closely linked to both conflict and climate shocks.<sup>17</sup> Poor and vulnerable communities living on low-lying, marginal or degraded land, including in urban slums and informal settlements, are highly exposed to climate change impacts yet they often lack the access to information, resources and decision-making to adapt or protect themselves.<sup>18</sup>

## **CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES HAVE LIMITED ACCESS TO RESOURCES TO HELP THEM ADAPT**

The inclusion of the rights of children and other vulnerable groups in the Paris Agreement is groundbreaking, but more action must be taken to address the specific needs of children and vulnerable communities and the risks they face in realising those rights. Current levels of adaptation funding are inadequate to ensure developing countries, in particular the least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), are able to adapt at the scale needed. In 2017, USD 71.2 billion in climate finance was provided to developing countries, of which only USD 13.3 billion was allocated to adaptation.<sup>19</sup> While climate finance to developing countries has been trending up it is still a long way off from the Paris Agreement 2020-2025 target of USD 100 billion in annual climate finance to developing countries, balanced between adaptation and mitigation.<sup>20</sup>

## **CLIMATE CHANGE IS HAVING SEVERE HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES TODAY THAT WILL ONLY INCREASE IN FUTURE**

More frequent and severe natural hazards are amplifying already high levels of humanitarian need globally, through the destruction of livelihoods, reduced access to essential public services and displacement. In 2019, 23.9 million people were newly displaced by weather-related disasters, significantly exceeding the 8.5 million people internally displaced by conflict in the same year.<sup>21</sup> Of the 50.8 million people internally displaced globally at the end of 2019, 18.3 million were children under 15.<sup>22</sup> By 2050, the World Bank estimates that an additional 143 million people across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America could be internally displaced as a result of slow onset impacts of climate change including water stress, crop failure and sea-level rise.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, climate displaced people usually seek to migrate to urban centres in search of economic opportunities, but cities are not prepared to provide for increasing urban populations.<sup>24</sup> Displaced peoples often have no choice but to resettle in urban slums and informal settlements that are prone to further environmental risks and increase their vulnerability. Poor and vulnerable communities, in particular those caught in shortening cycles of recurrent disasters or protracted crises, need greater support to prevent, respond, adapt and build resilience to climate change risks and impacts.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IS AFFECTING CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT**

Deforestation, climate change and unsustainable agricultural and development practices are degrading natural ecosystems,<sup>25</sup> and threatening children's right to a healthy environment. Environmental degradation reduces local biodiversity, decreases land productivity and accelerates desertification.<sup>26</sup> Already more than 2 billion people around the world suffer food insecurity,<sup>27</sup> 1.3 billion people live on degraded agricultural land<sup>28</sup> and over 160 million children live in areas of high or extremely high drought severity.<sup>29</sup> Prolonged drought is one of the most dangerous environmental determinants of premature mortality, affecting hygiene and sanitation, reducing crop yields, and increasing food insecurity and malnutrition.<sup>30</sup> Without action on climate change, droughts will continue to intensify, land degradation and desertification will continue to accelerate, there will be less food security and up to 100 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030.<sup>31</sup>

Currently, Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) contributes almost 25% of anthropogenic GHG emissions,<sup>32</sup> but improved agricultural practices and landscape restoration offer significant climate change adaptation and mitigation opportunities. Nature-based solutions (NBS), including reforestation, landscape restoration, indigenous land management practices, and rehabilitation of coastal ecosystems can stabilise the local environment, improve water availability and land productivity, and reduce disaster risks.<sup>33</sup> NBS can also provide over one-third of the climate change mitigation needed by 2030 to stabilise warming below 2°C.<sup>34</sup> Developing countries need greater support to protect and restore environmental assets that support the livelihoods of vulnerable communities, reduce land degradation, increase food security and mitigate climate change.



# 4 OUR RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

“ World Vision should teach young children to take care of the environment and engage them in recycling, greening, etc. It should also hold information sessions with the children’s parents in order to have an impact on a larger scale. Then, we have to deal more with the disposal of plastic but also with selective recycling. Through these small things, we can see very big changes on our planet. ”

Teodora, aged 16, Romania

World Vision has a long history of implementing programmes that address the impacts and causes of climate change, and deliver positive outcomes for vulnerable communities and the natural environment. We also recognise that to effectively address the climate crisis, we must take concurrent actions to end global poverty and inequality, support at-risk communities to build resilience, and reduce global climate and environmental impact to create a climate-safe future.

By using our position to influence greater climate action and building on our programming experience to effectively respond to the climate crisis, we can create a safer future for children, their families and communities, and generations to come. Our response to the climate crisis focuses on:

- Advocating for climate justice for children and more ambitious climate action;
- Delivering our programming to address the climate crisis; and
- Reducing our own environmental impact.

## ADVOCATING FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

“ We need to treat climate change as one of the greatest crises on the planet as Greta has been telling us. We, children, need to take action immediately because climate change is not just an adult’s concern. It is our problem too. For instance, in my country, every winter is getting colder and colder and the air is more polluted. In Mongolia, around 527 lakes and streams have dried out. This loss of water is contributing to the desertification. If we do not take immediate action in the future, we will be fighting for our water to drink and our air to breathe. ”

Nomundari, aged 14, Mongolia

## **INCREASING THE VOICE AND AGENCY OF CHILDREN**

World Vision believes that the climate crisis threatens the realisation of children's rights and that girls and boys must have a central voice in climate change discussions and decision-making. Children have already shown their incredible capacity to mobilise for issues they believe in. They are actively engaging decision-makers and holding them accountable in the highest international forums as demonstrated by millions of children mobilising for Fridays for Future climate strikes.<sup>35</sup> World Vision believes that creating spaces for children's activism has a transformative impact on their lives and has the power to change society for the better as social structures and institutions become more inclusive and responsive to children's rights.<sup>36</sup> In response to the climate crisis, World Vision is committed to empowering girls and boys as agents of change, and ensuring their active participation and opinions are reflected in climate action decision-making at the local, national and global levels.

### **Increasing the voices of children and youth for social accountability**

In Tanzania and Ireland, World Vision is supporting children and youth participation through Citizen Voice and Action, our approach to social accountability in communities. The programme provides training and empowers children and youth to engage with and monitor local government commitments on climate change. In addition to increasing youth engagement at the local level, World Vision advocates to create mechanisms for consultation with children and youth, empowering them to protect themselves from climate-related risks and to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes.

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SAUTI Project, funded under the African Union – European Union Youth Cooperation Hub/  
<https://www.worldvision.ie/news/SAUTIAnnouncement>, <https://www.aueuyouthhub.org/>

## **ADVOCATING FOR GREATER GLOBAL ACTION**

As a global partnership that spans nearly 100 countries, World Vision is no stranger to leveraging our reach to advocate on behalf of vulnerable girls, boys, women and men. The climate crisis is no different. Advocating for stronger international cooperation and greater global action to adhere to the Paris Agreement and limit global warming to 1.5°C will take an enormous effort and we cannot do it alone. World Vision will continue to work with our partners at the local, national and global levels, and through global coalitions and campaigns for greater climate action to meet these targets. Our advocacy, as outlined in Section 5, will additionally focus on ensuring those most affected by the climate crisis, including girls and boys, have greater access to and influence on decision-making processes; that climate action is child-centred, inclusive and supports women's empowerment; and that the necessary financing and resources flow to the most vulnerable communities, leaving no one behind.

Partnerships with humanitarian and development peers, children and youth, church and faith networks and other like-minded actors will be crucial to leveraging our work for greater global impact. Many such partnerships already exist, including the Children in a Changing Climate Coalition, the Global Partnership for Forest and Landscape Restoration, the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR-100), the Regreen the Globe Movement and the UN Global Compact Network, among others. These existing partnerships and the creation of new ones will further increase our reach, build our programming expertise and amplify our voice on critical climate change policy issues.

## DELIVERING OUR PROGRAMMING

World Vision will continue to deliver sustainable development outcomes for children, families and communities through our programme approaches that adapt to and mitigate climate change.

### **BUILDING SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE-SMART LIVELIHOODS**

World Vision promotes sustainable natural resource management, complemented by climate-smart agricultural approaches and development of inclusive market systems to strengthen sustainable agricultural production and market access. Increasing financial inclusion, improving and increasing access to markets and training on climate smart-agriculture, including agroforestry, conservation agriculture, water harvesting, crop diversification, climate information services and erosion control techniques, will improve farmers' resilience to climate change and increase farm productivity.

### **RESTORING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE**

World Vision is a global leader in integrating community development with landscape restoration approaches to achieve positive outcomes for vulnerable communities and the natural environment. Regenerative agriculture and land restoration techniques, like Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), provide low cost, scalable, community-led solutions to restore the natural environment, improve land productivity and strengthen livelihoods. The restoration of natural ecosystems can also reduce local disaster risk and provide significant opportunities for climate change mitigation. Through the Regreen the Globe Movement and our involvement in global partnerships such as AFR-100 and the Global Partnership for Forest and Landscape Restoration, we seek to further engage diverse stakeholders from around the world to reduce land degradation, scale up landscape restoration and mitigate climate change. We also collaborate with communities and organisations to identify clean technology solutions that reduce carbon emissions and other pollution and improve community health and sustainable development outcomes.

#### **Humbo Forestry Project**

World Vision launched the Humbo forestry project in southwest Ethiopia in 2006. This community-managed reforestation initiative has regenerated 2,728 hectares of degraded land. The project was accredited under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The project has sequestered 181,000 tCO<sub>2</sub> to date, with 880,000 tCO<sub>2</sub> projected by the end of the accreditation period in 2036. The sale of carbon credits through the CDM has generated USD 1.64 million in income for the local community to date.

The restored landscape has also helped to strengthen livelihoods in the local community through increased grass cover for livestock, increased availability of firewood, improved ground water and decreased erosion.

## **PARTNERING WITH THE MOST VULNERABLE TO REDUCE CLIMATE RISKS AND RESPOND TO DISASTERS**

The climate crisis is increasing the frequency and intensity of natural hazards and risking the lives and livelihoods of millions around the world. In response, World Vision partners with vulnerable children, families and communities to reduce their exposure to climate risks. Using a community-led approach to Disaster Risk Management (DRM), World Vision is strengthening community capacity to both assess risk and vulnerability to human and natural hazards and develop the strategies and resources necessary to adapt to climate change and reduce disaster risks and impacts. When disasters hit, World Vision rapidly responds to protect rights, provide urgent lifesaving assistance and support the recovery of disaster-affected girls, boys, women and men. To complement our community-based approach, we invest in strengthening early warning systems to support more effective disaster preparedness and response. In 2019, World Vision provided humanitarian assistance to 20 million people, 65% of whom were children, through 76 emergency responses in 58 countries.

### **REDUCING OUR OWN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

World Vision understands that we all have a responsibility to reduce our environmental impact and protect and care for God's creation. We are taking action to reduce our environmental and carbon footprint by incorporating environmentally sound practices and policies in all our offices and operations. We are developing an environmental management system and guidance manual to enable each World Vision entity to identify, measure and reduce the negative environmental impacts from our operations.





# OUR CALLS TO ACTION

World Vision understands that effective action to address the climate crisis requires meaningful, long-term international cooperation. While we all must do our part to respond to the climate crisis, we also must support and strengthen the global frameworks and cooperation that can deliver decisive and meaningful action.

**To ensure children’s rights to a healthy, safe and sustainable future, World Vision calls on governments, corporations and the international community to support the full realisation of the UN CRC, the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), and the goals of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030). In particular, we call on governments, corporations and the international community to:**



Reduce global GHG emissions to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C;



Mobilise USD 100 billion in annual climate finance to support developing countries, in particular LDCs, SIDS, and fragile contexts, to meaningfully adapt to the impacts that are already unavoidable;



Build the capacity of governments, at all levels, cities and communities in LDCs, SIDS and fragile contexts for effective climate change-related planning and management, with a focus on the most vulnerable children, youth, women and marginalised communities;



Enhance international cooperation with developing countries through adequate and sustainable support for their national actions to implement the Sendai Framework by 2030; and



Bring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration by 2030, in line with the Bonn Challenge.

**To ensure that these actions meet the needs of the most vulnerable and leave no one behind, we further call on governments, corporations and the international community to:**

**Strengthen social accountability and foster greater participation of those most affected by climate change, especially children, by:**



- ✓ Empowering girls and boys to meaningfully participate in local, national and global climate change discussions and decision-making processes, and listening to what they say;
- ✓ Reflecting and embedding children's rights to environmental education and access to information in decisions under the Action for Climate Empowerment of the UNFCCC dialogue and associated decisions in accordance with the UN CRC; and
- ✓ Ensuring the participation of women, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples in climate action at all levels, and investing in training and capacity building to enable the meaningful participation of those most vulnerable.

**Ensure climate action targets the most vulnerable communities and is child-centred, inclusive and supports women's economic and social empowerment by:**



- ✓ Making Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans child-centred, inclusive, supportive of women's economic and social empowerment, and respectful and protective of human rights;
- ✓ Mandating that at least 50% of climate finance is allocated to climate change adaptation;
- ✓ Prioritising climate financing flows to LDCs, SIDS and fragile contexts, in support of vulnerable children and communities; and
- ✓ Integrating context and conflict analysis as key components of climate action policy and strategy development at the national, regional and global levels and conflict-sensitive approaches and activities into implementation and monitoring of those policies.

**Scale up investment in programmes that protect and restore environmental assets to support vulnerable communities' food security and livelihoods and mitigate climate change by:**



- ✓ Enacting policies which enable and foster sustainable community management of natural resources, in particular in LDCs, SIDS and fragile contexts;
- ✓ Investing in awareness raising for governments and development organisations on low cost regenerative agriculture and landscape restoration approaches that are rapidly scalable;
- ✓ Increasing climate financing for NBSs to 30% of all mitigation funding; and
- ✓ Conducting greater research into low-cost scalable landscape restoration approaches, including indigenous land management practices.

**Support communities to build their resilience to climate change and prepare, mitigate, cope with and recover from the immediate impacts of climate-related disasters by:**



- ✓ Expanding support for child-centred, community-led climate change adaptation and DRM programmes in LDCs, SIDS and fragile contexts;
- ✓ Strengthening public services and health systems in LDCs, SIDS and fragile contexts, including child-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection, child protection, education and water, sanitation and hygiene, to reduce children's vulnerability, achieve universal health coverage and enable more rapid recovery;
- ✓ Increasing support for multi-year, community-focused programmes that build resilience to climate change and reduce needs, vulnerability and risks over the long term;
- ✓ Providing timely, adequate support to meet immediate humanitarian needs occurring due to climate change-related disasters and other climate change impacts; and
- ✓ Ensuring that international, regional and national responses to climate change-induced displacement uphold human rights, provide protection, and integrate the perspectives and priorities of those most vulnerable, the girls and boys displaced by the impacts of climate change.

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