



**‘Talk less and act more,
the world needs help’**

(Emmanuel, aged 16, Brazil)

Children Front And Centre Of Climate Action

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World Vision is a Christian relief, development, and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families, and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING CONSIDERATIONS

World Vision ensured safe and ethical participation of children when they shared their stories, adhering to World Vision's safeguarding protocols. Names of children and young people have been anonymised and changed to ensure confidentiality. All photos were taken and used with informed consent.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Talk less and act more, the world needs help' (Emmanuel, aged 16, Brazil). Climate change is happening now, and is threatening the realisation of children's rights and their ability to achieve their full potential. Children and young people across the planet have expressed their desire to fully participate in the debate on the climate change crisis and support in the development of solutions. Children and young people are concerned about the negative impact of greenhouse gas emissions, and seek to hold governments and multilateral organisations accountable to their duty to protect the planet from global warming. However, to date, their calls have only received intermittent attention. The world has seen a surge in activism and participation on climate change from children at a grassroots level but this is not always reflected in policy decisions. This research aims to give policy-makers further evidence of children and young people's views on climate change and their desire for action.

World Vision sees children and young people as rights-holders and agents of change who are capable of expressing their views and proposing strategies to make a change in their communities and countries. In order to explore how children and young people associated with World Vision programmes understand and perceive climate change, World Vision conducted a research study to capture children and young people's ideas on how they wanted to engage in climate action. We spoke to 121 children and young people (74 girls and 47 boys) between the ages of 10 and 17 years from 12 countries: Albania, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Kenya, Mongolia, Nicaragua and Romania.

Their responses showed that children and young people are well aware of climate change, and are able to articulate this concept and describe the impact of climate change on their communities. Most of the respondents noted that climate change is affecting their communities and is therefore not an alien problem. Most children and young people also self-reported a high level of acceptance of scientific facts, such as global warming being due to greenhouse gas emissions, and demonstrated a recognition that climate change is a human-driven phenomenon. The perception of risk associated with climate change was high across all respondents, who viewed extreme weather changes as proof of the damage it is inflicting on the environment, demonstrated through increased temperatures, floods, droughts, wildfires and erosion, amongst others.

It was clear from speaking to children and young people that the damage to the environment inflicted by climate change is a major area of concern for them. However, despite their worries, most respondents agreed that they did not want to be perceived as helpless victims of the climate crisis, but as competent agents of change who can engage fully in climate action. The vast majority (94 percent) of children and young people said they were committed to climate action. Furthermore, most (98 percent) of the respondents said that they want to contribute to individual and collective efforts to build a better planet for everyone.

In terms of their activism, children and young people made it clear that they aim to transform their knowledge about climate change into action. Children and young people agreed on the need to take action, from promoting sustainable natural resource management and climate-smart agriculture, to landscape restoration, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening communities' capacity to assess and respond to their own vulnerability to human and natural hazards. When asked about the role of World Vision in climate action, the majority of children and young people argued that World Vision should have a leading role in climate debate as this is a global crisis which is having a negative impact on the communities where World Vision works.

2 FOREWORD

Children and young people have put us to shame on climate justice. For years, climate change conversations had little resonance beyond technical or political circles until children and young people started school strikes. This was an action that turned concern about the climate from a peripheral subject to a central one to have at work, at home or in informal social gatherings. The complexity of children and young people's understanding of our world, and their passion for change, is reflected in their thoughts quoted in this report.

I am blessed to regularly have the privilege to meet with, and have profound conversations with, children and young people from all over the world, representing all walks of life. So when we work on a report reflecting children and young people's voices, I know that I have another opportunity to understand the complexity of their perceived reality.

It becomes clear once more, if needed, that children and young people from deprived environments and living amid poverty and injustice are concerned about climate change, despite the fact that their daily worries include finding their next meal, staying safe amid armed conflict, and suffering from violence and discrimination. Who are we to ignore them or say we know better, when confronted by children and young people who, regardless of their immediate interests or daily activities, are actively contributing, where possible, to change the status-quo?

We take seriously our responsibility as a child-focused organisation to ensure that children and young people's voices and experiences are heard and taken into account in public debates. Because, as one child said in this research, they have contributed the least to the damage affecting our planet, yet they are the ones paying the biggest price for delays, lack of action and decisions by some in power to simply ignore the consequences.

We cannot let them down. I urge you to listen to children and young people, through this report, and join us to take action.



Dana Buzducea
Vice-president, Advocacy and External Engagement
World Vision International

FOREWORD

Climate change is increasingly affecting nature and community life. Global warming and climate change endanger Durres – my hometown in Albania - from the western lowlands, because, with sea levels rising, there are large areas of land flooded. Lack of rainfall for a long time causes drought to appear. This significantly affects agriculture and the provision of food reserves, but also the provision of raw materials for many branches of the economy. In Durres, there are periods of intense rainfall that cause flooding of lands, residential centres and roads.

I feel the consequences of environmental problems in my community, such as the greenhouse effect, ozone hole, biodiversity damage, air, and water, land pollution and the consequences of plastic at sea. The constant rise in temperatures creates fear in me. If this increase continues to be accompanied by melting glaciers, we will have an increase in the average level of the world's ocean. If this happens, we will have floods in coastal areas, such as Durres.

When temperatures are high there are people who are hit by the peak of heat. People get sick more often because of mosquitoes, which become carriers of many diseases. Recently, the cases of allergic diseases caused by environmental pollution have increased. We feel these climate changes especially in the summer season, where temperatures are higher and rainfall is very low. These climate changes have negative effects on the health of my family and the members of the community where I live. We often have shown health problems, such as dehydration, breathing problems, heart problems, blood pressure problems, allergic diseases, etc. My families and community can reap more from their crops if these climate changes do not continue and we have a more sustainable climate.

The most important issues we need to work on together to ensure that communities are safer from the effects of climate change are: (1) protect the environment from greenhouse gas emissions. Most responsible for this pollution are industrial activities, transport and incineration of urban waste. So, for instance, people should use bicycles more than cars and waste should not be incinerated, but landfills should be created for their collection and processing; (2) improve legislation of each country in support of minimising environmental pollution, and (3) raise awareness on personal responsibilities for the protection of the common environment. In addition, in order to respond to climate change, we, children, can contribute by cleaning actions in areas that have more urban and industrial solid waste, planting as many trees as possible, recycling stocks and taking actions for the preservation and protection of the environment.

I'm afraid of the future, so I hope that an immediate and safe solution to climate change will be found.



Ingis Gashi

Young leader, aged 15, Albania

3 INTRODUCTION

The basis of this study is that children and young people from deprived environments and living under the poverty line are concerned about climate change, despite the fact their daily worries include poverty, armed conflict, violence and discrimination. For these children and young people, climate change is considered a relevant topic that is very close to their lives and will determine their present and future. Throughout this research, World Vision wants to listen to their opinions and ideas for action. Our responsibility as a child-focused organisation is to ensure that their voices are heard and taken into account in the public debate.

The purpose of this research is to explore how children and young people's perceptions and views about climate change are framed as a children's rights issue. World Vision, as a child-focused organisation, advocates for spaces and opportunities for children and young people below the age of 18 to engage and contribute to this global debate. World Vision believes that all children and young people have equal rights, and climate change threatens the realisation of those rights, especially for the most vulnerable. By recognising children and young people as change agents and development actors in their own right, World Vision seeks to ensure that children and young people's voices and perspectives are front and centre in national and global fora on climate change, and that their needs and aspirations are reflected in climate change decision-making. This was also clear in the feedback we received from children and young people:

“ I would ask the governments to carry out campaigns to protect the environment and to involve us, children, who are more committed than the adults to stop climate change. They need to support us in doing things for the environment. ”

(Isidora, aged 15, Chile)

Despite a global commitment by the international development community to put children and young people at the centre and front of our work, this is not without challenges. For instance, the connection between child participation and climate change has been strong, from a grassroots perspective, but not always reflected in policy decisions. One example is the 26th [United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties \(COP 26\)](#), scheduled for November 2021, which focuses on the engagement of young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 years. Children and young people below the age of 18 years are omitted. This means that the conference is leaving behind the voices of almost 30 percent of the world's population.

World Vision's organisational commitment to child participation means practically creating the opportunities for children and young people's experiences to be at the centre. As the organisation responds to the threat posed by climate change, children and young people must therefore be active participants in developing this response. This has been achieved by enhancing opportunities for children and young people to participate, and by strengthening standards, policies and guidelines to ensure that their participation is meaningful, safe and enjoyable, especially for those from the most vulnerable populations. In order to operationalise this call, World Vision has developed frameworks that enable children and young people to participate in decision-making processes that are relevant to them. This work has been influenced by the global children's rights discourse and emerging typologies for unpacking their right to participate.



Patricio Cuevas-Parra
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4 BACKGROUND

4.1. CLIMATE CHANGE

Goal 13 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls all United Nations (UN) Member States to ‘take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts’. Climate change is one of the current major global challenges, affecting the planet at an unparalleled scale, causing increasingly shifting weather patterns, rising global temperatures and increasing occurrences of natural disasters, such as floods and droughts (IPCC, 2014).

Whilst Greta Thunberg is one of the highest profile child climate activists, there are thousands of other child climate activists that remain less well known. For instance, Aditya Mukarji, who successfully mobilised citizens against plastic straws in India, and Leah Namurgewa, from Uganda, who is leading tree planting campaigns (Unigwe, 2019). These examples suggest that children and young people are taking more active roles in social justice issues, and, through their activism, they have mobilised millions of children and young people, as well as adults, across their countries and regions. Evidence from the field demonstrates that children and young people engage in activism and support collective movements in order to change something they consider unfair and because of their commitment to specific causes (Harris et al., 2010).

Scientists agree that climate change is caused by greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere from industry, transport, large-scale agriculture, deforestation and other human activities. Humans have caused greenhouse gas emissions to rise to what are now the highest levels ever seen in the history of humanity (United Nations, 2019). Increasing rates of industrialisation, globalisation and global population growth are interdependent factors that aggravate the levels of greenhouse gas emissions. The actions of producers and consumers are therefore juxtaposed with the actions of activists, as well as policy makers. Inherently linked, each member of humanity can choose to either mitigate or intensify the impact of greenhouse gas emissions through their actions.

The global climate crisis threatens the lives of millions of children and young people and their families. It affects not only those who live in the most vulnerable geographical areas, like developing countries, but all children and young people worldwide. In comparison to adults, children and young people are more likely to suffer the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change (Sanson et al., 2019). The multiple consequences of the crisis include environmental shocks and increased risk of natural disasters and conflicts, among others, which create and exacerbate conditions where violence and other child rights violations are more likely to happen.

In response to this global crisis, the UN has called on Member States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 percent by 2030 to keep within the 1.5 – 2 degree global warming range by the end of the century (United Nations, 2019). The Paris Agreement – a global agreement to combat climate change adopted by the UN – has established a framework for alleviating the threat of climate change by endeavouring to limit global temperature rises this century to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (Rogelj et al., 2016). These measures aim to mitigate the negative impact of greenhouse gas emissions in the climate system, whilst keeping reasonable levels of production and economic development.

Addressing climate change requires collective actions involving multilaterals, governments, civil society organisations, businesses, communities, and children and young people. Target 13.3 of the Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly appeals to ‘improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning’. This implies that responses to climate change need to be coordinated and interdependent, since climate action relies on human rights and development approaches which recognise that climate change is a key driver of extreme poverty, inequality and vulnerability. Therefore, World Vision believes that responding to climate change is a justice issue. Climate justice represents the interdependence of human rights, development and climate action, an approach that places children and young people at the centre of the climate crisis and brings about solutions that are beneficial for humankind and the planet by upholding children and young peoples’ rights.



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 (UNCRC):** 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, which aims to strengthen 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.

4.2. CHILD ACTIVISM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Across history, children and young people have actively participated in different spheres of society, but their roles have varied based on the diversity of social and historical contexts (Corsaro, 2011). Despite these historical levels of engagement, it was not until 1989 that ‘the UNCRC galvanised adults to recognise children and young people’s right to participate, as part of a broader human rights agenda’ (Tisdall, 2015:185). Explicitly, Article 12 of the UNCRC recognises the participatory rights of children and young people, which include two key components: the right to express a view and the right to have that view given due weight. This conceptualisation of participatory rights gives children and young people a new status, by recognising them as subjects deserving of rights who are entitled to be heard and to participate in decision-making processes (Archard, 2004).

In World Vision programmes, for example, many children and young people have been involved in climate action at the community level in order to channel their activism. For instance, they engage in initiatives to reduce their exposure to climate risks using a community-led approach to Disaster Risk Management. This strengthens their capacity to both assess risk and vulnerability to human and natural hazards, and to develop the strategies and resources necessary to adapt to climate change and reduce disaster risks and impacts. Children and young people also participate in landscape restoration approaches and provide ideas to reduce carbon emissions and other pollution.



Climate change threatens the rights of children and young people, which are outlined within the UNCRC. As such, children and young people should be at the centre of the debate on the climate crisis, including in the design of potential solutions. Children and young people – in line with many other citizens – are concerned about the issues affecting their lives, and want to hold their governments accountable as part their activism (Buire and Staeheli, 2017). As agents of change, they seek to express their views on issues based on their particular lived experiences in order to create change (Papa, 2017). Examples of this include Malala Yousafzai, who is an advocate for girls’ education and empowerment; Greta Thunberg, who has become globally recognised for the Fridays for Future climate strikes; and David Hogg, who survived the Stoneman Douglas massacre and funded the gun control #NeverAgain movement (Glyde, 2015; Locker, 2019; Skilbeck, 2020).

5 METHODOLOGY

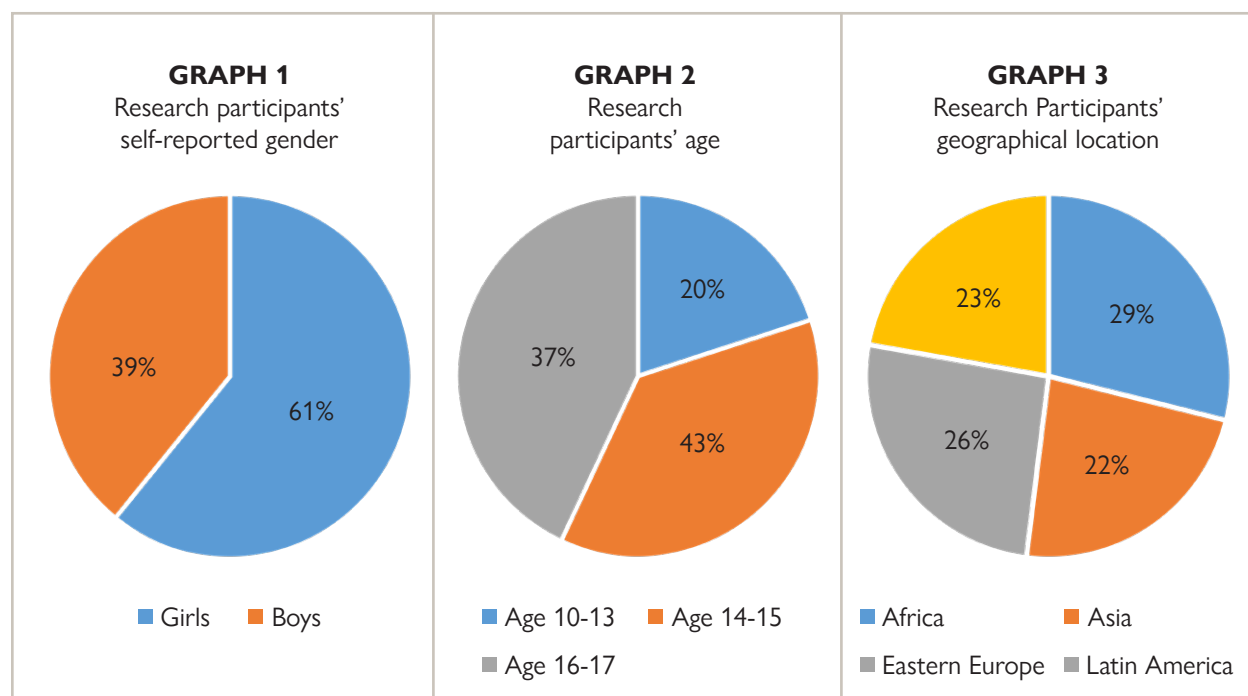
5.1. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research aimed to explore children and young people's views and experiences related to climate change. This included capturing their ideas on how to engage in initiatives to support advocacy messages on climate action and environment sustainability, as well as exploring their views on the intersection between climate change and children's rights. Research questions included:

- To what extent are children and young people living in deprived contexts aware of climate change and its impact on their communities?
- How are children and young people contributing to, or might contribute in the future to, the fight against climate change?
- In what ways are children and young people raising awareness about climate change?

5.2. SAMPLE

The research sample of children and young people in this study is a purposeful sample and included 121 respondents (74 girls and 47 boys) between the ages of 10 and 17 years from 12 countries (Albania, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Kenya, Mongolia, Nicaragua and Romania). The participating children and young people were associated with World Vision programmes in their respective countries. Selection criteria considered gender, age, different abilities, religion, geographic region, context location and ethnicity, to ensure diverse perspectives.



5.3. METHODS, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS

The research used online one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions. These were conducted via social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber and Skype, in order to respect social distancing measures due to COVID-19. This also one of the most effective ways to reach children and young people, as this is where and how they engage in social dialogue. It is important to note that accessing children and young people via online platforms could be a limitation of the research since particularly vulnerable children and young people may not have access to the technology required for participation and, thus, may not be adequately represented. That said, this methodology was chosen to ensure that child participants were able to share their personal knowledge, experiences and attitudes despite the constraints posed by the global pandemic, and efforts were made to reach the most vulnerable.

In each country, children and young people were asked seven questions, in addition to the prompt questions used to stimulate the conversation (see the interview schedule in the Annex). Participants were given the option either to respond individually or as part of a focus group discussion, according to their preference. All the participants were interviewed in their local languages, and transcripts were translated into English. Some of the questions were quantitative to establish a baseline.

The research team used a thematic analysis approach and examined interview data by identifying and categorising emerging themes or patterns within the responses (Guest et al., 2012). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the information, the research team developed a coding framework, and emerging themes were classified and scrutinised into three main themes: awareness, commitment to action and activism.



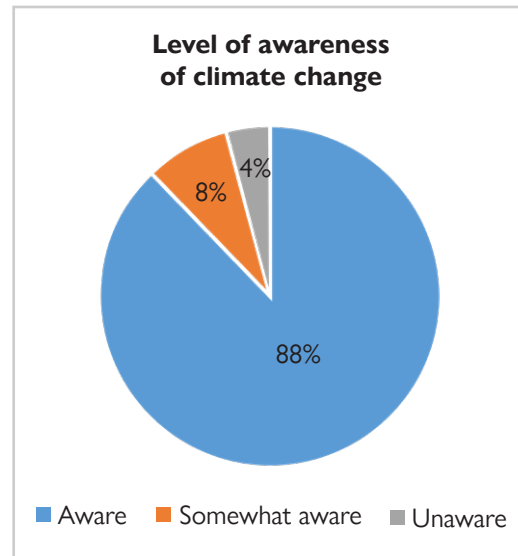
5.4. ETHICS

The research team ascribed to the core codes of Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC), which include ensuring that the dignity, well-being and rights of the participants are essential components in framing the study (Graham et al., 2013). Children and young people engaged in the research on a voluntary basis, and all of them provided informed consent. The research team ensured that the consent was a dynamic and negotiated process, where children and young people had the right to join and opt-out at any time during the fieldwork (Houghton, 2015; Kustatscher, 2017). The research ensured that the principles of confidentiality, protection and anonymity were central to the study (Morrow, 2009). All personal identifiers, such as family names and contact details, were removed from the notes, and children and young people were only identified by their broad geographical location, pseudonyms and age. The team also had in place child safeguarding reporting mechanisms in case any participants were identified as being at risk of significant harm (Hiriscau et al., 2014).

6 FINDINGS

6.1. BEING AWARE AND CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

When children and young people were asked whether or not they were aware of climate change and how it may impact their community, 88 percent of the respondents said they were aware, 8 percent said they had some knowledge and only 4 percent reported being unaware. Where respondents indicated an awareness of climate change and its possible impacts, they demonstrated a high level of awareness of the topic, providing a description of the phenomenon and explaining its immediate consequences in their communities and daily lives. Those who were 'somewhat aware' of climate change knew about the topic but were unable to explain it. The children and young people who were unaware did not understand the concept of climate change. However, this does not mean that they were disinterested in the environment. In fact, some children and young people understood the concept already and were just not familiar with the terminology; once this was clarified, some professed an interest in becoming champions for climate change when asked the subsequent questions.



The high percentage of respondents who showed a strong awareness of climate change is notable when compared with other studies that surveyed adults. In 2008, the World Bank estimated that only 61 percent of people globally were aware of climate change. Similarly, a 2018 study conducted by the Pew Research Centre – a US-based think tank – estimated that 59 percent of Americans, 43 percent of Russian and 38 percent of Israelis were concerned about climate change (Fagan and Huang, 2019). Finally, a survey carried out by Ipsos Mori (2020) found that 70 percent of respondents considered climate change to represent a severe threat. When comparing these figures with the 96 percent of children and young people who had at least some awareness of climate change and its effects, the results demonstrate that children and young people are acutely conscious of climate change. This awareness also bleeds over into concerns about the future of the planet. In recent years, there has been an increase in climate-related disasters, as well as resource shortages (Sanson et al., 2019). This challenging situation could be an explanation for why children and young people seem to be more aware and concerned than adults about the climate crisis.

In each of the 12 countries, most of the children and young people we spoke to were able to articulate a clear understanding of climate change and its impact. Ashfaq, a Bangladeshi young person, exemplified respondents' depth of understanding, saying:

“Climate change is... creating long-term effects to the world community [and] poor countries especially in Asia Pacific Region. It's destroying humanity as well as the environment and others living in this world. Due to the impact of climate change, massive weather and environmental changes [are] happening... death, the destruction of humanity, animals, lands, properties, significantly increasing the height of Bay of Bengal, increasing salinity, heavy flooding, drought and landslide. Changing the direction of rivers, river erosion, destroying lands, people become landless and people are shifting from village to town.”

(Ashfaq, aged 16, Bangladesh)

Ashfaq's comprehensive response not only included the most commonly known consequences, such as those directly related to environmental shocks, but he talked also about the societal impacts, like loss of property and migration. Although there is little research in this area, the existing research shows that climate change and its effects increase the likelihood of social and economic shocks, which put children and young people's development at high risk (Akresh, 2016).

Furthermore, the majority of children and young people demonstrated a high level of acceptance of scientific facts and ways of thinking when presenting their understandings of climate change, notably that the Earth's climate is warming across the planet and that this is a human-driven phenomenon. For instance, Srdjan from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Francine from Brazil said:

“Climate change is noticeable in the shifts in the rain, snow, and temperature. There are many proofs that climate changes are due to contamination from gases. People are responsible for that. The cars we use produce very bad pollution and not many people care about it. The pollution from companies can be stopped, but they do not care about it. People are cutting the forest, and we know that it is bad for the environment... climate change is not an accident; it is happening because people are causing it.”

(Srdjan, aged 13, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

“The increase in the sea level is causing floods in our communities and water is invading the houses near the tide, causing harm to all. We also face problems with basic sanitation. People are disposing garbage in the wrong places. Next to my house, there are open ditches with garbage that harm us. This brings diseases, among other things. People are destroying the environment.”

(Francine, aged 14, Brazil)

Just like Srdjan and Francine, most of the respondents highlighted the role of humans in the climate crisis, not only in producing but also in exacerbating the continued acceleration of climate change. Only a few respondents suggested that climate change is produced by natural processes, with the majority connecting climate change to human culpability. This suggests that the majority of respondents agreed that climate change is human-created. Interestingly, in the conflict-affected eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), respondents observed that human conflict has also increased climate change:

“Our country keeps very large forests for humanity's benefit, but these forests are full of rebels who kill us and are burning down some forests. This is a big problem that is causing deforestation and floods. We have been in war for the last six years where people are killed by machetes in my town. This conflict is increasing climate change in my community, and we will not be able to solve deforestation unless the conflict finishes.”

(Jason, aged 16, DRC)

When considering the perceived risks associated with climate change in their communities, most children and young people pointed to extreme weather as proof of the damage done to the environment. These extreme events have, in turn, been instrumental in developing their personal views on climate change. Most respondents reported that their opinions on climate change had evolved, based on the changes they perceived in their communities and countries. Two respondents reflected on their experiences of growing more aware of the risks associated with climate change:

“With time, I have become concerned about climate change because if we are not aware of this, we may experience a great problem in the future. Humanity could face new and more aggressive major natural disasters. Climate change is the product of environmental pollution, and this causes damage to people’s health; progressive destruction of the ozone layer, for example, has an impact on human beings.”

(Nicole, aged 15, Nicaragua)

“I was really scared about this problem, even though I was not so aware of what was going on, but now I think I am taking this seriously. In 2014 in Bosnia, I think 20 or 30 people died and thousands of people were affected in a disaster due to climate change events. This is a big problem for us because we are producing this problem. I am fully aware now, but I think many people do not know how important it is and do not want to hear about it.”

(Emina, aged 14, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Emina, like many other children and young people consulted as part of this research study, shared her feelings of anxiety related to climate change. Whilst there is vast information about the psychological consequences of natural disasters, which may have been precipitated by climate change, ‘psychological effects of climate change unrelated to a climate event are less well characterized’ (Wu et al., 2020: 235). Findings in this research provides extensive evidence of climate distress experienced by children and young people. Participants said that they are experiencing negative emotions, from feeling worried and angry to feeling helpless.

Most of the children and young people who participated in the study stated that climate change would not be stopped unless people make serious modifications to their behaviours and attitudes towards the environment. They said that changes need to be collective, not only individual, and quick, rather than waiting for the next generation to make changes:

“The most important actions we can take together in our communities are compassion and a spirit of help, making everyone understand what is around us, thus building a better and happier environment. In my opinion, the best solutions to prevent the destruction of the climate balance [are] that everyone starts recycling plastic, paper and metal products, saving water and electricity and, last but not least, the prevention of carbon dioxide pollution.”

(Nicoleta, aged 17, Romania)

“People need to learn the three ‘Rs’ to take care of environment. These are reduce, reuse and recycle. We need to spread the three ‘Rs’ to adults throughout recycling workshops to how bad is throwing away the garbage everywhere. Garbage is big pollution factor.”

(Diego, aged 15, Chile)

Against this backdrop of risks, many children and young people reported an increased level of uncertainty about their future due to the damage being inflicted on the environment:

“ I am deeply scared. We are in a climate crisis. I fear that we are witnessing record temperatures, 1,000-year storms, glacial retreat, and coral reefs dying on a continental scale despite the science and the early warning signals. Global society may finally wake up, but it may be too late. ”

(Arvin, aged 14, Albania)

“ What worries me the most is how we can stop the planet's pollution and how we can save energy and water. ”

(Petrisor, aged 13, Romania)

As is clear from these statements, the respondents recognised that climate change is happening in their own communities, and is not just a phenomenon affecting remote areas or distant people from other countries. However, alongside feelings of anxiety, children and young people also reported feeling hopeful and motivated to initiate change.

When talking about the specific risks triggered by climate change, respondents' answers varied from country to country and from urban to rural spaces. In Bangladesh, children and young people saw a strong link between climate change and child marriage, and other protection concerns, suggesting a gendered impact of climate change:

“ Based on my experience, adolescent girls always face many problems, like protection, mistreatment, child trafficking and child marriage. This creates fear in them during any kind of disasters. ... there is the possibility of family separation and loss of parents. Disasters cause school dropout, the possibility of increasing child labour, violence against children, and, in general, a lost childhood. ”

(Lamia, aged 16, Bangladesh)

This is consistent with findings from a study by Alston et al (2014), which found climate crises to be contributing factors leading to an increased prevalence in child marriage in Bangladesh, amongst other forms of violence. This is due to the economic adversity often brought about by climate change which, in turn, impedes families' ability to feed their family members. Marrying their daughters earlier also allows families to save money by paying a smaller dowry (Alston et al., 2014).

Differing levels of exposure to climate change affect children and young people in different ways. For instance, respondents from Ghana pointed out that their greater vulnerability to environmental disasters generates some traumatic effects, such as separation from parents and curtailed access to schools and social protection mechanisms. A Ghanaian girl, aged 16, reflected:

“ We are a poor country, and climate change has affected us a lot. Our rainy season is changing. It can cause drought too, and all this will go a long way to slow down my community's development and destroy the future of the people and the community. Children are sent to live with other relatives. When the school [is] closed, children are at risk of child labour or marriage, no one can protect them. ”

(Mary, aged 16, Ghana)

In contrast, children and young people from Nicaragua predominantly thought that decreasing livelihoods were the major negative impact of climate change in their communities. Juan, aged 15, noted: 'Climate change affects us all, the drought causes us to lose crops and creates hunger in families that lose their crops'. Another boy developed this point further, adding:

“ I am concerned about its impact [climate change]. This directly affects families with higher levels of poverty; natural disasters associated with climate change cause many material, economic and human losses. ”

(Jeremy, aged 16, Nicaragua)

The interviews showed that children and young people have a strong understanding of the contextualised risks associated with climate change and its impact on their communities. They described the causes and consequences of global warming and how climate change-related events directly affect their lives. Their claims of increased violence against children and young people due to climate change are also supported by the general academic literature, which has found that the effects of climate change place children and young people at greater risk of suffering forced displacement (e.g. Kielland and Kebede, 2020; Palmquist and Gribble, 2018), child labour (e.g. Guarcello et al., 2009; Krishna et al., 2018) and child marriage (e.g. Alston et al., 2014), amongst other forms of violence.

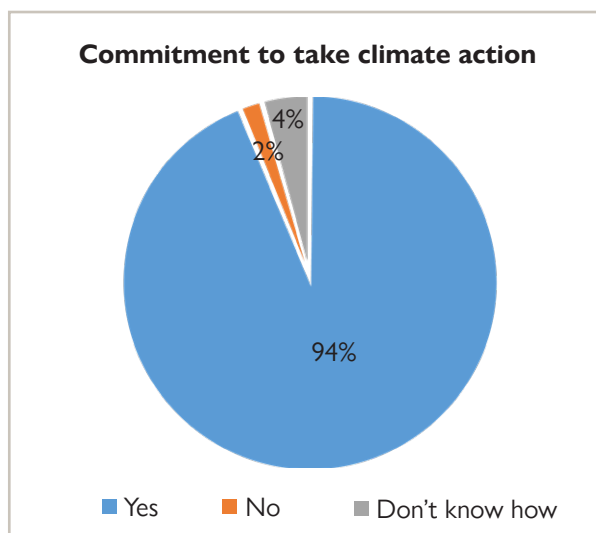
6.2. COMMITTING TO TAKE CLIMATE ACTION

Despite their high levels of concern for the future of the planet, the majority of children and young people pointed out that they do not see themselves as passive victims of the climate crisis, but as active social actors who have the required abilities and willingness to contribute to climate action. Carla, a 14 year old from Romania, noted:

“ These days, young people and children are full of potential and have a lot of good ideas. This is exactly why their voices shouldn't be shut [down]; adults should take their opinions into consideration more often and stop thinking that each one of us teenagers is immature. ”

(Carla, aged 14, Romania)

In interviews and focus groups, children and young people mentioned that they were currently engaged in actions addressing a range of social justice issues, including stopping child marriage, child labour and bullying. They also expressed their commitment to mobilising themselves to get other children and young people to take climate change seriously. Reflecting this commitment, 94 percent of respondents expressed a desire to fully engage in the fight against climate change, whilst 4 percent wanted to take part in climate action but reported not knowing how to do so. Only 2 percent said that they were unable or unwilling to participate.



Many respondents highlighted a perceived gap between levels of awareness on climate change and actions in response to this crisis:

“ I think that both children and adults have big role in climate change. But many people only talk and do not take action. A large number of people do not take the problem of climate change seriously. We need action. ”

(Lana, aged 15, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Whilst participating in the interviews and focus groups, children and young people suggested a range of preferred solutions and ideas on how to address climate change. Some of the key recommendations included:

1. As a child social activist, my request will be to **increase funding for affected countries and affected people**. I want to request world leaders to instruct businessman and industry owners to **use updated technologies to reduce pollution and gases**. (Dola, aged 16, Bangladesh)
2. The **children and youth must be part of decision making processes**, because we can raise the concrete problems... we can be part of different community projects that need to be monitored or followed, together with local government structures. (Murat, aged 17, Albania)
3. We can **run cultural interventions on the theme of environment**. We [can] then publicise them through social media to reach the authorities so that they are sensitised to help the community in this fight. (Kelly, aged 15, Brazil)
4. **Children could organise different groups to collect and sort waste**, or do other ecological activities. (Andreia, aged 16, Romania)
5. Young people and children in the matter of climate change can play the following roles: we can sensitise our communities on **reforestation and better garbage management** in each region. We need to be the reference for adults and children, and promote the reduction of greenhouse gases. (Christian, aged 17, DRC)
6. **Involve children and youth in tree planting**, disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation interventions. (Adambilla, aged 15, Ghana)
7. We can **run educational activities amongst our peers**. We can do meetings and talk about pollution and, more generally, climate change and everything that we should do to prevent all the bad things happening to our planet - kind of seminars, or something like that, in our community. (Luka, aged 15, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
8. We can participate in events in which each child is given seeds or trees in rural areas where we can **plant or transplant trees to improve the air in the district**. (Mayra, aged 14, Chile)
9. We should act as role models to **prevent people from cutting down trees** and explain to them the benefits of having trees in the area. (Mary, aged 17, Kenya)
10. We can **use our social networks to make complaints about environmental deforestation and climate change**. We could mobilise children, youth and adolescents to plant crops in the communities. (Emmanuel, aged 17, Brazil)
11. A first action could be to change the uses of the affected areas, to reduce the damage, and a second action would be to inform the community to be prepared for these changes. (Sebastian, aged 15, Romania)
12. Fight against deforestation and **reduce livestock rearing**, [as well as] the excessive use of fossil fuels, promote reforestation. (Serge, aged 17, DRC)
13. Take part in voluntary activities work, **like cleaning the streets**, preserving the environment and educating people on climate change. (Lidia, aged 17, Kenya)
14. **Have greenhouses in our schools** where children can take care of plants, make compost and learn recycling. (Abigail, aged 14, Chile)

Children and young people recognised that in order to initiate meaningful and effective change, engagement is needed with all levels of a society, from peers and communities, to policy makers and leaders of industry. They did not just see climate change as a localised issue, but understood it in terms of wider national and global structures, highlighting their understanding of how the globalised world is intrinsically interconnected.

6.3. REDEFINING CHILDREN'S ACTIVISM AND MESSAGING

Children and young people engage in activism in order to support individual actions or collective movements that address their chosen causes (Harris et al., 2010). The cause of climate change is not an exception. Children said that it was important for them to transform information into action, redefine their engagement in climate action and explore different forms of activism, including a more direct accountability mechanism with local and national authorities. Their responses were in line with existing literature (see also Bosco, 2010; Buire and Staeheli, 2017):

“ We need to push the government to do more and talk less, because they have made many promises and they haven't achieved even half of them. They need to pay more attention to the north and northeast of the country, which are often forgotten by the government. We need more investment in the environment to encourage the importance of its preservation and reduce global warming. ”

(Gabrielle, aged 16, Brazil)

Children and young people highlighted that child activism is often difficult as they have reduced access to conventional means of influence and many adults do not see them as equitable stakeholders. However, children and young people expressed a belief that they could achieve change if they mobilised themselves (see also Martin, 2007). Araleem, aged 14, in Chile noted, 'Once, I participated in a 'rescued garden' that was taken over by young college students who did workshops for children. We learned new things and went out to the park to clean and to reuse things.'

Children and young people made it clear that they thought they got the best outcomes from their actions when they act as a group rather than as isolated individuals. They pointed out that engagement with adults is a helpful strategy for initiating meaningful change, and that organisations, like World Vision, are one of their main allies, supporting them in their efforts:

“ World Vision and child activists can carry out public awareness campaigns to protect the environment. Thus, we can work with state organisations and private companies and the general public so that together we contribute to stopping the degradation of the environment and the effects of climate change. ”

(Marcela, aged 15, Nicaragua)

Respondents highlighted that networking with adult organisations increases their access to the people they want to influence, as well as to training and resources that would be harder to obtain without this mutual child/adult collaboration.

Turning to messaging on climate change, children and young people agreed on the need to promote sustainable natural resource management and climate-smart agricultural approaches. For example, Wasila from Ghana called for more advanced farming systems, saying, 'We need to practice good farming systems and prevent frequent bush fires' (Wasila, aged 15, Ghana). Respondents also expressed a desire to connect their activism to landscape restoration approaches, with Mercy from Kenya stating, 'We should plant trees and promote agroforestry' (Mercy, aged 17, Kenya). Respondents also identified a need for targeting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions:

“ We should protect the environment from greenhouse gas emissions, and industrial activities should invest in the installation of cleaning filters, and people should use bicycles more than cars. ”

(Ajkuna, aged 15, Albania)

Finally, children and young people wanted to share messages that would strengthen their capacity to increase awareness and resilience to human and natural hazards, and respond accordingly. For instance, Diana, aged 16, from Nicaragua said that children and young people should 'protect ourselves against the risks of climate change. For example, do not play in the streams that are formed with rainwater. Organise ecological brigades in their communities, neighbourhoods, schools or churches' (Diana, aged 16, Nicaragua).

When respondents were asked about the role of World Vision in climate action, the majority of children and young people argued that World Vision should have a leading role in climate change as this global crisis is having a negative impact on the communities where World Vision works. They also articulated a perceived obligation to mitigate the impact of climate change on the curtailment of children's rights:

“ World Vision should hold consultations with children and youth, so we can share and express our valued suggestions and recommendations. Together, we can organise different level awareness-raising activities, both at local and national level, through advocacy and campaign initiatives. World Vision can help us to hold policy dialogue [meetings] with decision-makers, heads of private sectors and owners of various industries. ”

(Lucky, aged 16, Bangladesh)

Children and young people expressed the belief that the awareness and sensitisation activities are critical, but these need to be accompanied by actions directly responding to climate change. They see their activism as not just demanding others do something, but instead as a series of concrete actions needed to achieve change, implemented by individuals and organisations. Two respondents' thoughts on World Vision's role reflected the views of most of the children and young people who participated in this study:

“ To respond to climate change, World Vision can organise several activities in collaboration with children. For example, cleaning activities in areas that have more urban and industrial solid waste; plant as many trees as possible because trees are vital for cleaner air and a healthier environment; recycling various wastes, such as paper, plastic bottles and car tyres. ”

(Blerta, aged 15, Albania)

“ World Vision should teach young children to take care of the environment and engage them in recycling, landscaping, etc. It should also hold information sessions with 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)

These examples, focusing on recycling, demonstrate the need for climate action that combines information with practical steps to initiate change.

Across all the countries in this study, most of the children and young people articulated the need for strong and bold messaging relating to climate action. Carla, a 14 year old Romanian child activist, captured this point, saying:



“ Please start taking action, make some moves and don't close your eyes thinking it will get better soon. It won't be better if no one is doing anything. Our own planet is in big danger and it's not the moment to waste time. ”

(Carla, aged 14, Romania)

Respondents also frequently mentioned that while the global community is still debating how to address climate change, the only answer is to 'put our hands on urgent solutions to address the climate tragedy' (Lidia, aged 17, Kenya). In particular, respondents said that this requires direct, clear and impactful messages:

“ We need to treat climate change as one of the greater crisis of the planet, as Greta [Thunberg] 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. ”

(Nomundari, aged 14, Mongolia)

Children and young people made a strong call for taking action and using all means available to raise awareness, from local radio stations and community billboards to social media. Most respondents said they would use their own social media to make their messaging stronger and reach a larger population. However, this varied from country to country. Children and young people from rural areas and with limited access to the Internet, for instance, were less likely to mention social media as a way to share information (e.g. respondents from Kenya and DRC). In contrast, children and young people with better connectivity, from Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile and Romania, focused on social media as the core of their climate action ideas.

This suggests that patterns of child activism are highly relational and contextual, and move beyond the familiar challenges of children and young people's participation. The findings consequently highlight that child activism provides a useful channel for children and young people to express their views, to contest other's people's views and actions, and to restate their commitment to change.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to explore children and young people's views on climate action and concluded that across all respondents, children and young people had high levels of awareness and engagement on the issue of climate change, regardless of their countries of origin or any social category. The children and young people who participated in this study reported experiencing several, interconnected levels of marginalisation; on one hand they are all from deprived communities, many of which are prone to conflict and major natural disasters. On the other hand, they are part of the broader disfranchised group of 'children and young people' who are under the control of adults. Thus, their chances to participate in the public debate on climate change are restricted by their age and traditional adult social norms that portray children and young people as passive subjects, in need of protection. It is World Vision's hope that this study will help to better the international community's understanding of children and young people's perception of the climate change crisis, and encourage all actors to support the active role that children and young people want to take in addressing this issue.

Children and young people were very knowledgeable about climate change and particularly concerned about its consequences on their communities and well-being. They connected climate change-related events to their own experiences, including poverty, food scarcity, safety, child marriage and child labour. Substantial gender issues were also identified, with respondents observing that climate change increases the risk that girls will be asked to marry early as part of a perceived survival strategy by caregivers. Through the use of persuasive evidence, children and young people demonstrated their ability to comprehend the issues discussed and to identify solutions to which they can contribute. Their commitment to climate action was individual but also collective; children and young people saw collective strength and collaboration as a fundamental requirement for fighting climate change. Critically, children and young people advocated for the benefits of an intergenerational approach, where they can increase their social capital and access to resources by collaborating with adult-led organisations.

Finally, findings from the study also showed that children and young people want to move away from merely taking part in activities. Instead, they want a more substantive role that allows them to make a real change on issues that are relevant to them. In line with the literature, children and young people's motivation to participate in climate action is influenced by the conviction that they have a responsibility to improve the current situation and that their collective work can make an impact on the planet and on their own lives (Bosco, 2010; Böttcher et al., 2020; Martin, 2007; O'Brien et al., 2018; Unigwe, 2019). Against this backdrop, children and young people do not want to wait for the next generation to act; they are committed now and ready to mobilise themselves to engage in the local and global debate on climate change. As Emmanuel, aged 16, said in Brazil, 'Talk less and act more, the world needs help'.



RECOMMENDATIONS

World Vision understands that effective action to address the climate crisis requires meaningful and long-term international cooperation. In order to reaffirm World Vision's commitment to 'leaving no one behind', and based on children and young people's interest, awareness and right to participate in a global action, World Vision calls for participatory mechanisms to be safe, child friendly, accountable and inclusive, ensuring the participation of the most vulnerable children and young people.

World Vision's recommendations to decision makers and adult professionals at governments, corporations, international community and child-focused agencies are:

- Invest in strategies and policies that support the view of children and young people as agents of change and rights holders with the capability to engage in actions to address climate change.
- Invest in training and capacity building to enable the meaningful participation of the most vulnerable groups in climate action at all levels, including girls and boys with disabilities and of indigenous groups. Ensure age-appropriate participatory mechanisms that take into account the evolving capacities of children and young people, so that children and young people from different age groups can also participate in a safe and meaningful way.
- Embed child activism as an integral component in long-term children's participation programmes to support children and young people to take action on climate change.
- Provide children and young people with the space and opportunities to engage in decision-making processes and engage in the development, implementation and evaluation of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- Foster collaboration amongst child-focused agencies and other stakeholders, including business, academia and the international community, in order to implement new ways of working with children and young people to co-create innovative solutions to climate change.
- Support children and young people to put their ideas for climate action into pilot programmes which can be tested, improved upon and iterated across countries and regions.
- Ensure that children and young people are directly at the heart of the local, national and global debates and policy making processes on climate change, and have a meaningful and safe space to make their voices heard.
- Identify and support local, national and global networks where children and young people can engage, learn with others, collaborate and mobilise.
- Embed children and young people's right to environmental education and access to information in decision-making processes under the Action for Climate Empowerment and associated decisions in accordance with the UNCRC.





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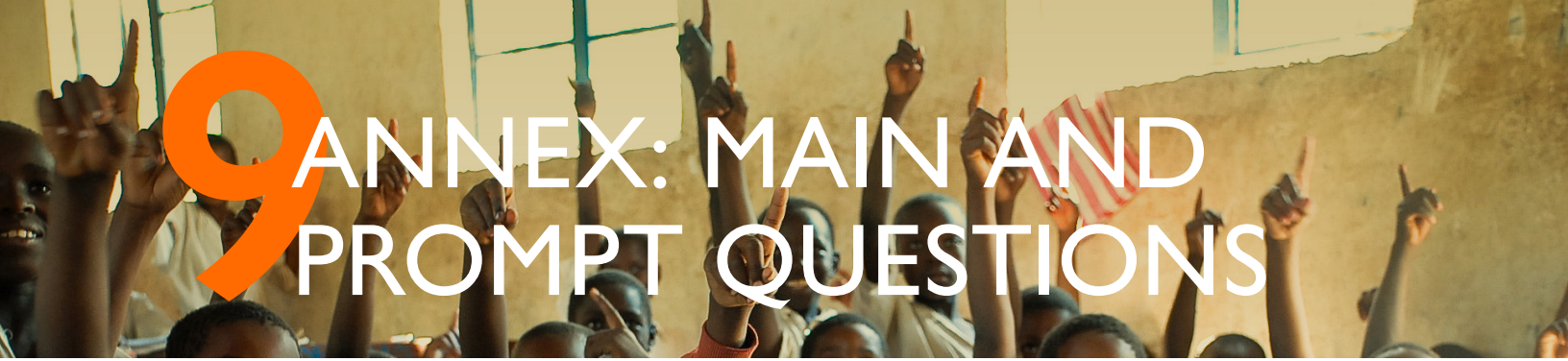
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ANNEX: MAIN AND PROMPT QUESTIONS

Main and prompts questions		
Opening	Welcome and acclimation	
	Main questions	Probes and prompts
Q1	Are you aware of climate change, and how it may have an impact on your community? Please describe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard of climate change?
Q2	What concerns/fears you most about climate change/environmental degradation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What changes have you noticed? • If you look at the environment around you and your family (for example: landscape, water, farming), has there been any changes that you have observed during your lifetime?
Q3	In your opinion, what are the two or three most important actions we need to take to ensure a safe future climate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does climate affect you? • How does climate change affect you, your family, and your village? • Can you describe concretely what has changed in your village? • How has the environment in your region changed? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Does it rain more often or less? ◦ Do you have enough food? ◦ Do more people in your village get sick? ◦ Can you still harvest enough from your field?
Q4	In your opinion, what are the two or three most important actions we need to take to ensure communities are safe from the impacts of climate change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your opinion? • What is your perspective? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Are you angry? ◦ Are you sad? ◦ Are you afraid of the future?
Q5	What role do you think a child-focused NGO like World Vision should play in responding to climate change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should people around the world do to stop climate change? • What do politicians in your country and around the world have to do?
Q6	What role do you think children and young people should have in climate change decision-making?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do (or can) you do yourself or with other children and young people in your village to stop climate change?
Q7	If you could say one thing to world leaders about climate change what would it be?	
Closing	Is there anything else you think would be helpful to share with us on this topic?	



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