



A GUIDE FOR ACTION

# Are climate change policies child-sensitive?

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UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy

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## Acronyms

ACE	adverse childhood event
ADB	Asian Development Bank
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP	Conference of the Parties (to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change)
DRR	disaster risk reduction
EIA	environmental impact assessment
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GGCA	Global Gender and Climate Alliance
IES	Institute of Environmental Studies
IPCC	UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KJIP	Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan
LCIPP	Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform
LDCs	least developed countries
MFIs	multilateral finance institutions
MoEWC	Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate
MRFCJ	Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NCCRS	National Climate Change Response Strategy
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCCB	Paris Committee on Capacity-Building
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization
WRI	World Resources Institute
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency

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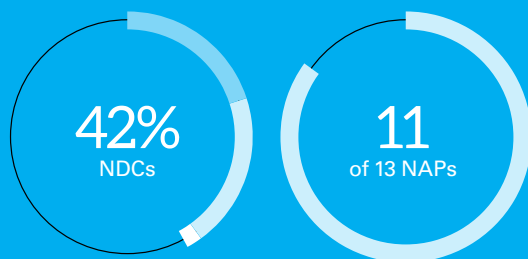
# Key messages

01

## Climate policies are not addressing children...

Only **42 per cent** of all Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) contain direct reference to children or youth while only **20 per cent** mention children specifically. Less than **two per cent** mention the rights of children.

**Eleven of 13** National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) explicitly refer to children or youth, viewing them as both a vulnerable group and as beneficiaries in terms of education and health interventions.



02

## ...but 2020 NDC revisions and new NAPs offer opportunities for change.

As countries gear up to submit new or update their current NDCs by the **2020 deadline**, they have the opportunity to enhance their ambition for reducing emissions as well as strengthening adaptation measures and other elements to bring their NDCs into closer alignment with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

NAPs are "continuous, progressive, and iterative" processes which follow a country-driven, gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent approach.

As such, in both instances, there is space to ensure that the rights and needs of those most impacted by climate change are addressed.

03

## Child-sensitive climate policies need to be structured around the following principles:

### **Ambitious and urgent**

Ambitious mitigation and adaptation measures that protect the rights and best interests of the child from harm caused by climate change.

### **Rights-based**

Explicit and meaningful references to children and youth, considering them as rights-holders and important stakeholders.

### **Holistic and multi-sectoral**

Specific sector interventions that address children's specific risks and vulnerabilities.

### **Inclusive**

Systematic consultation and meaningful participation of all children, including children of different ages, gender and social backgrounds, that will inform every step of the climate policymaking process at all levels.





## SECTION 1

# Why this report?

The scientific community has sounded the alarm. Climate change is a global emergency and we have little more than a decade to undertake the urgent and unprecedented actions required to limit global temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Beyond that time, the risks of deadly drought, flooding, heatwaves, extreme weather and poverty will significantly worsen for hundreds of millions of people.<sup>1</sup>

Children will continue to suffer the most under the impacts of climate change (see section 2). Yet, despite their disproportionate vulnerability, children are consistently overlooked in the design and content of climate policies and related processes.

With this in mind, this report seeks to assess and contribute to addressing the gap between current practice and a 'child-sensitive' approach to climate policymaking, namely one in which the particular needs, vulnerabilities, rights and agency of the child are considered and used to inform climate policies.<sup>2</sup>

There is no such thing as a child-neutral policy. Whether intended or not, every policy positively or negatively affects the lives of children.

EU-UNICEF (2014).  
Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating  
Child Rights in Development  
Cooperation

<sup>1</sup> IPCC, (2018). *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C. Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication and Reducing Inequalities*.

<sup>2</sup> In line with the norms and standards set down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To this end, the study sets out:

1. **A baseline analysis of the current landscape** of national climate policies/plans and the degree to which these are child-sensitive, based on evaluation of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs);
2. **Identification of key elements needed for child-sensitive climate policymaking**, including principles to be applied, approaches and tools that contribute to a conducive and enabling environment as well as measurement and impact;
3. **Examples of good practice** regarding child-sensitive national climate policies; and
4. **A 'checklist'** of key criteria with which to guide and assess child-sensitive climate policymaking.

## Methodology

For this report, UNICEF analyzed 160 NDCs<sup>3</sup> and 13 NAPs comprising a quantitative and qualitative assessment, based on: (i) a systematic search of key words to capture any direct or relevant reference to children and youth in the policy and (ii) an assessment of the nature of the reference to evaluate whether this was 'substantive' or 'passive'.<sup>4</sup>

The following 15 key words were searched in English, French and Spanish: child, youth, young, adolescent, infant, baby, girl, boy (*direct references*), and vulnerable, rights, human rights, intergenerational equity, mother, school, and education (*child-relevant key terms* to capture consideration of heightened vulnerability, a rights-based approach, and child-targeted interventions, even where a direct reference to children may not appear).<sup>5</sup>

KEY WORDS USED TO SEARCH NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS		
ENGLISH	FRENCH	SPANISH
child	enfant	hijo/hija
youth	enfance/jeunesse	juventud/infancia
young	jeune	joven/jóvenes
adolescent	adolescent/e	adolescente
infant/baby	bébé	bebé
girl	fille	niña/chica
boy	garçon	niño/chico
vulnerable	vulnerable	vulnerable
rights/human rights	droits/droits de l'homme	derechos/derechos humanos
intergenerational equity	équité intergénérationnelle	equidad intergeneracional
mother	mère	madre
school	école	escuela
education	education	educación

3 At the time of writing, 184 NDCs were listed on the NDC registry website, but only 160 NDCs were mapped. The discrepancy can be explained by the fact that a) the 28 countries of the European Union submitted a single joint NDC; b) two NDCs from the registry could not be searched (Oman — only in Arabic, and Timor Leste — format prevents searching); c) six additional NDCs that were not available on the UNFCCC registry were found elsewhere online ([Iran](#), [Kyrgyzstan](#), [Lebanon](#), [Philippines](#), [Senegal](#), and [Yemen](#)).

4 The methodology was adapted in particular from approaches adopted by the Gender Climate Tracker, developed by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. See: [www.genderclimatetracker.org](http://www.genderclimatetracker.org).

5 A decision was taken not to search for the key term 'health' or other child-relevant sectoral interventions, e.g. nutrition etc., as it was assumed that the search for direct references to children would capture where such interventions explicitly addressed children and could therefore be categorised as 'child-sensitive'. However, education was included, to ensure that interventions focusing on schools or curricula were captured, even if children were not mentioned. This was the case, for example, for the NDCs of Bahrain, China, Ghana, Haiti, Madagascar, Palau, South Africa, Togo and the UAE.

A ‘substantive’ reference indicates an explicit reference to children and youth, or that the key term is directly linked to children/youth, or child/youth-related topics (e.g. primary schools and respective infrastructure). A ‘passive’ reference indicates that the term could potentially be relevant for children/youth but does not directly refer to them (e.g. ‘vulnerable groups’ or ‘public education’). The introduction of this qualitative assessment was intended to provide a clearer picture of the degree to which NDCs and NAPs not only address sectors and interventions which will broadly benefit children — along with other segments of the population — but to also capture whether policies explicitly recognise and consider their particular needs, rights, vulnerabilities and agency, in line with the definition of ‘child-sensitive’ applied in this paper.

Following this analysis, and in light of its findings on the prevailing omission of children and youth from climate policies, an extensive body of literature, guidance and tools were examined with a view to identifying the key principles, and elements required to address this gap. In particular, materials from the fields of child and human rights, gender-mainstreaming, and child-centred disaster risk reduction were consulted, as well as documentation capturing the perspectives of children themselves.

The report has focused on NDCs and NAPs, critical tools for advancing the central objectives of UNFCCC, that provide a consistent baseline for analysis across countries, as well as a clear reference point against which future progress can be assessed. It is important to note however, that they are not the only policies on climate and therefore, any conclusions drawn are necessarily tentative, recognising that some countries’ submissions may not reflect other climate-related policies, strategies and plans at the national level that are child-sensitive.

BOX 1 | WHAT ARE NDCS AND NAPS?

**Nationally Determined Contributions** (NDCs) outline the post-2020 climate actions that countries intend to take to reduce national emissions in line with the goal of the Paris Agreement to limit warming to under 2°C.<sup>6</sup> While their focus is on mitigation, Parties are invited to include a more comprehensive view of national climate policies, strategies and action plans, including adaptation and means of implementation.<sup>7</sup> Given this comprehensive

NDCs in setting out State Parties’ national commitments on climate change, these provide a useful indication of national priorities and the degree to which these are child-sensitive.

**National Adaptation Plans** (NAPs) identify medium- and long-term adaptation needs of countries and strategies/programmes to address them.<sup>8</sup> The NAP process, established in 2010, is ‘continuous, progressive

a country-driven, gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent approach’.<sup>9</sup> Since NAPs represent countries’ strategic approach to adaptation, and address issues that are fundamental to children’s rights in developing countries, the degree to which they are child-sensitive provides an important insight into whether governments understand, recognise and prioritise the specific needs and capacities of children

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