

MEANINGFUL CLIMATE ACTION:

YOUNG PEOPLE AS CHANGEMAKERS IN THE MENA REGION

October 2023
Final Report



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Save the Children



♦ Ahmed, 14 years old | Egypt

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Credits

This study was conducted by Save the Children Regional Office in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe, in partnership with the Regional Youth Committee and Voluntas research consultancy. The research was led by Yousra Hassan, and analysis was conducted by the Voluntas research team, including Aya Barouni, Elizabeth Jones, Mutaz Alnaas, Mariem Soltani, and Selma Essafi. In conducting and presenting this research, the authors have endeavored to remain objective, ensuring that the findings and interpretations do not reflect personal opinions but are grounded in the data and evidence collected. The research team is grateful to Save the Children staff and partners who have contributed to this report, including Nicola Padamada, Denis Vanhontegem, Ayat Kammouni, Hassan Arafat, Manar Amro, Omeed Enwiya, Fadi Dweik, Ayman Ali and Youssef Qahwaji. They would also like to acknowledge helpful reviews from Save the Children program, advocacy and evidence and learning teams at country, regional and global levels.

Children and Youth Participation Statement

This report has been developed with the support of a dedicated Regional Youth Committee, comprised of 12 young women and men aged between 18–26 years old from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory, and Yemen. The Regional Youth Committee provided valuable inputs on the impacts of climate change on child and youth rights, existing climate policies, and the barriers and opportunities to meaningful engagement of young people in climate action and policymaking. Other young people in the region participated in interviews, a creative digital campaign, and design thinking-inspired workshops for adolescents, contributing further reflections on the landscape of child and youth participation. Our heartfelt thanks go out to these young individuals, along with all young climate advocates worldwide, for their valuable time, insightful recommendations, and unwavering commitment to bringing young people's voices to the forefront, ensuring their contribution to shaping a more sustainable future.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AYCCC	Arab Youth Council for Climate Change	NAPA	National Adaptation Program of Action
BAU	Business-as-Usual	NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
CCCC	Climate Change Coordinating Committee	NCCC	National Committee on Climate Change
CCP	Climate Change Policy	NC	National Communication
CO2	Carbon Dioxide	NCE	National Council for the Environment
COP	Conference of the Parties	NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
CYNP	Climate Youth Negotiators Program	NFP	National Forest Plan
DEWA	Dubai Electricity and Water Authority	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
EQA	Environment Quality Authority	oPt	Occupied Palestinian Territory
EEG	Emirates Environmental Group	RYC	Regional Youth Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	SCI	Sustainable Campus Initiative
FEE	Foundation for Environmental Education	SGI	Saudi Green Initiative
FYA	Federal Youth Authority	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
GHG	Greenhouse Gases	UK	United Kingdom
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	UN	United Nations
IAS	Invasive Alien Species	UNDP	United Nations Development Program
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
LCOY	Local Conference of Youth	UAE	United Arab Emirates
LNNGO	Local and National NGOs	WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
MENA	Middle East and North Africa	WYF	World Youth forum
MENAE	Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe	WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature
MoE	Ministry of Environment	YOUNGO	Youth Non-Governmental Organizations Constituency
NAP	National Adaptation Plan		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The population of the MENA region – of which some 250 million are children and youth – is facing increasingly adverse impacts of the climate crisis.¹ The countries within the MENA region have historically been exposed to hazards, including droughts, heatwaves and extreme weather, which are being further exacerbated by the climate crisis. With a large percentage of the population dependent on agriculture, and many residing in coastal areas, the increased frequency of temperature rise, precipitation deficits and sea level rise threaten the livelihoods of large portions of the region's population.² Climate impacts also threaten to amplify existing instabilities and vulnerabilities, including socioeconomic inequalities, conflict and displacement among a population which is expected to double by 2070.^{3,4}

The landscape of climate policies in the MENA region illustrates a fluctuating emphasis on children and youth as key stakeholders. While some policies carve out spaces for young people, it's evident that the rhetoric often exceeds direct action, with a tangible disconnect between stated aspirations and practical implementation. **Youth are occasionally provided platforms, and there are a few innovative examples where they are positioned to influence and contribute their perspectives to decision-makers.** However, the evidence of this feedback being woven into broader policymaking remains opaque. **On the other hand, children, while recognized for their vulnerabilities, especially in the context of climate change impacts, are less frequently positioned as active contributors.** Their engagement tends to revolve more around awareness and education rather than active participation in policymaking. Despite the challenges, certain practices across the region stand out as promising and could serve as models for enhancing both direct and indirect engagement of children and youth. However, the key to progress is strengthening these structures with transparency and ensuring that both demographics are educated and prepared to engage with the complexities of climate science.

This research, employing a participatory approach, delves into the perceptions of children and youth in the MENA region regarding climate change and its policy dimensions, to identify entry points for making climate decision-making more child and youth-sensitive and inclusive. Through a participatory desk review led by a committee of 12 youth researchers in the MENA region, interviews with 23 key duty bearers and climate activists, a creative digital campaign with over 600 participants, and 14 design thinking-inspired workshops with adolescent girls and boys across six countries, this research both presents the current landscape of child and youth sensitivity and inclusion in climate policymaking, and identifies a way forward for children and youth in the region to meaningfully participate in climate action.

Key Entry Points for Meaningful Climate Action



Education & Capacity: Equip children and youth with tools and knowledge to participate effectively in climate action and policy discussions.



Children as Information Disseminators: Leverage education and hands-on climate projects with children as an advocacy and outreach-multiplier.



Accessible Climate Science: Offer engaging, region-specific climate content tailored for young audiences.



Enhanced Communication: Bridge communication gaps between the demands of children and youth and policymaker decisions.



Child and Youth-Driven Climate Finance: Prioritize children and youth's rights in climate finance decisions.



Participatory Policymaking: Involve children and youth in designing and implementing national climate plans.



Policy Monitoring Frameworks: Implement robust child and youth-led monitoring frameworks to guarantee the realization of commitments for inclusive climate policies.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Climate Crisis as a Children and Youth Rights Crisis

Addressing the needs of children and youth when designing adaptation and mitigation strategies is essential to ensuring equitable climate action. The MENA region is expected to face disproportionate effects of the climate crisis, particularly affecting its young population. The region is already experiencing higher levels of **water stress**, and **temperature increases** are predicted to exceed the global average – rising by up to 4°C by 2071-2100.⁵ With nearly half the region's population (47%) made up of children and youth between the ages of 0-24, young people will be on the front lines facing the impacts of a climate emergency. 90% of children in the region already reside in water stressed areas, and with **droughts** combined with the increasing frequency of **heatwaves** and **dust storms**, they will experience risks to their health linked to reduced clean water availability as well as heat and pollution-related illnesses such as heatstroke, asthma, respiratory conditions, and cardiovascular disease.⁶ These and other climate challenges such as **rising sea levels**, **floods**, and other **extreme weather events** will have further far-reaching impacts on children and youth, including food insecurity, limitations on access to education, livelihoods and basic services, and displacement. Changing rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts will affect agricultural livelihoods, which will increase an already growing dependence on imported food products, and disproportionately impact rural and poorer communities, who may also be the most vulnerable to displacement. Climate stressors and related impacts on families can also make children and youth more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and gender-based violence, including child marriage, as well as affect their mental and psychosocial wellbeing. With such a critical impact of climate change on children and youth in the region, the inclusion of children and youth's voices in climate

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stressed areas.**

In this research, "youth" refers to participants aged 18 to 24, while "children" encompasses those below 18. When jointly mentioned as "young people," the term encompasses both children and youth.*

* The definition of the youth age bracket can take various forms, such as the widely recognized range of 15 to 24 years by the UN, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and other actors, or the African Union's definition of 15 to 35 years. It is essential to stress that the concept of youth is adaptable and represents the transition from childhood dependence to adult independence.

policymaking is far overdue. The children and youth who today face the most significant impacts of climate change in the MENA region, are also poised to play a crucial role in shaping the region's future.

Within this context, it is essential that children and youth are provided with the knowledge, space and resources to contribute to the climate policymaking process, whether by highlighting their needs and rights, or by presenting their own ideas to contribute to effective adaptation and mitigation at any level, from local to global level. In 2022, the UN climate conference – COP27 – included a special focus on children and youth for the first time, as well as a youth-led climate forum to emphasize to policymakers the importance of including young people's voices

in climate talks. A specific day is now dedicated to young people at the COP each year. In the region, some countries have already begun to commit to more child and youth-sensitive strategies to combat climate change. The occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and Kuwait submitted National Adaptation Plans to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) referencing youth needs and vulnerabilities, and Tunisia, oPt, the UAE, Jordan, and Morocco have child sensitive NDCs.⁷ However, despite the relevance of child and youth participation, there remain significant barriers to their meaningful participation in effective climate action, including a lack of awareness, limited resources for education and participation, an understatement of children and youth's capacities, and an absence of available forums for them to safely and meaningfully engage in the climate conversation with decisionmakers.

Across the region, public awareness and knowledge about climate change remains limited, which has prevented it from being considered a priority issue for many people in the region. According to data collected by the Arab Barometer in 2021 and 2022, citizens from MENA countries – particularly youth – cited a lack of awareness as a more important factor than a lack of governmental initiatives in contributing to climate challenges in the region.⁸ Furthermore, only about half of MENA citizens believe their government should do more to address climate change, and few identify this as the top priority for government spending or international aid. The lack of recognition of climate change as a priority is also likely linked to the insufficient understanding of the compounding effects of climate change on issues that young people in the MENA region see as priorities, namely security, education, health and livelihood opportunities.⁹

Secondly, even as decisionmakers in the region acknowledge the need for climate strategies, few highlight the needs and rights of children and youth or center them as key change partners when it comes to policymaking. With the exception of Iran, Libya and Yemen, all MENA countries signed the Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 in 2015, agreeing to strengthen the global climate response and work together to limit the global average temperature increase to well below 2°C, while pursuing means to limit the increase to 1.5°C. As part of this agreement, signatory countries submitted NDCs committing to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For many countries in the region, these NDCs form the core of the country's national strategy with regards to climate change, however, only a handful of the updated country NDCs are child or youth-sensitive – explicitly referencing and addressing the specific vulnerabilities of children and youth, referring to them as key rights-holders, and recognizing them as key stakeholders and change makers.¹⁰ These include Jordan, oPt, Tunisia and the UAE. At an international level there is a growing recognition about the relevance of including child and youth stakeholders and addressing their needs and rights, with international actors such as UNICEF, Save the Children, UNDP and many others leading in advocacy and education to support child and youth participation. However, there is more that governments in the MENA region could be doing to support meaningful participation of children and youth. A

Child and youth sensitivity in policy documents is defined as the explicit reference to children and youth, addressing their specific vulnerabilities and referring to them as key rights-holders, key stakeholders, and change makers.

pledge at COP25 in 2019, titled the “Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action,” to uphold the priorities identified by children and youth in determining climate policies has only been signed by three MENA countries so far: Jordan, Libya, and Qatar.¹¹

Thirdly, in countries where child and youth-focused forums for policy participation are beginning to take shape, national governments often fail to engage youth meaningfully, and children are often an afterthought. With regards to climate governance, inclusion may be mainstreamed in both formal and informal processes, and at local, national, regional and international levels through public and private actors. Within the international space, forums like the UNFCCC’s children and youth constituency (YOUNGO), the UN Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, COP27’s Children and Youth Pavilion, the Climate Champions Youth Team, the Climate Youth Negotiators Program (CYNP), the Arab Youth Council for Climate Change (AYCCC), Generation Hope Campaign by Save the Children, as well as the Global Center on Adaptation’s Regional Youth Adaptation Forums all offer spaces for children and youth to join the discussion on climate change, to share their opinions, and to engage with policymakers. A majority of participants in these forums are youth around or over the age of 18, however, with significantly less participation from younger age groups, with the exception of Generation Hope which engaged 54,000 children from 41 countries in the biggest ever global dialogue with children, including more than 8000 children across the MENA region.¹² At a national level, a handful of countries have established forums for direct engagement of young people, including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the UAE. These include child and youth parliaments, quotas for youth participation in local councils, as well as a few climate-specific forums for youth participation such as Egypt’s National Dialogue for Climate Change or the Saudi Youth Green Summit. However, other countries in the region such as Lebanon, oPt and Yemen do not have significant spaces for child and youth participation at a national level at all. Even in countries which do have established avenues for direct engagement of young people, children are often excluded, and youth may not have a real voice in determining policy outcomes. There are only a few concrete outcomes of youth dialogues and participation in climate policy decisions across the region, indicating that inclusion of young people may often be a check-the-box exercise for countries rather than a meaningful pathway to participation. In countries across the region, nongovernmental organizations, advocacy groups, and other youth-led initiatives are often trying to fill these gaps by offering the space for children and youth to get involved in climate action directly. Grassroots organizations, many of which are child or youth-led, allow young people in the MENA region to engage, whether through concrete adaptation or mitigation projects or advocacy initiatives.

Finally, across all levels of participation, whether local, national or international, displacement and socioeconomic inequalities and discrimination often present additional barriers to the participation of children and youth. Urban, educated children and youth from high-income households without disabilities often have more access to national policy forums, international dialogues, and even local advocacy groups. While lack of awareness and education on climate change and its impacts broadly affects all children and youth in the MENA region, those in communities most impacted by inequality and discrimination, displacement-

affected settings or hard-to-reach and rural areas likely face increased challenges to accessing information. This may also limit their knowledge of existing forums where they could participate in climate action, and thus their likelihood of participation – which is further compounded by the logistical challenges they may face in participating, such as internet access, transportation and financial resources. Socioeconomic disparities further impact children and youth's ability to participate in climate action, particularly in a region which encompasses countries scoring both on the highest and lowest ends of the human development index.¹³ Limited resources, poverty and unequal access to basic services and opportunities can make it challenging for marginalized and displaced children and youth to engage in climate-related initiatives. With one in four children in the MENA region experiencing acute, multidimensional poverty, socioeconomic barriers may prevent the contributions to climate decision-making of a significant proportion of young people who are also the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.¹⁴ Based on the desk review, crosscutting factors, including gender, ethnicity, age, displacement and disabilities present additional compounding barriers to young people's participation in climate action.

Scope and focus of the study

With countries in the MENA region experiencing different climate challenges, diverse socioeconomic and security conditions, and differing levels of political will regarding climate action and policymaking, there is a need for both a regional and country-level analysis of the opportunities, barriers, and entry points to ensure meaningful child and youth participation in climate action. Children and youth each navigate distinct challenges and opportunities within the realm of climate policymaking. Children often have limited participation avenues, and their contributions, though valued, are sometimes seen more in the context of their vulnerability rather than as proactive stakeholders. Meanwhile, youth have broader access to participation platforms, but it is rather tokenistic in large-scale regional or global events, and these may not always be meaningful opportunities to influence local policymaking and implementation.

Save the Children and Voluntas collaborated with children and youth across the MENA region to produce a participatory research study, "Meaningful Climate Action: Young People as Changemakers in the MENA Region," aiming to **map the child and youth inclusion in the climate policy landscape in the region, and to identify concrete entry points to make young people's participation in climate action more meaningful.** The research study brings children and youth aged 8-35 to the forefront of the climate crisis discussion by helping them understand the existing policy environment and working with them to identify the relevant enablers and barriers to children and youth's participation in climate action. The report gives an overview of climate policies in the region and the impact of climate change on children and youth, and dives into an analysis of opportunities and barriers to children and youth's participation at a policy level. Finally, the report highlights existing examples of successful child and youth engagement in the region to encourage and identify potential strategies for children and youth to meaningfully participate in climate action.

METHODOLOGY

Research shows that the climate crisis is a children and youth crisis, hence, their inclusion in the decision-making process of tackling climate change is vital. This study aimed to bring children and youth to the forefront of the climate crisis discussion by understanding the policy and relevant enablers, and barriers to their participation in climate action. The research included an **extensive desk review of climate policies** to support advocacy efforts to engage children and youth in decision-making. Additionally, the research included **participatory data collection approaches** engaging adolescents and youth, to understand their perception of climate action and the impact of climate change on their futures. To ensure an inclusive, and representative methodology for this research, Voluntas and Save the Children designed the study to include the voices of children and youth, climate experts, and duty bearers from countries across the region. Ten countries were selected as focus countries for the research, including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, oPt, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the UAE, and Yemen. The research covered three main areas:

Modelling Participation in Evidence Generation

Through this research’s participatory approach, Voluntas and Save the Children aimed to educate, engage, and put forward the power of young people both in contribution to climate education in the MENA region and to drive the conversation about the entry points to meaningful participation in climate action.

As such, the research process offered a means for children and youth to learn and engage with climate issues, including an understanding of the different impacts of climate change on different geographic locations, age groups, genders, and social classes, as well as of the existing policies and forums for young people’s participation. In parallel, the inclusion of both children and youth enabled the research to capture the thoughts and perspectives of young people from different countries on climate change and climate action. The outcomes of the research are therefore a co-creation both by and for young people.

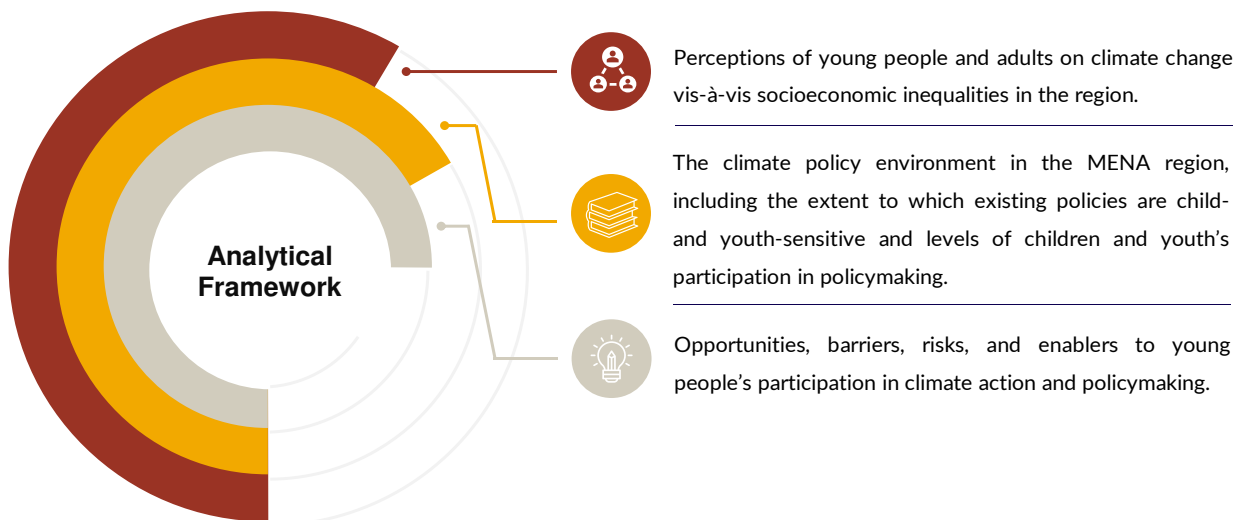


Figure 1: Research Focus Areas

Desk Review

For all ten countries, a participatory desk review was conducted by the Voluntas research team and Save the Children’s **Regional Youth Committee (RYC)** to assess the climate policy landscape. The twelve members of the RYC were chosen from six key countries that were selected to include primary data collection where Save the Children operates, namely Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, oPt and Yemen. Voluntas team supported with the desk review, and covered the remaining four countries – Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

As part of the desk review process, Voluntas and Save the Children prepared a Youth Climate Dictionary (Ref. Annex 2 and 3) to harmonize understanding of key climate concepts and existing international frameworks among the RYC members, and to guide their research. Voluntas facilitated weekly meetings with the RYC for structured orientations and follow-up reflections on their progress over a period of three months. The final desk research included a review of international and national climate policies to assess their level of child- and youth-sensitivity, and of opportunities, entry points, and barriers to child and youth participation in climate action.

Regional Youth Committee (RYC)

The desk research involved a committee of 12 youth members (six young women and six young men, aged 18-26) from six countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, oPt and Yemen). They were selected by the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe (MENAEE) regional office and respective country offices of Save the Children through local partners and climate activists, to include youth with diverse backgrounds in climate action and research in their communities.

In particular, the committee members were involved in:

- Contributing to the design of a youth climate orientation guideline and policy analysis toolkit.
- Actively engaging and performing a desk review on climate action and policy in the six targeted countries and participating in climate policy analysis at a national and regional level.
- Assisting in conducting Key Informant Interviews with identified stakeholders and duty-bearers.
- Participating in a final validation workshop on key research findings and recommendations.

The RYC included the following members:

	Female	Male
Egypt	Eman Abdel-Hamid	Moustafa Abdallah
Iraq	Wassan Mohammed Yahya	Mohammed Abdl-Wahid Mohammed
Jordan	Juman Al-Khateeb	Mahmoud Al-Radaideh
Lebanon	Ghia Zaatar	Abdel-Karim Bakir
oPt	Baghdad Rabah Al-Salhi	Tariq Esmat Hishme
Yemen	Sabah Al-Sanayi	Ala'a Mustafa

Geographical Coverage



Figure 2: Research Coverage by Country and Data Collection Modes

Primary Data Collection

Primary data collection for this study included qualitative interviews and simulation-based adolescent workshops in the six countries listed above, a MENA-wide creative digital campaign, and a validation workshop with the RYC on August 25, 2023.

A) Key Informant Interviews

In total, Voluntas, the RYC and Save the Children conducted 23 KIIs with duty bearers, climate and youth engagement experts, and young activists at a regional and national level. For the six countries selected for primary data collection, Voluntas and Save the Children conducted three interviews per country, while four additional KIIs were conducted by Voluntas at a regional level, and one interview conducted by the RYC on voluntary basis. Interviewees were selected by Save the Children’s country and regional focal points to include the views of policymakers, climate specialists, and young climate activists on topics of climate policymaking, and children and youth’s action in the region. Interviews were conducted in person and remotely, in either English or Arabic per the respondents’ availability and preference. Prior to the interviews Voluntas conducted enumerator training covering data collection tools, interviewing techniques, and data protection procedures.

Country	Gender	Position	Interviewer	Interview Date
Lebanon	Female	UNDP Climate Change Project Manager	Voluntas	June 23, 2023
	Male	Advisor for the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture	Voluntas	July 7, 2023
	Female	Environmental and Agriculture Advisor at USPEaK	Voluntas	July 4, 2023
	Male	Environmental Specialist	RYC	July 28, 2023

Jordan	Male	Youth and Climate Change Specialist, UNDP	Voluntas	June 6, 2023
	Male	Climate Change Project Coordinator, Green Generation Foundation	Voluntas	July 7, 2023
	Male	Technical Advisor at GIZ Jordan, Youth Council Member at the Arab Youth Council for Climate Change, and Jordanian Youth Government Representative	Voluntas	June 7, 2023
Yemen	Male	General Director of the Climate Change Unit, Environment Protection Authority (Sana'a)	Save the Children	June 12, 2023
	Male	National Coordinator of the WASH Cluster, Ministry of Water and Environment (Sana'a)	Save the Children	June 14, 2023
	Male	WASH Technical Advisor, Save the Children	Voluntas	June 13, 2023
Iraq	Male	Head of Climate Change Directorate, Office Manager at the Ministry of Environment of Iraq, and Climate Focal Point for reporting on the national NDC	Save the Children	June 7, 2023
	Female	Adolescents and Youth Development Specialist, UNICEF	Save the Children	June 19-22, 2023
	Male	Consultant, Health and Environment Committee, Parliament of Iraq	Save the Children	May 24-25, 2023
oPt	Female	Head of Climate Change and Drought Management, Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture	Save the Children	June 1, 2023
	Male	Director General for Projects and International Relations, UNFCCC Focal Point for Palestine/ Environment Quality Authority	Save the Children	July 4, 2023
	Male	Climate Change Expert	Save the Children	May 27, 2023
Egypt	Female	Assistant to Director, Center for Applied Research on the Environment and Sustainability at the American University in Cairo	Save the Children	May 29, 2023
	Female	Director, Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the American University in Cairo	Save the Children	May 28, 2023
	Male	Board Member of DCarbon Global for Sustainability and Climate Change	Save the Children	May 30, 2023
Regional	Male	Project Manager (Youth Climate Champion Team), COP28 Youth Envoy; and former Global North Lead for YOUNGO (Feb 23)	Voluntas	July 5, 2023
	Male	Council Member and Head of Partnerships, Arab Youth Council	Voluntas	June 20, 2023
	Female	Multimedia Content Specialist, Connect4Climate (World Bank Group)	Voluntas	June 20, 2023
	Male	YOUNGO Representative, and UNDP Project Assistant	Voluntas	June 21, 2023

B) Adolescent Workshops

14 design-thinking workshops were conducted with adolescents (12 to 17-years-old), including two workshops in each country, apart from Iraq where four workshops were conducted to cover both the Republic of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Each workshop included 10-15 girls and/or boys from refugee, IDP and host communities (HC) in the target countries. The workshops were designed to engage adolescent children from the six primary-research countries, to learn about their perceptions of climate change, test their understanding of the impact it has on nature and communities from different socio-economic backgrounds, and engage them in a design thinking-inspired exercise to develop a solution to climate challenges they identify in their communities. Through five phases – Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test – the adolescents identified a climate challenge scenario affecting their country and were guided to design an action plan to address it, identifying barriers, enablers, and entry points along the way. Split into two teams in each workshop, access to policymakers – or the lack of – was a planned power differential between the simulations of the two teams in each workshop, to test the solutions they would come up with and the impact of such a barrier on the creativity, impact and scale of their solutions. Workshops were conducted between June and August 2023 in Arabic or Kurdish, and took three to five hours. During the workshops, adolescent children were engaged under the supervision of four adults, two facilitators and two notetakers.

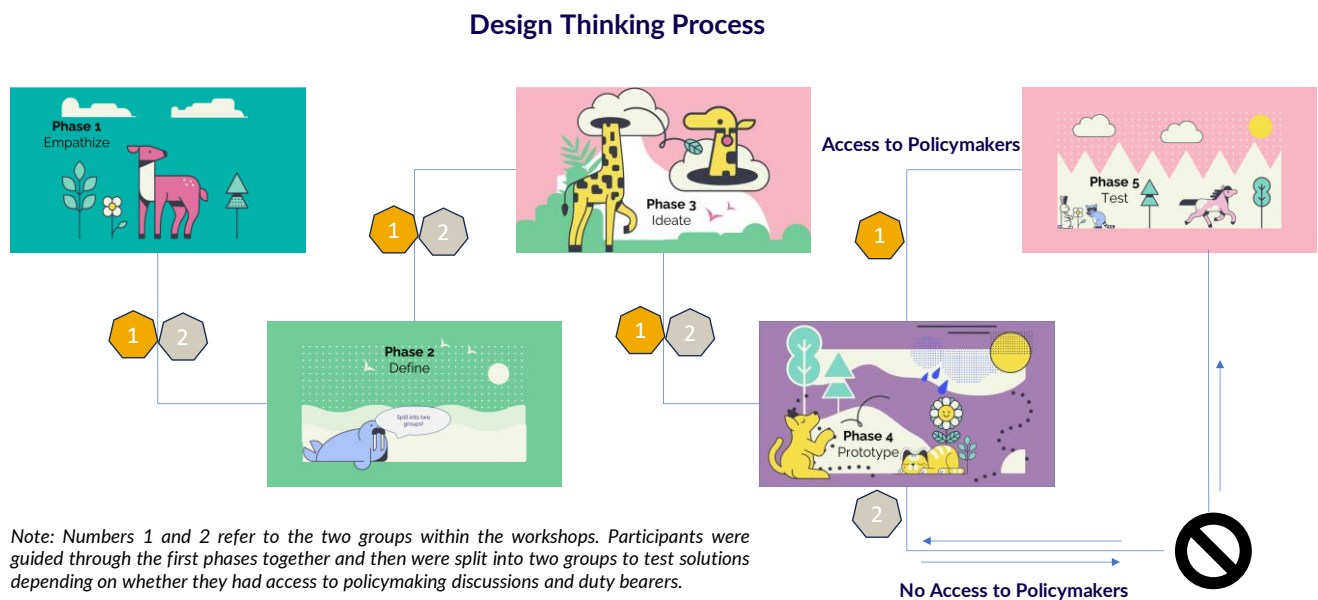


Figure 3: Adolescent Workshop Process

Country	Governorate	Nationality	Displacement Status	Gender	Conducted By
Egypt	Giza	Egyptians	HC	Mixed (G & B)	Save the Children
	Giza	Sudanese and Eritreans	Refugees	Mixed (G & B)	
Iraq	Baghdad	Iraqi	HC and IDPs	Girls	Public Aid Organization
	Baghdad	Iraqi	HC and IDPs	Boys	
	Duhok	Syrian	Refugees	Mixed (G & B)	
	Duhok	Iraqi	HC and IDPs	Mixed (G & B)	
Jordan	Amman	Jordanian	HC	Mixed (G & B)	Yarob Charity Development Association, Liwan Youth Space and Save the Children
	Amman	Palestinian and Iraqi	Refugees	Mixed (G & B)	
Lebanon	Mount Lebanon	Lebanese	HC	Mixed (G & B)	Manara Network
	Mount Lebanon	Syrian and Palestinian	Refugees	Mixed (G & B)	
oPt	West Bank	Palestinian	HC	Mixed (G & B)	QADER for Community Development
	Gaza	Palestinian	HC	Mixed (G & B)	
Yemen	Taiz	Yemeni	HC and IDPs	Girls	Sheba Youth Foundation for Development and Waad Network
	Taiz	Yemeni	HC and IDPs	Boys	

C) Creative Climate Action Campaign

Finally, a perception survey and creative campaign was developed to capture broader regional perspectives of children, youth and adults in MENA on climate change, its impact on child and youth rights, and the intersection with socio-economic inequalities. The campaign was published online using TypeForm (a GDPR compliant platform), with questions embedded as reflection prompts at intervals throughout a storyline of two families of different socioeconomic backgrounds who are impacted by climate change; the story was shared in short, animated videos while the questions were tailored to ensure language is appropriate for the wide age range and not-necessarily specialized audience targeted. The videos also included subtitles and sign-language interpretation to ensure inclusivity for hearing-impaired respondents. The campaign purposefully served as an awareness raising tool and included a creative submission portal, where participants were invited to submit a drawing, design, climate action intervention idea, or letter to a decision-maker, to share their creative

interpretation of meaningful climate action, describing the changes they want to see in their community or country to mitigate and adapt to climate change, as part of the creative campaign. The campaign was launched in Arabic, Kurdish and English, and received a total of 600 survey responses, including 166 children (8-17), 347 youth (18-35), and 87 adults (36+), in addition to 31 creative submissions. Respondents were 63% female, 35% male, and 2% who preferred not to answer. Findings were disaggregated by age, country, gender and displacement status to identify diverse perceptions among the different groups. The survey was published online through Save the Children’s social media platforms and ran for almost one month from June 22 to July 17, 2023.



Figure 4: Creative Survey Design and Story Outline

Given discrepancies in social media reach, certain countries were more heavily represented in the sample, as well as certain demographics. The findings are thus only indicative of trends at a regional level but may not fully represent the perspectives of young people from all the different backgrounds, settings, and minority groups in the region. The survey demographics are presented below.

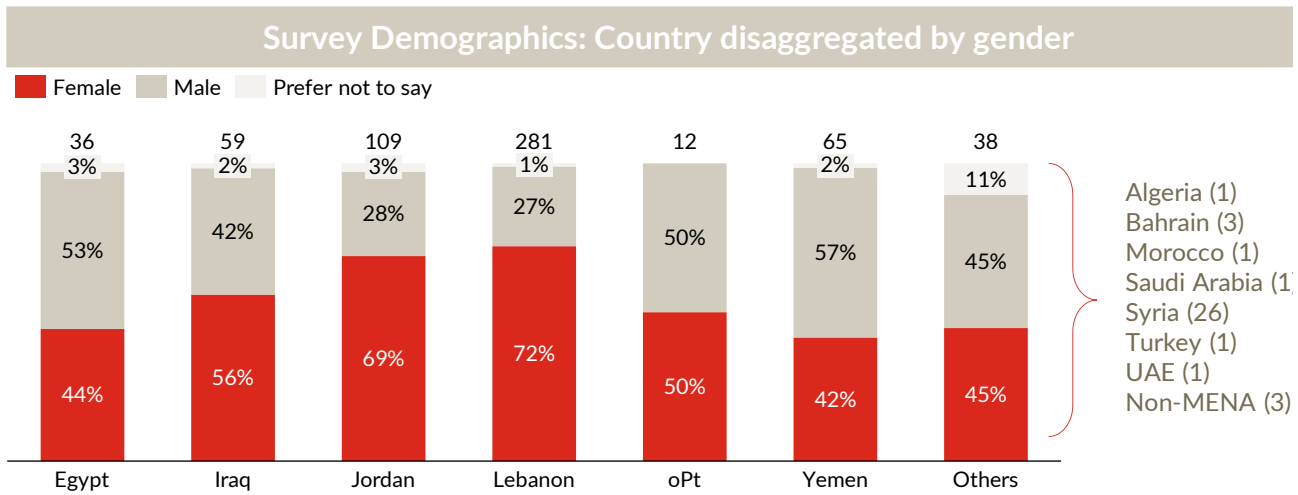


Figure 5: Survey Demographics - Gender

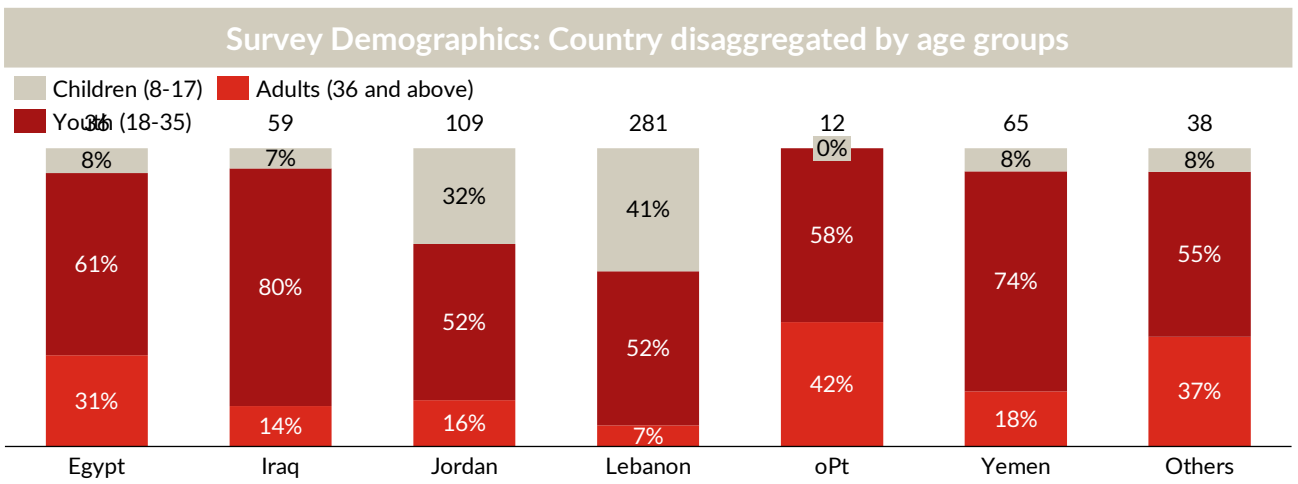


Figure 6: Survey Demographics - Age Groups

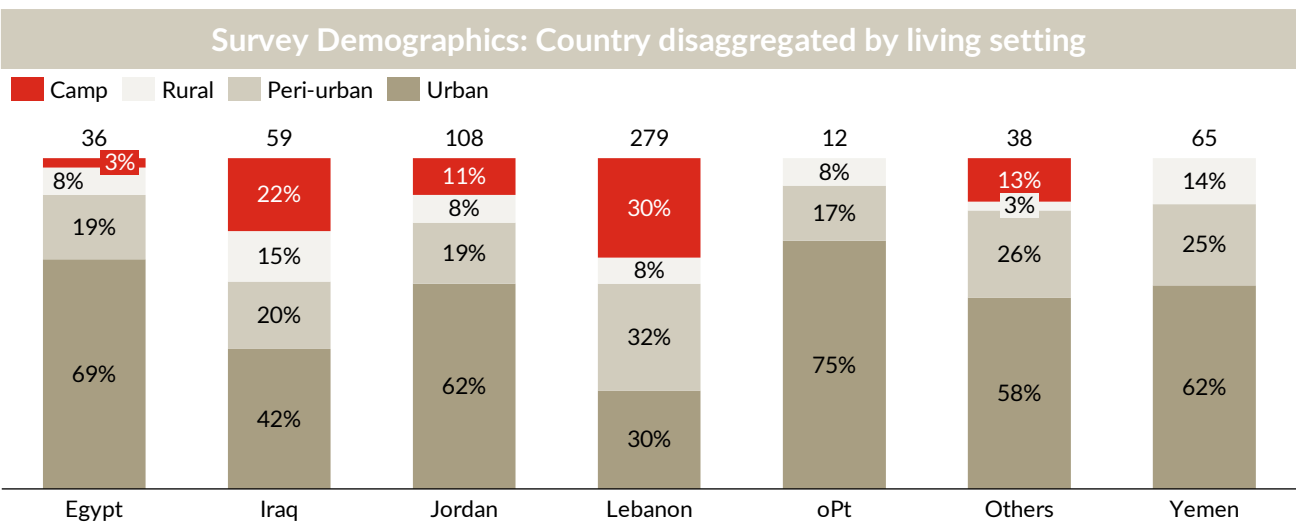


Figure 7: Survey Demographics - Living Setting

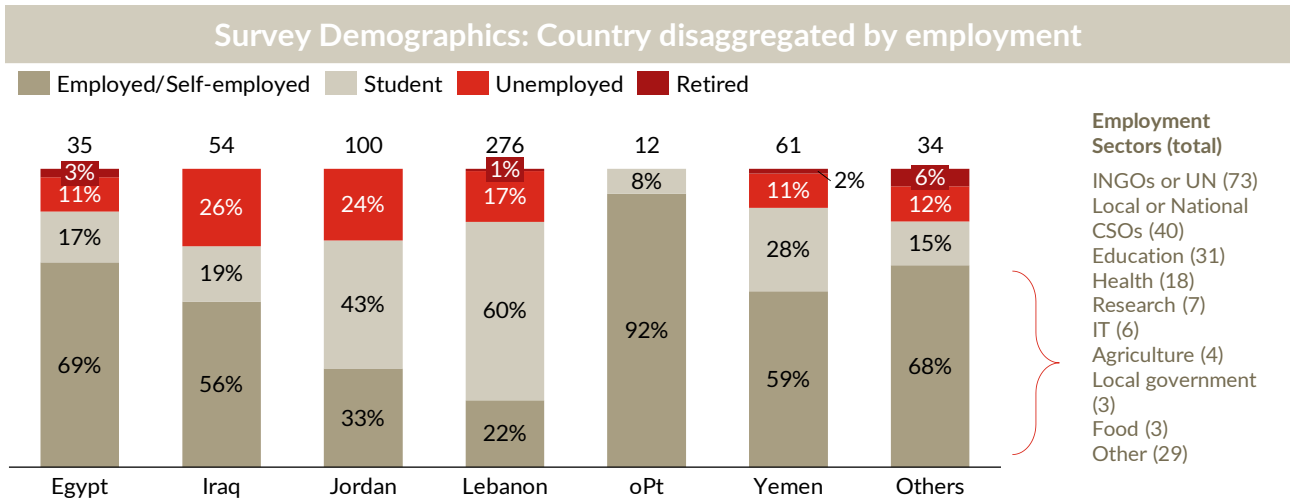


Figure 8: Survey Demographics - Employment

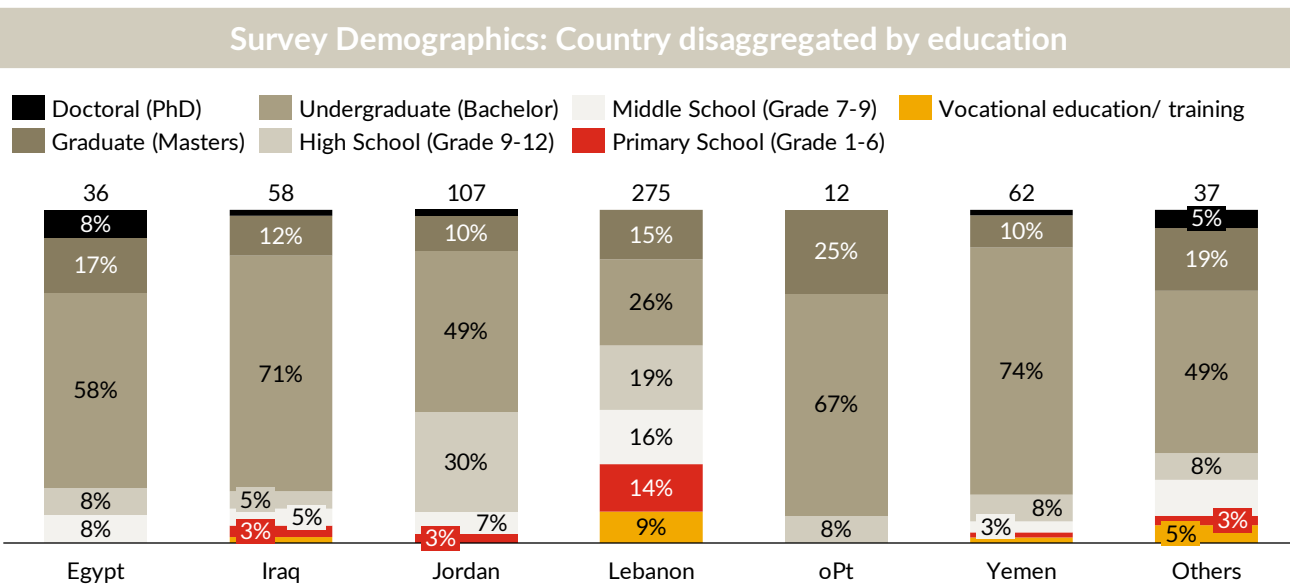


Figure 9: Survey Demographics - Education

D) Validation Workshop

Following the completion of data collection, Voluntas and Save the Children conducted a final validation workshop with the RYC on August 25, 2023 to discuss and brainstorm entry points based on the findings of the study. During the workshop, the findings were presented to the RYC, who provided feedback and additional insights and reflections, which were incorporated into the final report.

Safeguarding, Inclusion and Ethics

This participatory research study has prioritized child and youth safeguarding, including comprehensive ethical reviews and measures implemented to ensure the well-being and rights of all participants. All data collection instruments were reviewed by Save the Children's Ethics Review Committee to ensure their alignment with standard child and adult safeguarding measures and adherence to data protection and ethical standards.

Language used for engaging children and youth has been carefully edited to be comprehensible and child- and youth-friendly, promoting their active involvement in the research process. Informed consent was a paramount consideration – youth and other respondents over the age of 18 were asked to sign their own consent forms, and caregivers of children younger than 18 were approached for consent, while children provided their informed assent. All participants were provided with detailed information about the research's purpose, duration of the activity they participate in, potential risks, compensations, and other relevant expectations (Ref. Annex 2 and 3).

During data collection, the research team ensured a safe and conducive environment for all discussions conducted with youth and adolescents. Participants were provided with declared safe spaces to freely express themselves without fear of judgment or reprisals. Facilitation techniques were employed to address power dynamics, including age and gender dynamics, ensuring that all participants' voices were equally valued and heard. Confidentiality was guaranteed throughout the research process, assuring participants that their responses would be kept confidential and used anonymously and solely for research purposes. To maintain a high standard of sensitivity and effectiveness, the research team conducted a risk assessment, and developed training guides (Ref. Annex 2 and 3). All data collectors underwent comprehensive training on child-sensitive communication, consent and assent protocols, gender sensitivity, and conflict sensitivity. This training equipped them with the necessary skills to approach the research with the utmost respect for the participants' backgrounds and experiences. Moreover, data protection was considered throughout the design of the research and procedures were put in place to ensure data was collected and stored with restricted access, no unnecessary personally identifiable information was collected, and only the core research team had access to primary data. By implementing these robust child and youth safeguarding and data protection measures, this participatory research study aimed to uphold the highest ethical standards, prioritize the well-being of all participants, and ensure the research process was inclusive, empowering, and respectful of the unique perspectives and experiences of the children and youth involved.

Limitations and Challenges

Despite the comprehensive approach to child and youth participation and safeguarding in this study, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the scope of data collection offers valuable insights but might not fully capture the diverse perspectives of all children and youth in the region. With key primary data collection conducted in only six countries, the regional analysis provides an indication of trends but not a comprehensive and representative picture of the region as a whole.

The creative campaign survey, which intended to capture a broader perspective of children, youth and adults in the region received a significant number of responses, however, responses were heavily concentrated in a handful of countries, making it challenging to include a representative regional analysis. Notably, when examining responses across all age groups, we found minimal deviations between the perceptions of males and females. Differences in answers between the two groups typically were below 5 to 10%. This discrepancy can be attributed to the variations in the sample size of male versus female participants and given the margin of error of the sample size cannot be attributed to statistically significant differences.

Adolescent workshops were conducted by Save the Children's local and national country partners, except in Egypt where they were conducted by Save the Children's staff. The workshops, which included an innovative design-thinking approach, involved the facilitators guiding the adolescents to identify their own solutions to climate challenges, which posed certain challenges when country facilitators may also not have had sufficient knowledge of climate interventions in the region; with that in mind, foundational concepts of climate change and action have been covered in the facilitators training. Furthermore, the desk review, which was partially conducted by the RYC may be constrained by their nascent knowledge and experience in research methods, potentially affecting the depth and rigor of the review's findings. The Voluntas research team therefore complemented and verified the findings across countries to ensure validity of the conclusions.

With regards to assessing the climate policy and initiative landscape, the research team was limited to reviewing the texts of policies and evidence of initiatives that were accessible online, or through secondary sources, potentially excluding some unpublished policies currently under discussion, or certain local grassroots initiatives. Given this limitation, stakeholders who are knowledgeable about policymaking in the primary research countries as well as climate experts and activists at national and regional levels have been identified for interviews to enrich the overview of the climate policies examined in this analysis. As such this study should be regarded as a first look into the climate policy landscape in the region, but not an exhaustive catalogue of policies, programs and initiatives. Rather this study provides country and regional snapshots into the climate policy landscape, perspectives of young people, and entry points to facilitate meaningful child and youth participation in climate action, which should serve as inspiration for future research and exploration.

COUNTRY ANALYSIS



Figure 10. Young People in MENA and Climate Impacts Illustrations

This research aims to assess the impacts of climate change on children and youth’s rights, the climate policy landscape, and their level of child and youth inclusion in the MENA region. To achieve this, ten country close-ups are provided, mindful of the distinctiveness and complexities of each country within the region. These country-level in-depth analyses reveal the diverse effects of climate change, considering the varying socioeconomic dimensions, geological and climatic conditions, and livelihoods of high-, middle-, and low-income countries in the region. Despite these differences, MENA countries all share a significant population

In this research, "direct engagement" refers to key governmental structures facilitating child and/or youth participation, while "indirect engagement" highlights participation opportunities supported by international and local organizations, including community- and young people-led initiatives.

of young people, who hold the key to shaping future decisions and climate strategies. Furthermore, in six out of the ten countries a special focus has been given to highlight the perspectives and opinions of children and youth on climate impacts, as well as the opportunities and barriers to young people’s meaningful inclusion in decision-making through primary data collection. Following the country analysis, insights from the research are triangulated within a regional analysis, which identifies the trends and lessons learned from the region, to guide the development of tailored inclusive strategies and programs for young people’s meaningful participation in climate action.

Morocco



Climate impacts in Morocco have far-reaching consequences for the country's population, environment, and national economy. Climate variability, particularly **rising temperatures** (average annual temperatures projected to increase by up to 2.3°C by 2040-2059),¹⁵ disrupts socioeconomic environments in the country's



semi-arid areas, leading to food insecurity and unsustainable agroecological systems. Furthermore, **water scarcity** is being exacerbated by population growth and urbanization, putting the country

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.3°C by 2059.

on track for extreme water stress within 25 years.¹⁶ Morocco, alongside other North African countries, including Egypt and Tunisia, has a higher reliance on agricultural production compared to the wider MENA region. The agriculture and fisheries sector contributes around 13% to the country's GDP and represents some 35% of the country's employed population – the highest proportion of employment in agriculture in the region.¹⁷ With more than a third of Morocco's population living in rural areas (35%) - where farming and fishing provide the greatest proportion of incomes – **declining precipitation, droughts, and temperature anomalies** threaten to have a major negative impact on agricultural productivity, leading to reduced crop yields and compromised livelihoods.¹⁸ Rural residents, women - who represent more than half of the agricultural workforce (also one of the highest proportions in the region) – and youth (15-24), of whom 25% are unemployed, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of temperature increases and water stress in Morocco.¹⁹ The remaining two-thirds of the population, who live in urban, coastal areas face different climate challenges. Morocco is predicted to experience sea level rise of between 0.4-0.7 meters by 2100, with 42% of coastal areas at risk of erosion and floods by 2030.^{20,21} These areas are already stressed from industrial and urban development, tourism, and over-fishing, which may exacerbate their vulnerability to climate change.²²

Water scarcity serves as a catalyst for internal displacement, compelling individuals from regions affected by drought, like those surrounding the Oum Er Rbia water basin, to seek refuge in water-rich coastal cities. The evolving patterns of climate-induced mobility hold implications for national planning in Morocco, with internal migration reshaping population distribution across different regions. Notably, by 2050, climate in-migration hotspots are expected to emerge in the southwest near Agadir, around Rabat, and the Tingitana Peninsula, encompassing Tangiers, due to stable or marginally decreasing water availability conditions.²³ By the same year, the number of internal climate migrants in Morocco is predicted to average between 0.5 to 1.9 million.²⁴

The displacement of families and individuals, particularly children, engenders disruptions in education, heightens protection risks, and inflicts substantial health and mental health impacts.²⁵ This can lead to the adoption of negative coping mechanisms, placing children at elevated risk of gender-based violence, including child marriage, child trafficking, and exploitative labor practices.²⁶ Climate change has a pronounced impact on Moroccan Berber nomads, like the Amazigh in desert areas, whose traditional way of life faces intensifying

threats from climate change-induced droughts. Escalating water shortages have compelled some nomads to resort to unconventional measures, including taking loans to sustain their livestock, their primary livelihood asset. Consequently, a portion of these nomadic communities have transitioned into permanent settlements in urban centers.²⁷ The health impacts of climate change, particularly on children and the elderly, are also profound. Around the world, heightened vulnerability to food-borne diseases is being noted, with a projected rise in other health issues such as dengue fever, malaria, and schistosomiasis due to climate-related factors.²⁸ In Morocco, changes in temperature impact the distribution of leishmaniasis¹, further complicating the country's health landscape.²⁹ This phenomenon has profound implications, especially for children, as the visceral form of leishmaniasis predominantly affects them and poses a potentially fatal threat.³⁰

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 1)

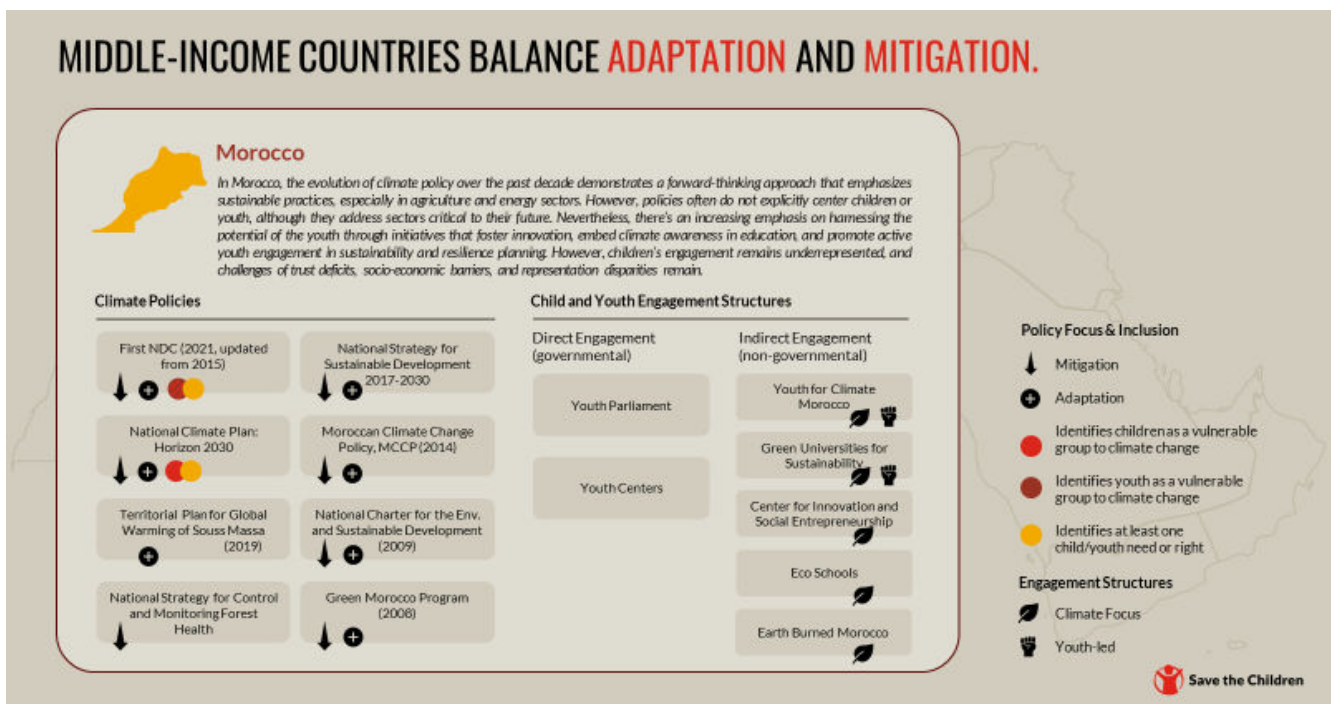


Figure 11. Morocco Climate Policy Snapshot

Morocco has implemented a comprehensive set of climate change policies that address adaptation and mitigation challenges. Key policies include the 2008 **Green Morocco Program**, which focuses on modernizing agricultural water infrastructure and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.³¹ The 2014 Moroccan **Climate Change Policy (CCP)** encompasses various sectors and emphasizes the strengthening of institutional frameworks, engagement of local communities, including their youth, and the promotion of research and innovation.³² While both policies are not expressly framed as child or youth inclusive, they establish commitments in child and youth-critical sectors, namely sustainable agriculture.

¹ Leishmaniasis is a parasitic disease that is found in parts of the tropics, subtropics, and southern Europe. It is classified as a neglected tropical disease (NTD). Leishmaniasis is caused by infection with Leishmania parasites, which are spread by the bite of phlebotomine sand flies.

Morocco's updated **NDC**, developed in 2015 and updated in 2021, outlines its commitment to reducing GHG emissions by 18.3% by 2030, with the potential to achieve a 45.5% reduction with international support. To realize these objectives, the NDC establishes distinct benchmarks, including a targeted 20% decrease in energy consumption by 2030 when contrasted with the BAU scenario. The BAU scenario assumes that ongoing practices, policies, and actions associated with energy usage, industrial methods, transportation, and land utilization remain unchanged or unaltered, thereby lacking significant efforts to address climate change. Moreover, Morocco aims to increase the share of renewable electricity generation from 17.6% in 2020 to 52% by 2030, with 20% from solar, 20% from wind, and 12% from hydro sources.³³

Within the NDC's list of target points, there is an explicit recognition of youth for their economic vulnerabilities to climate change. For instance, one of the target points mentions improving the income and economic inclusion of youth in the country.³⁴ Children, on the other hand, are only mentioned by the NDC in relation to respiratory health issues, but not explicitly in relation to further climate impacts. **The National Climate Plan**, established in 2019 sets strategic objectives for achieving renewable energy targets by 2030, reducing energy consumption, and supporting reforestation efforts.³⁵ The policy involves various social actors in the country's transition into a green economy including children, and its articles encourage climate education in the school curricula and promote the participation of different age groups in climate planning and resilience.³⁶ Local climate initiatives demonstrate an equally strong commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility, and tend to be more child and youth sensitive. For instance, the **Youth Innovation Summit** in Rabat engages young Moroccans in developing innovative solutions for sustainable development, covering topics like green energy, climate change, urban sustainability, and food production. Similarly, the **AESVT Agadir Initiative** fosters eco-citizenship and sustainable development awareness among school children, emphasizing climate change challenges and good practices.³⁷

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

Morocco has established various bodies, agencies, and mechanisms to ensure the participation of children and youth in climate policy-making processes, demonstrating the country's commitment to their active involvement in shaping climate action. These entities span across national, regional, and local levels, providing platforms for meaningful participation and representation. The Children's Parliament, known as the **Chambre des représentants**, established in 2014, is a significant avenue for child participation in Morocco's policy-making landscape.³⁸ Composed of children aged 10 to 17, the parliament functions as a non-governmental institution with a mandate to provide recommendations, proposals, and questions to policymakers. It is structured in various specialized committees, including education, health and environment, children's rights, culture, and local affairs. The parliament holds national and regional sessions, allowing children to voice their

concerns, share insights, and contribute to policy discussions. In addition, Morocco has over 650 **youth centers** scattered throughout the country. These public structures serve as essential platforms for the social integration and participation of youth (aged 15-29).³⁹ They facilitate activities, programs, and services that empower youth to participate in various aspects of public life, including civic engagement and policy discussions. The government is taking steps to enhance the role of these centers and expand their reach to provide essential services and information to youth.⁴⁰ In addition, Morocco's active participation in international climate conferences, such as the Conference of Parties (COP), enables youth to engage in global climate policy dialogue through the UN youth delegation. These conferences provide platforms for youth delegates to advocate for climate solutions and advocate for their inclusion in climate policies.⁴¹

Replicable Practice

Morocco has a Children's Parliament composed of children aged 10 to 17 who work in different committees to contribute to policy discussions

While there are substantial efforts to involve children and youth in policy processes, several challenges persist. Youth parliaments and councils have limited jurisdiction. Considered purely consultative bodies, they offer non-binding council on policy issues, and have a restricted role in both policymaking and policy implementation processes.⁴² In addition, the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives within these bodies is not always fully represented. For example, the youth parliament is comprised of 395 members, 305 of which are selected based on academic merit alone and 60% of which are male.⁴³ Inequalities between regions in terms of resource allocation and investment in avenues like youth centers also discourage youth participation.⁴⁴ These obstacles underscore the need for comprehensive inclusivity strategies to ensure that all voices are heard and integrated into policy development.

Indirect Engagement

The participation of children and youth in climate policymaking in Morocco extends beyond direct participation and encompasses a range of indirect mechanisms, enabling their contribution to climate action. Movements like "**Youth for Climate Morocco**" play a vital role in sensitizing Moroccan youth to climate challenges and promoting participation through educational and innovative projects.⁴⁵ United Nations team in Morocco's campaigns like "**From Milan to Glasgow: Moroccan Youth Leaders in the Spotlight**" further empower youth to combat climate change and reduce carbon emissions.⁴⁶ University clubs like the Green Universities for Sustainability club and social entrepreneurship initiatives like the Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship provide platforms for youth to develop solutions addressing climate challenges while gaining entrepreneurial skills.⁴⁷ Moroccan governmental and non-governmental entities contribute to indirect youth engagement through diverse programs. The Mohammed VI Foundation for

Environmental Protection, through initiatives like **Eco-schools** and **Young Journalists'** capacity-building programs, nurtures environmentally conscious youth.⁴⁸ Programs like **CorpsAfrica** enable young adults to serve as "Peace Corps Volunteers," driving solutions to poverty at the community level.⁴⁹ International actors also play a role, such as the UN Association and the UN Democracy Fund's projects that encourage youth participation in public policy dialogues.⁵⁰ Additionally, initiatives such as the British Council's "**Climate Connection**" project and **Earth Burned Morocco** harness global collaboration for youth-led climate action.⁵¹

Several obstacles persist in fostering indirect youth engagement in climate policymaking. A significant portion of Moroccan youth lack trust in their government, leading to disengagement from political processes.⁵² Endemic corruption and skepticism regarding the authenticity of reforms dampen youth enthusiasm for policy engagement.⁵³ Poverty and challenging socio-economic conditions in certain regions hinder youth participation in civil society activities. Despite legislative improvements, the challenge remains in implementing laws effectively, translating them into concrete actions, and establishing mechanisms for determining the best interests of children.⁵⁴ The absence of financial resources and the exclusion of younger children from regional committees undermine their participation, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁵⁵ Indirect participation mechanisms hold significant potential to empower Moroccan youth in climate policymaking, yet addressing these obstacles is crucial to ensure their inclusion in shaping the country's climate agenda. Collaborations between governmental institutions, NGOs, and international actors can help overcome challenges and create a supportive ecosystem that enables children and youth to contribute effectively to climate action and sustainable development. Overall, Morocco has made notable progress in youth and child participation, however, continual efforts to enhance the representation of diverse voices and perspectives will contribute to more effective and inclusive climate policymaking.

Morocco's participation structures predominantly lean towards youth-oriented initiatives, with a noticeable underrepresentation of programs tailored specifically for children. This trend, while affirming the nation's commitment to involving youth in decision-making processes, underscores a potential gap in holistically addressing the needs and perspectives of all age groups. It presents an opportunity for child-focused agencies to step in, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to climate engagement in the country.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Saudi Arabia, characterized by its vast desert landscape and substantial dependence on fossil fuels, is grappling with a series of climate extremes, including **extreme heat, flash floods, droughts, and dust storms**. In 2021, the nation's average temperature reached 27°C, with some regions experiencing temperatures over 50 degrees in summer, making it one of the world's hottest countries.⁵⁶



Saudi Arabia has experienced a concerning 1.9 °C temperature increase over the past 50 years, leading to



Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.7°C by 2059.

tangible impacts on agriculture and food security. The country is further expected to experience an average increase of up to 2.7°C by 2059.⁵⁷ The rise in temperature has particularly affected the country's principal crop, winter wheat, which is highly sensitive to heat, threatening the nation's already limited food production capacity.^{58,59} Higher temperatures also endanger fishing in the Red Sea, posing an additional risk to national food supplies.⁶⁰ With KSA becoming increasingly dependent on food imports, agricultural workers are facing increased risks to their livelihoods. These workers - 95% of whom are foreign migrants - face increased vulnerability to extreme heat as they work long hours, earn lower wages and do not get adequate safety training.^{61,62}

KSA is a young country with a median age of 29 and around 40% of the population under the age of 24.⁶³ This young demographic is especially susceptible to the effects of climate change, with extreme heat posing significant risks, particularly to children under 5 years old. **Heightened temperatures can lead to increased mortality risk, especially among marginalized children and youth.**⁶⁴ In schools, high temperatures and humidity can result in heat exhaustion and heatstroke. A study of Saudi children and youth between the ages of 15 and 19 found that the sweltering weather deterred physical activity.⁶⁵ Younger children may be even more susceptible to heat illnesses as their bodies are not as good at regulating their temperatures and they rely on adults for adaptive behaviors such as drinking more water, moving to cooler spaces, or resting when too hot.⁶⁶ Regardless of emission scenarios, KSA consistently experiences the highest category of child exposure to extreme heat, which poses a major concern.⁶⁷

KSA is also one of the world's most water-stressed countries, and long-term studies indicate that rising temperatures and evaporation rates will likely further deplete scarce water resources critical to meeting the nation's agricultural, industrial, and domestic needs.^{68,69} Moreover, water efficiency measures implemented to address the situation have caused frustrations and unrest among citizens.⁷⁰ On the coasts of the kingdom, the sea levels are projected to rise from 0.18 meters to 0.23 meters by 2050 and coastal cities like Jeddah, with a population exceeding four million, are particularly at risk.⁷¹ Additionally, KSA is prone to short and severe bouts of rainfall, leading to floods that contaminate water reserves and pose health hazards.

While KSA faces significant climate-related risks, the country’s reliance on fossil fuels, and its status as one of the world’s largest oil producers, contributes to substantial GHG emissions, including CO2 emissions. The country ranks eighth in the world in terms of per capita CO2 emissions.⁷² Heavy dependence on desalination, though critical for water supply, also significantly contributes to environmental damage and GHG emissions, exacerbating the prevailing water scarcity issues.⁷³ While the country has set ambitious goals to achieve "net zero" emissions by 2060, it has also faced skepticism about its strategies to maintain oil dependency and hinder climate negotiations. Some critics argue that the focus on carbon capture technologies and increasing oil drilling could delay the transition away from fossil fuels, raising doubts about KSA’s genuine commitment to addressing the climate crisis effectively.⁷⁴

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 2)

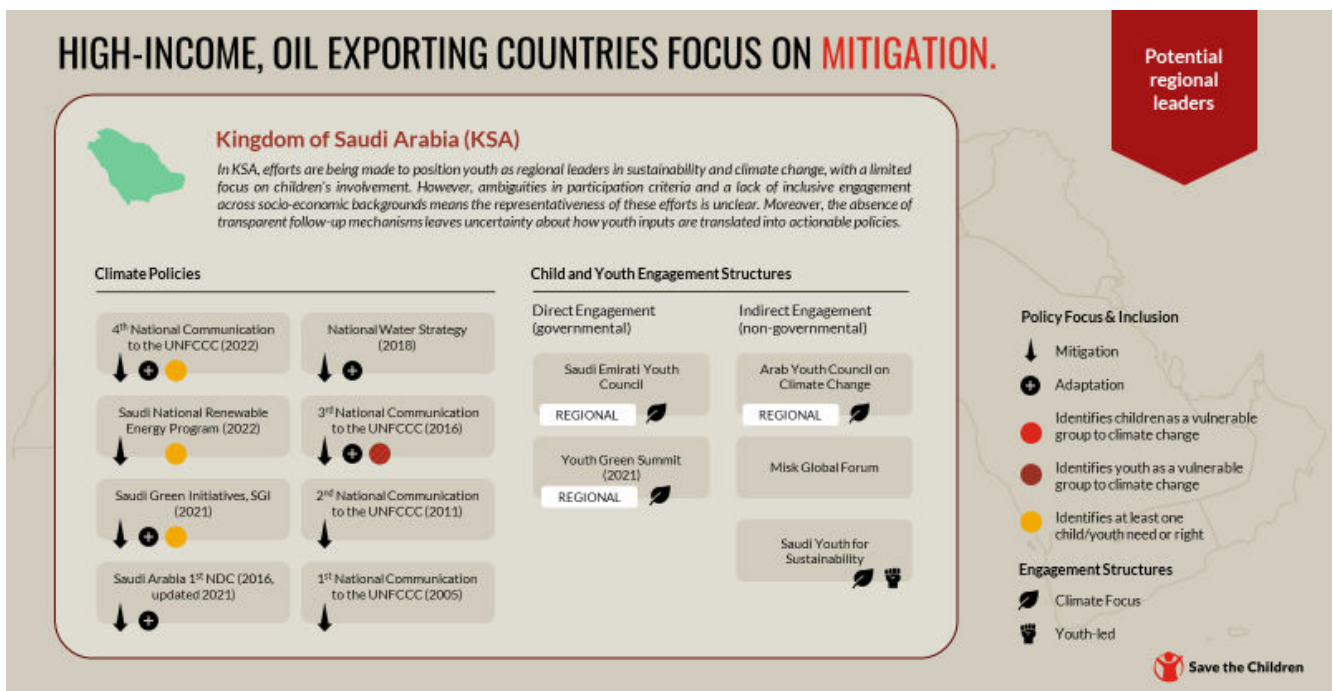


Figure 12. KSA Climate Policy Snapshot

Despite its reliance on fossil fuels and status as the second highest per capita emitter in the region after the UAE,⁷⁵ KSA has shown some commitment to fighting climate change by signing the Paris Agreement and submitting its NDC in 2021. The NDC outlines programs, policies, initiatives, and collaborative platforms to address climate change challenges at national, regional, and global levels. Through this document, KSA showcases its mitigation strategy through energy efficiency, renewables and carbon capture and storage. Even though KSA does not make its plans for oil production clear, it has set a national goal to cut 50% of its GHG emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by 2060. On the adaptation front, KSA aims to improve water management, marine protection, plant trees to reduce desertification, and encourage sustainable urban planning infrastructure.

The NDC objectives will be achieved through the **Saudi Green Initiative (SGI)**, which was launched in 2021 in collaboration between the Government and the private sector, with a commitment to facilitate a transition to a circular carbon economy.^{76 77,78} Moreover, the SGI aims to protect 30% of its terrestrial and marine area through afforestation and biodiversity protection. KSA also implemented a **Green Buildings Code** in 2019 which addresses the long-term sustainability of buildings.⁷⁹ KSA has several energy efficiency policies such as the **Saudi Energy Efficiency Program** which has been active since 2012 to rationalize the consumption of energy in industry, construction and land transport.⁸⁰ Additionally, renewable energy initiatives are underscored by the Government who put together the **National Renewable Energy Program**, a framework to invest in localized renewable energy projects and encourage public-private partnerships, allowing the private sector to buy and invest in renewable energy.⁸¹ Despite putting forward these policies, KSA remains the second biggest oil producer on earth.

Most of KSA is arid, which makes water resources scarce. To face this scarcity exacerbated by climate change, the National Water Strategy of KSA encompasses various programs aimed at implementing comprehensive water management policies, optimizing resource utilization, enhancing sector resilience, promoting innovation and capability building, improving supply chain efficiency and service quality, regulating water services, reconstructing the Saline Water Conversion Corporation, restructuring and privatizing distribution, and enhancing irrigation through the Saudi Irrigation Organization. Nevertheless, none of these policies and strategies seem to be inclusive of children and youth in their text.

When it comes to children and youth representation in climate policies, KSA's **fourth National Communication (NC4)** submitted to the UNFCCC recognize its large youth population as a key asset in the realization of its climate change strategies.⁸² For example, in NC4, the document analyzes the socio-economic impact of climate challenges and undertaken measures by the government, it underscores the access of women and children to clean energy for cooking and the creation of 400,000 green jobs for youth. The strategy's reference to children and youth acknowledges their role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), aligning with an overall global trend. However, it fails to detail how these groups will be actively engaged in its implementation. This omission may signify a lack of institutionalization that could obstruct effective engagement with children and youth. Furthermore, the absence of specific mention in the NDC might point to a potential disconnect between recognizing the importance of youth and translating this recognition into concrete, actionable climate plans and commitments. Finally, while the KSA has announced several environmental commitments, there hasn't been comprehensive reporting available on the implementation progress of these initiatives.

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

Children and youth under 24 represent 40% of KSA's population.⁸³ The country has created the **Saudi Emirati Youth Council** in partnership with the UAE. The council, which is endorsed by members of the Saudi royal family, targets youth from both countries to promote their collaboration in the creation of sustainable development projects in line with KSA's SDG strategy, and Vision 2030.⁸⁴ However, the criteria for participation in the youth council are undefined, and there is no specific age bracket provided, making it difficult to assess the representativity of the Youth Council. In October 2021, the SGI Forum, launched by the Crown Prince of KSA, brought together government members, businesses, and international experts to discuss KSA's progress on its climate action goals. In tandem with the forum, another discussion took place, the **Youth Green Summit**, which gathered young climate advocates and created a space for them to learn about climate change, present their recommendations and advise policymaking. Similarly, information on age brackets for participants was not clearly communicated.

Replicable Practice

The Saudi Emirati Youth Council targets youth from both countries to promote their collaboration in the creation of sustainable development projects

When it comes to inclusivity, some sources like The Saudi Emirati Youth Council website⁸⁵ and online communications related to the Youth Green Summit⁸⁶ underscore the involvement of women and their role in sharing their experiences and demands relating to climate change. However, there is a lack of information about the level of inclusion of children and youth from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and those with disabilities. Up-to-date news and follow-up information on these initiatives also remain scarce, making it challenging to assess the impact on the nation's children and youth. Consequently, while youth participation may appear to be emphasized through their participation and input in discussions, there is a lack of clarity regarding how their contributions are translated into actionable decisions and policies.

Indirect Engagement

When it comes to non-governmental structures, Saudi youth participate in the **AYCC** which is a regional council initiated by the Youth Federal Authority in the UAE. The council serves to engage youth age 15-30 in climate action and to disseminate climate change education.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the Misk Foundation, an LNNGO founded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud in 2011, hosts the **Misk Global Forum** with the objective of empowering young men and women under the age of 35 and providing them with a platform to exchange ideas on various subjects, including sustainability and climate change.⁸⁸

The youth-led initiative “**Saudi Youth for Sustainability**” has a national scope and aims to establish student sustainability groups in Saudi universities, facilitate networking among youth change-makers, encourage knowledge sharing on sustainable development and UN-SDG, and promote the spread of successful youth sustainability initiatives.⁸⁹ This initiative is open to male and female students in Saudi high-schools or universities or studying abroad, professionals interested in supporting youth, and groups of students in Saudi universities forming campus clubs working towards SDG.⁹⁰ Saudi Youth for Sustainability also has a program in partnership with the British Council in KSA, The **Climate Change Champions** program which offers an opportunity for climate activists to come together, learn from each other, and make a united impact through workshops on active citizenship and climate covering various topics related to nature, identities, cultures, dialogue, societies, ecosystems, and social action.⁹¹

In KSA, a concerted effort is being made to position youth as regional leaders in sustainability and climate change initiatives with limited focus on children’s involvement. This is reflected in the creation of platforms like the **Saudi Emirati Youth Council**, and the **Youth Green Summit**, aimed at promoting collaboration and empowering young leaders, with no focus on engaging children. However, ambiguities in participation criteria and a lack of inclusive participation across various socio-economic backgrounds means the representativeness of these efforts is unclear. Moreover, the absence of transparent follow-up mechanisms leaves uncertainty about how youth inputs are translated into actionable policies. Thus, while there are significant strides towards positioning Saudi youth as regional leaders, there remains a need for more clarity, inclusiveness, and tangible action to ensure that these initiatives are more than symbolic and lead to substantive change.

Tunisia



Tunisia is a coastal country that heavily relies on tourism and agriculture, which makes it particularly vulnerable to weather patterns and climate change. The country is projected to experience a **temperature increase** of up to 2.1°C by 2050, coupled with a 28% decrease in **water resources** by 2030.^{92,93} These changes pose significant risks to agricultural livelihoods, which represent 15% of total employment in the country.⁹⁴ Women are particularly affected, making up more than 50% of the

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.1°C by 2050.

agricultural labor force.⁹⁵ **Youth working in rural agricultural areas often resort to rural-urban migration for economic opportunities** such as young farmers in Mareth, Medenine Nord, Sidi Makhlouf and Beni Khedache who reported preferring migrating to the island of Djerba to work in other sectors like tourism when laboring the land proves unsustainable.⁹⁶ **The decline of crop yields compromises national food security and endangers the nutritional well-being of children, particularly those in poverty who constituted 21.1% of Tunisian children in 2016.**⁹⁷ Rising temperatures also heighten the vulnerability of children to vector-borne diseases, such as dengue fever. Additionally, water scarcity exacerbates the lack of water access in schools, impacting education and contributing to child dropout rates.⁹⁸ Furthermore, **sea level rise** threatens the coastal economy, infrastructure and freshwater reserves due to saltwater intrusion, impacting coastal livelihoods like that of the women clam collectors in Kerkennah who face financial and health risks due to rising sea levels.⁹⁹

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 3)

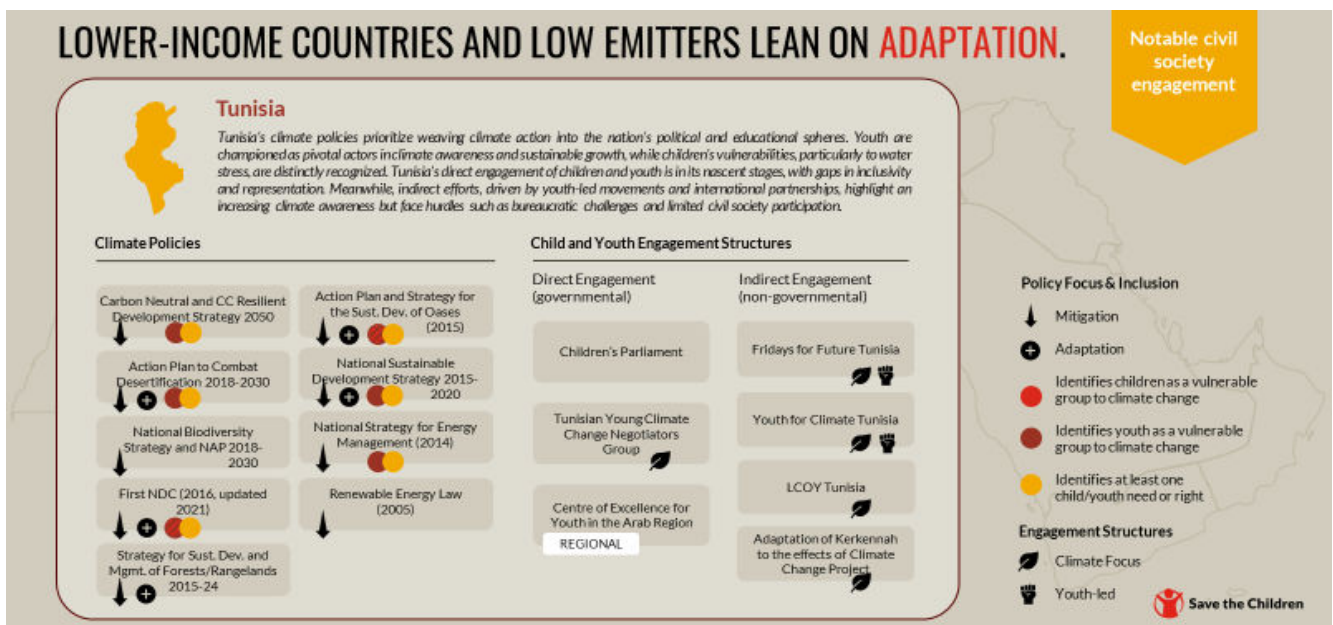


Figure 13. Tunisia Climate Policy Snapshot

Tunisia's commitment to environmental consciousness can be traced back to the 1990s when it introduced the national environmental mascot, the Labib, along with a country-wide awareness campaign on ecological preservation. Tunisia ratified the UNFCCC in 1993 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2002. In 2001, 2014 and 2018, the country also published a National Communication to the UNFCCC, presenting Tunisia's climate context, GHG inventory, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and contributions to the mitigation and adaptation of Climate Change. In 2012, the **National Climate Change Strategy** was launched with the objective of giving climate action a political focus. It aims to prioritize climate-related matters in parliamentary discussions and establish an institutional framework to guide the implementation of various climate action measures by responsible entities. The strategy also includes a focus on the institutionalization of climate education. Climate challenges in Tunisia are also highly linked to the serious issue of youth unemployment, as changing weather patterns affects agricultural lands and pushes youth in rural areas to look for alternative sources of revenue.

In 2016, Tunisia signed the Paris Agreement and subsequently published its first **NDC** the same year, which it updated in 2021. In the document, Tunisia sets ambitious targets for reducing carbon intensity by 45% - compared to 2010 levels - by 2030. The plan emphasizes a low-carbon scenario and aims to build resilience in vulnerable sectors such as water resources, agriculture, ecosystems, coastline, health, and tourism. The document acknowledges the importance of gender considerations and includes specific sections with a focus on promoting gender equality. It recognizes the role of youth in climate awareness and highlights the need for youth-inclusive economic growth, particularly in sectors like tourism and agriculture. The document also emphasizes enhancing youth participation in climate-related initiatives. Additionally, children are identified as a vulnerable group in the NDCs, particularly in relation to water stress. The plan calls for the dissemination of specialized health programs for mothers and children in internal regions, recognizing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of this group. Despite the elaborate study that presents the NDC, critics have highlighted the lack of consultations with NGOs and youth in the development of the document and the absence of a yearly action plan to implement the NDC.¹⁰⁰

In addition to the NDC and the National Communications, Tunisia has several policies in various sectors like the **Tunisian Solar Plan** (2005), the **National Strategy for Energy Management** (2014) for the energy sector, the **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)** (2018-2030), and the **Strategy for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Management of Forests and Rangelands** (2015-2024) in the biodiversity sector. While some of these policies mention youth, none mention children, and few identify young people as key stakeholders at all.

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

In Tunisia, climate change is recognized as a critical issue by 35% of young individuals aged 18 to 29.¹⁰¹ While avenues exist for children and youth to express their concerns to policymakers and actively participate in policy creation, their involvement in climate policymaking is comparatively limited. Tunisia has established a

Children's Parliament for individuals aged 12 to 16, but it lacks a specific focus on addressing climate change. Furthermore, one of the criteria for becoming a child representative is maintaining high grades, potentially excluding children with fewer educational opportunities who may be particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.¹⁰²

Within the broader national parliament, only 5.19% of seats (8 seats) are occupied by individuals under the age of 30.¹⁰³ This figure is significantly below the already modest regional average of 16%.¹⁰⁴ According to the Arab Barometer, only 20% of Tunisian youth express interest or strong interest in politics, which may hinder the candidacy of young individuals in formal political structures.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, a report by GIZ in 2021 highlighted a lack of trust in political institutions among the youth, particularly among rural youth, with 91.2% reporting a lack of trust compared to 68.7% among urban youth.¹⁰⁶ This disparity could lead to a lack of representation for rural youth within official structures. To remedy to this, a study by the Arab Reform Initiative suggests that the implementation of youth quotas in local municipal elections has proven effective in Tunisia, ensuring that a 37% of seats are allocated to individuals under the age of 35.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, this study emphasizes the significance of considering the generational differences among youth. Those belonging to Generation Z, who did not experience the Ben Ali regime, exhibit a more positive perception of politics compared to individuals from Generation Y.¹⁰⁸

While Tunisia have supported youth in climate discussions through the formation of the **Tunisian Young Climate Change Negotiators Group** in August 2021, there remains a degree of uncertainty surrounding the tangible impact and integration of their recommendations. This assembly, comprised of 18 young activists, aids the national delegation in global climate negotiations and monitors Tunisia's commitment to the Paris Agreement. However, it's still unclear to what extent youth perspectives genuinely influence decision-making and policy execution in the realm of climate diplomacy.¹⁰⁹

In 2021, the UNFPA Arab States Regional Office and the Tunisian government collaborated to inaugurate the **Centre of Excellence for Youth in the Arab Region**. This initiative, emphasizing knowledge dissemination, capacity-building, and youth policy support, emerged as a direct response to recommendations from youth during the second edition of the Youth Forum in the Arab Region, which took place in Tunisia in 2019. This endeavor underscored the continued dedication to youth-focused agendas in the Arab regions, albeit without a direct focus on climate issues.¹¹⁰ Overall, Tunisia faces challenges in effectively engaging its child and youth population in the policymaking process, particularly in the broader context. Yet, some established initiatives, are geared towards the inclusion of children and youth. While these efforts are still in their early stages and may not encompass all voices, they reflect a positive shift towards amplifying youth input in environmental strategies.

Indirect Engagement

Many NGOs and youth-led movements are working on climate action in Tunisia, whether it is their main focus or only a component of their work. A total of 22 **Fridays for Future** strikes have taken place in the country since 2019.¹¹¹ The same year, **Youth for Climate Tunisia** was founded in Kairouan by high school students, following a heatwave. This youth-led movement advocates for climate action, creates pressure on policymakers through strikes and raises awareness about climate change online. A member of this movement reported that restrictions to youth climate advocacy, due to complex registration processes and recognition by the state, constrain their activities. Their initiatives are also slowed down by a lack of funding as well as political instability that prevents continuity in their advocacy to the government. The limited access to information on climate change and youth participation in climate action in Tunisia also poses an additional challenge for young people in formulating evidence-based arguments.¹¹²

Replicable Practice

After a period of heatwaves, high school students in Kairouan, one of Tunisia's most affected regions by climate change, founded the organization Youth for Climate Tunisia in 2019

Furthermore, awareness campaigns, youth workshops, and other youth climate initiatives are organized by INGOs such as WWF, which partnered up with other organizations like YOUNGO and the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation Tunisia to organize the **Local Conference of Youth (LCOY) Tunisia** and the Henrich Boll Foundation which provided a fully funded opportunity for Tunisian youth between 23-38 to go to their **Regional Summer School** in Jordan in 2023. LNNGOs like the **Association des Amis du Belvedere** have provided climate education workshops for children and youth, and the "Adaptation of Kerkennah to the effects of climate change" project organized by the **Lions Club Sfax Thyna** raised awareness among students and local community on energy efficiency and clean energy and contributed to the installation of 13 photovoltaic stations by local households.

Despite a significant increase in the number of LNNGO's in the years following the 2011 revolution, the participation of young people in these organizations remains limited, with only 6.4% of youth actively involved in local organizations.¹¹³ As a result, the number of youths involved in LNNGOs that specifically concentrate on climate-related issues is even lower.¹¹⁴ While both the Government and NGOs have taken steps to engage young people in climate discussions, their inclusion in the implementation of these efforts, as well as monitoring and evaluation of climate projects, remains limited.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



The UAE is known for its arid subtropical climate, high temperatures, limited rainfall, and frequent dust-laden sandstorms.¹¹⁵ With outdoor temperatures consistently above 25°C and relative humidity exceeding 60% for most of the year, the region is highly susceptible to the effects of climate change.¹¹⁶ Analysis of anthropogenic drivers over the past few decades reveals a discernible trend towards a **warmer climate**, and future projections anticipate a 2.4°C temperature increase by 2059.¹¹⁷ The UAE also faces the challenge of **rising sea levels**, with projections suggesting the loss of up to 6% of its developed and populated coastline by 2100.¹¹⁸ This is of particular concern as 87% of the UAE's population of over nine million people reside in urban areas located on the Persian Gulf coast.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the UAE's water consumption rate per capita, which significantly exceeds global consumption averages with 500 liters per day, is only expected to increase.¹²⁰ This, coupled with the rapid depletion of groundwater resources, presents a key policy challenge for the country. Water scarcity boosts investment in seawater desalination, which is both financially taxing and high in carbon emissions.¹²¹ Climate change is also likely to impact biodiversity and food security in the UAE. Changes in temperature and water availability may lead to the extinction of certain plant and animal species and adversely affect agriculture due to reduced freshwater availability and increased saltwater intrusion.¹²² The UAE relies on imports for 87% of its food supply, putting the country at risk of import disruption due to climate-induced changes in price and supply.¹²³

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.4°C by 2059.

Slow-onset phenomena like rising sea levels pose significant threats to the livelihoods of families residing in coastal areas. According to the UAE's Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, the potential for infrastructure damage and displacement of the coastal population due to sea level rise and extreme weather events necessitates urgent attention.¹²⁴ **The implications of climate change on food access further exacerbate vulnerabilities, particularly for lower-income households and expatriate populations in the UAE.** Limited budgets for food, combined with shifts in food spending patterns due to climate change, create additional stresses for these groups.¹²⁵ **Children and youth, particularly those most impacted by inequality and discrimination, and those with pre-existing chronic conditions, such as respiratory, cerebral, and cardiovascular diseases, are at heightened risk due to extreme heat events exacerbated by climate change.** This phenomenon also intensifies the impact of poor air quality, further compromising public health in the UAE.¹²⁶ Rising temperatures also necessitate adjustments in work standards to protect their well-being. Recent studies highlight the importance of implementing measures to acclimate workers to the increasing temperatures and minimize potential risks.¹²⁷

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 4)



Figure 14. UAE Climate Policy Snapshot

Although the UAE is hosting 2023's UN Climate Summit, COP28, national oil production continues to grow and the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) CEO, sits as President of COP28 this year, prompting criticism from a number of civil society organizations. Regarding future plans, the **Energy Strategy 2050**, unveiled in 2017, aims to augment the share of clean energy in the total mix from 25 to 50% by 2050, alongside a targeted 70% reduction in the carbon footprint of power generation. The strategy envisions the inclusion of several cleaner energy sources. However, it omits distinct initiatives to aid youth in adapting to the shifts propelled by these governmental endeavors. Additionally, while the policy's investments and objectives could generate job opportunities through the expansion of renewable energy sectors, no clear indication of youth-focused job training or empowerment programs is provided.¹²⁸ Contrarily, ADNOC's plans appear to contrast with such sustainability goals. According to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) guidelines to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, new oil and gas projects shouldn't have been greenlit post-2021. Yet, a staggering 90% of new projects were approved after this cut-off, diverging from these global directives, with only 10% aligning with the IEA's 2050 net-zero scenario.¹²⁹ The UAE's **Green Agenda 2030** outlines strategic objectives and initiatives in areas such as the knowledge economy, social development, sustainable environment, clean energy, and sustainable resource use. This plan aims to enhance the UAE's economic growth, diversify its energy sources, and address environmental challenges.¹³⁰ In terms of child-sensitivity, the policy aims to integrate the principles of the green economy and sustainable development into the school curriculum, reflecting a proactive stance in educating younger generations about environmental issues. However, despite mentioning children in this context, the policy lacks specific references to addressing the unique vulnerabilities and risks they might face in the context of climate change. For youth, the policy outlines the provision of student scholarships for environmental courses in higher education. While this suggests

recognition of youth's role in driving environmental knowledge and innovation, the policy does not delve into the broader participation of young people in decision-making processes related to the environment or sustainable development. The UAE's Ministry of Education has introduced the **Green Education Partnership Roadmap** in anticipation of COP28. This globally adaptable roadmap aims to empower students and educators with pivotal climate insights. Supporting this work, UNICEF has partnered with the Ministry of Education to bolster climate literacy among the youth by providing extensive training for the UAE educators and facilitating open-source learning resources.¹³¹

To secure water resources and promote sustainability, the **UAE Water Security Strategy 2036** focuses on reducing total water demand, increasing water productivity, and enhancing water storage capacity. The strategy includes measures for water demand and supply management, along with policy development, and awareness campaigns.¹³² Groups most impacted by inequality and discrimination, such as those with low socio-economic status, people with disabilities, or refugees, are not explicitly mentioned in the policy, which may result in the policy not addressing potential disparities in access to water resources. Furthermore, the strategy does not explicitly address the specific risks and vulnerabilities that children and youth might face concerning water scarcity or emergencies. While the policy focuses on overall water conservation, storage, and distribution, it lacks a dedicated approach to ensuring the well-being and resilience of these age groups. Addressing the threat of Invasive alien species (IAS), the **UAE National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan (NISSAP) 2022-2026** aims to protect natural resources, the environment, and communities. It outlines measures to prevent the introduction and spread of IAS, manage established IAS, and enhance cooperation at national and international levels.¹³³ The policy does not explicitly mention children or youth in its objectives or content. Furthermore, the policy does not specifically address the risks and vulnerabilities that invasive species might pose to children and youth. While the strategy seeks to improve public awareness and enhance capacity for managing IAS, it does not highlight the potential threats that invasive species could pose to the health, safety, or well-being of young individuals. The **National Food Security Strategy 2051**, launched in 2018, aims to enhance food security by diversifying food sources, developing a comprehensive national system, and activating legislation and policies to improve nutrition and reduce waste. The strategy envisions the UAE as a leader in the Global Food Security Index by 2051 and among the top 10 countries by 2021. Although the policy's overall goal is to ensure access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for all, it does not explicitly mention children and youth as important stakeholders in this context. The **National Climate Change Plan 2017–2050** sets objectives to manage GHG emissions, enhance adaptation to climate change, and support economic diversification.¹³⁴ It emphasizes the importance of monitoring emissions, implementing adaptation measures across sectors, and promoting private-sector-driven economic diversification.¹³⁵ In addition, the policy outlines the intention to conduct awareness raising and communications campaigns targeting various audiences, including youth. This approach indicates a proactive effort to engage young individuals and raise their understanding and motivation to address climate change. Additionally, the policy acknowledges the importance of capacity building for youth, recognizing that the UAE has a substantial young population. The focus on developing technical, managerial, and vocational skills for the youth population aligns

with the country's Youth Empowerment Strategy and Emiratization Strategy and prepares the young population for green roles and responsibilities.¹³⁶

To promote environmental awareness and behavior change among the younger generation, the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) has implemented several local outreach programs targeting children and youth. The **Enviro-Spellathon**, geared toward children aged 4-11 years, promotes eco-literacy and environmental awareness through engaging and interactive games, both in hard-copy book format and through an app. The **Sustainable Schools Initiative (SSI)** and the **Sustainable Campus Initiative (SCI)** extend these efforts to students aged 12-17 years and 18-35 years, respectively. SSI focuses on increasing environmental awareness while building capacity to reduce the environmental footprint in schools. Meanwhile, SCI encourages sustainability practices, awareness, and proactive behaviors on college and university campuses, with a particular emphasis on turning ideas into action¹³⁷. Another program, **Connect with Nature (CwN)**, launched in 2018, targets young people aged 15-30, encouraging them to reconnect with the UAE's natural heritage and become environmental changemakers. CwN's pillars, Re-wild, Re-think, and Lead, guide young participants in discovering nature, challenging the status quo, and taking leadership roles in environmental conservation.¹³⁸ The **Carbon Ambassadors Program**, administered by DEWA and supported by the Dubai Carbon Centre of Excellence, aims to raise awareness among university students about sustainability, low-carbon growth, and effective economies. The program engages young people in sustainable environmental practices, emission mitigation, and adaptation.¹³⁹ By involving university students and providing training and experience, this initiative contributes to achieving the UAE's 2021 vision and helps manage GHG emissions.¹⁴⁰ While the UAE's efforts in fostering eco-awareness among its youth are commendable, there's a risk that emphasizing individual actions could deflect attention from the broader systemic changes needed, particularly as the nation's oil and gas expansions continue.

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

Youth's direct engagement in climate action in the UAE demonstrates considerable efforts and initiatives to empower and involve young people in decision-making processes related to environmental sustainability. Key enablers of youth participation include the establishment of the **Emirati Children's Parliament**, the **Federal Youth Authority (FYA)**, and various youth circles that provide platforms for dialogue, expression of opinions, and participation in policy formulation. The Emirati Children's Parliament, comprising 40 members from seven emirates between the ages of 10 and 16, aims to prepare a generation capable of contributing to community building, familiarize children with their rights, and enhance their role in national and Arab issues.¹⁴¹ The FYA, formed in 2018, plays a crucial role in connecting the UAE ministries and decision-makers with the values and

needs of the youth, implementing a **National Youth Strategy** to create a conducive environment for youth success.¹⁴²

Youth Circles, launched by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, encourage sustainable youth-

centric dialogues, allowing youth to express their opinions on societal and policy matters,

fostering community impact and youth leadership.¹⁴³ According to their website, the

Youth Circles have dedicated more than 500 hours to listening to youth challenges,

published more than 200 media artworks, and enabled more than 25,000 youth to

participate.¹⁴⁴ **Youth Councils**, spanning

Emirates Youth Council, Local Youth Councils,

Ministerial Youth Councils, Corporate Youth Councils, and Global

Youth Councils, are instrumental in empowering young people with future

foresight tools.¹⁴⁵ The **Local Youth Councils**, operating in all seven emirates, have

achieved noteworthy successes through their diverse initiatives spanning entrepreneurship, tourism, culture, and political participation, among other areas. On August 10th, 2022, the Crown Prince of Fujairah hosted

members of the Fujairah Youth Council at the Emiri Diwan. During this meeting, His Highness was apprised of the council's accomplishments and undertakings, which have been instrumental in targeting and empowering

the youth of Fujairah.¹⁴⁶ Despite these avenues for youth participation, policy-making processes fall short of being fully inclusive.

Indirect Engagement

Beyond government initiatives, youth-led conferences such as the **LCOY UAE**, also provide platforms for youth to boost local climate action and contribute to international conferences, fostering meaningful youth

participation in climate-related discussions.¹⁴⁷ Partnerships between schools and climate institutions, like an event organized by the Rabdan Academy in collaboration with the UAE Independent Climate Change

Accelerators (UICCA), offer opportunities for students to discuss pressing climate issues and the UAE's role in combating them.¹⁴⁸ Educational tools and platforms, such as the **Enviro-Spellathon**, podcasts by

environmental experts, and initiatives like **Sustainable Campus Initiative**, engage students and young adults in understanding environmental challenges and taking action. Environmental and children- and youth-focused

organizations like Emirates Environmental Group (EEG) and Save the Children International organize art competitions and public speaking events to raise awareness among youth on sustainability issues.¹⁴⁹ At the

regional level, **The AYCCC**, an initiative by the Arab Youth Center (AYC), is a youth-led non-profit focused on enhancing MENA youth engagement with environmental issues. It supports youth-driven climate actions and

encourages the development of innovative, sustainable solutions to climate challenges. Youth participation in

Replicable Practice

The FYA, formed in 2018, plays a crucial role in connecting the UAE ministries and decision-makers with youth's values and needs, implementing a National Youth Strategy to create a conducive environment for youth success



climate action is influenced by a combination of enablers and obstacles. On the positive side, there is a strong will among young people to bring about change. A study conducted on the UAE's youth revealed that approximately two-thirds (65%) of them expressed their desire to act in protecting the environment.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, the availability of easy participation processes, such as civic engagement online, presents opportunities for involvement. However, several obstacles hinder youth engagement in climate action. Notably, restrictive laws governing the establishment of associations limit the scope of LNNGOs and environmental initiatives, making it difficult for LNNGOs to function legally, unless they are sponsored by an official entity.¹⁵¹ The lack of coordination between non-governmental and governmental organizations in environmental protection further complicates the landscape. Unclear structures and a reluctance to engage with restricted environmental activities, possibly due to excessive regulations, also hinder participation of young people,¹⁵² and public advocacy on most issues is limited. This environment leads most LNNGOs to focus on economic, social, and cultural objectives, often with close ties to the ruling families, rather than on climate action.¹⁵³

While having made some progress on climate policies and youth participation, oil production expansion, combined with Sultan al-Jaber's dual roles in ADNOC and the COP28, raise concerns about the actual implementation of the UAE's climate ambitions. As COP28 approaches, the UAE's balance between economic growth based on fossil fuels, and genuine climate action will be under scrutiny.

Egypt



Projected **temperature increases** in Egypt, ranging from 0.81°C to 2.4°C by 2059, coupled with a **decline in precipitation**, will result in detrimental consequences such as droughts, **crop strain**, and livelihood risks to 24 million Egyptian farmers.^{154,155,156} The country's food vulnerability indicator is 0.511 at the higher ends in comparison to other countries in the region.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, the Nile Valley and Nile Delta, which host 95% of the population in close proximity, are identified as **one of the world's three most**

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.4°C by 2059.

vulnerable hotspots for climate change impacts.¹⁵⁸ **Sea level rise** directly impacts coastal inhabitants and 3.1 million people dependent on tourism, leading to additional economic vulnerability.¹⁵⁹ A mere 0.5mm rise could submerge half of Alexandria's touristic area.¹⁶⁰ Geographical location plays a crucial role, with northern Egypt experiencing more heat waves, and coastal regions like Alexandria being more susceptible to sea level rise. During the adolescent workshops, perceptions of climate impacts in Egypt were primarily centred on tangible daily effects, such as high temperatures and heightened pollution, which have prevented them from playing outside, forced them to use air-conditioned transportation, and avoid crowded spaces. Participants also highlighted human actions contributing to the climate crisis, including trash burning and waste disposal, fossil fuels, transportation and industry. While children demonstrated awareness of certain climate impacts such as heatwaves, drought and desertification, some were unaware of less immediately noticeable effects such as sea level rise.^{161,162}

These diverse effects of climate change are having a significant impact on certain groups in Egypt, who may be more vulnerable because of their geographic location, livelihood, age, or displacement status. According to an environmental protection expert in Egypt, **climate change has already resulted in the displacement of rural communities to urban areas to seek other income sources.** This shift is altering economic conditions of families, sometimes forcing children into labor at a young age. Furthermore, intrusion of salt water in the Nile, the primary source of fresh water for people in Egypt, the lack of recharge of ground water and higher evaporation rates are resulting in water scarcity, exposing the most vulnerable, including children and elderly, to health risks like cholera, typhoid and waterborne diseases through unhygienic alternatives.¹⁶³ Additionally, intense and abrupt precipitation presents a **heightened risk of frequent flash floods along the Nile, particularly impacting communities with inadequate sewage and drainage systems.**¹⁶⁴ In such areas, waterborne diseases become a grave concern, and children suffer without access to proper WASH provisions. Likewise, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds may also face limited access to clean water and may additionally be exposed to conflict over water in areas where resource access is limited.¹⁶⁵ The Delta, which is crucial for Egypt's food production, is expected to witness a decline of up to 30% by 2030 due to factors such

as erosion, droughts, floods.¹⁶⁶ This will further compromise food security, which will contribute to an increase in the stunting rate among children, already estimated at 12.8%.¹⁶⁷

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 5)

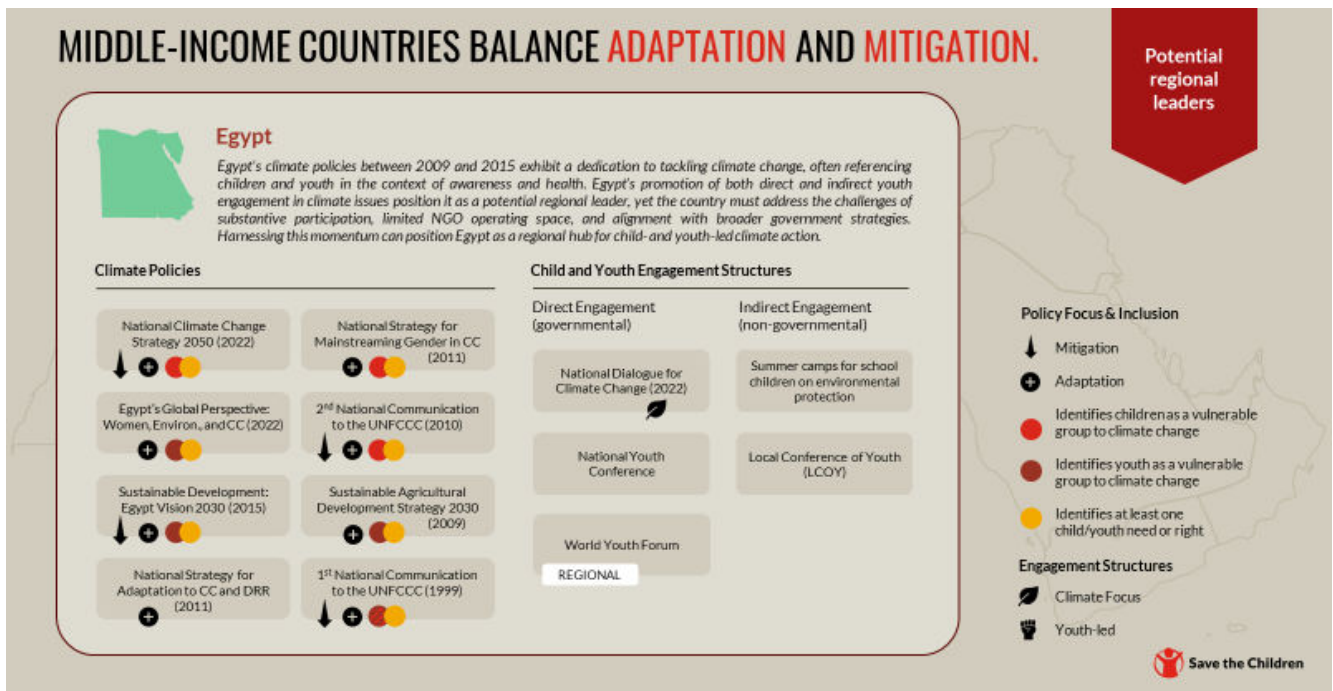


Figure 15. Egypt Climate Policy Snapshot

Since hosting the COP in 2022, Egypt has shown an increased commitment to climate action by involving youth in policymaking and recognizing the impact of climate change on young people. However, there is still room for improvement in addressing the specific needs of children and youth within its climate policies, as some policies mention them only briefly or overlook their specific concerns.

From 2009 to 2015, Egypt created several climate policies such as the **Sustainable Agricultural Development Strategy** towards 2030, Egypt's **National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction**, and the **Egyptian Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2030**. These strategies, designed mostly to be implemented at a national level, are long term, and aimed both at adapting and mitigating the impacts of climate change. The policies that mention children and youth tend to focus on awareness raising for youth and health impacts for children.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, the **National Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender in Climate Change in Egypt** was created in 2011 by multiple stakeholders on behalf of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency to address the gaps in gender consideration in other policies such as the **Initial National Communication** (1999) and **Second National Contribution** of Egypt (2010).

Egypt became a signatory of the Paris Agreement and submitted its **NDC** in 2015, as well as an updated version in 2022.¹⁶⁹ In the NDC, Egypt highlighted its efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the energy sector through reforms in the electricity and petroleum sectors like the decrease of subsidies on oil and gas by

3.4% and more reliance on solar energy with new solar parks like Benban Solar Park. The demand for conventional energy has been reduced through advancements in energy-efficient lighting alongside the introduction of a new electricity law that includes dedicated sections on electricity efficiency and energy management. Egypt has also prioritized promotion of low carbon transportation such as high-quality service buses provided by the private sector and building new metro lines in Cairo. The NDC highlights the expansion of Green Finance in Egypt which has increased from 15% in the fiscal year 2019-2020 to 30% in the fiscal year 2020-2021. Several adaptation strategies are also outlined in the document such as the **Sustainable Agriculture Investments and Livelihoods Project (SAIL) (2014-2023)** and **Adaptation to Climate Change in the Nile Delta through Integrated Coastal Zone Management (2009-2017)**. In the NDC, youth are referenced only once, specifically in the section on Capacity Building and Technology Transfer. It emphasizes that youth should be motivated to join the green transition via training, research, innovation, green entrepreneurship, and by providing access to business incubators. However, there is no mention of children in the NDC.

Furthermore, Egypt has developed a **National Climate Change Strategy** in the vision of 2050. This document thoroughly explains how the country will achieve sustainable economic growth and low carbon emissions in different sectors as well as how it will improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of infrastructure and citizens to climate change. It aims to protect the citizens from the negative health impacts of climate change with a special emphasis on women, children, and people with disabilities, preserve natural resources, expand green spaces and enhance the resilience of infrastructure to different climate impacts. Although the National Climate Change Strategy does not specifically mention youth, it does emphasize the importance of raising awareness about climate change and its health risks among children.¹⁷⁰

While the strategy emphasizes the preservation of green spaces, it is worth noting that from 2006 to 2020, green spaces in Cairo decreased by 2.1 million m², as priority was given to road expansion and construction of vehicle bridges rather than protecting green areas.¹⁷¹ This highlights the need not only to laude countries' climate policies and programs, but also to monitor their implementation to assess whether the strategies are in fact being implemented. A climate and environmental protection expert from Egypt reports that some infrastructure projects go in the opposite direction of set climate policies like building traditional power stations and removing trees in urban areas when policies emphasize finding alternative energy solutions and preserving green spaces.¹⁷² According to the aforementioned climate expert, the effectiveness of climate change interventions largely relies on the availability of sufficient funding, and even when funding is received – largely from European countries – it must be complemented by local ownership, including local research pertaining to affected regions, the establishment of laws and regulations, and the directed allocation of funds towards projects that effectively address climate change adaptation.¹⁷³

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

Egypt's interest in developing its climate strategy over the past years, and particularly in integrating young people as key actors within this strategy, has emerged in parallel to the country's role as host for the COP27 in 2022. Many of the climate initiatives in preparation for COP27 included or targeted children and youth. For example, the first **National Dialogue for Climate Change**, an initiative of the MoE, was held in Sharm El Sheikh in March 2022, gathering diverse stakeholders such as parliamentary representatives, journalists, civil society, academia, youth and youth influencers as well as Muslim and Christian religious leaders. The objective of this forum was to raise awareness and discuss Egypt's efforts to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change such as desalination of water, use of renewable energy, different green initiatives and climate finance. In the same year, the Egyptian Supreme Committee **initiated a national competition, urging each governorate to showcase environmental projects that engage diverse societal groups, notably youth and women.** While the competition's stringent qualification criteria might have overlooked community-driven and informal volunteer projects, it was designed to back 18 companies at various developmental phases, with plans to annually renew this initiative and showcase winners at each COP.¹⁷⁴ Such a model, if adopted regionally, could pave the way for collaborative efforts in the green economy, further integrating regional endeavors. The challenge lies in its restrictive criteria, but its potential as a collaborative regional model is significant.

Replicable Practice

The Egyptian Supreme Committee initiated a national competition, urging each governorate to showcase environmental projects that engage diverse societal groups, notably youth and women

Prior to the COP, Egypt deployed efforts to engage youth in policymaking in general. The country declared 2016 the "Year of the Egyptian Youth" and held the first **National Youth Conference** hosted by the president and engaging Egyptian youth across the country, bringing together university students, politically active young people, media, parties, and the first batch of the Presidential Leadership Program. This conference has been held in Sharm El Sheikh, Cairo, Aswan, Ismailia and Alexandria. The government also made some strides towards integrating youth in decision-making by appointing 18 young people as deputy governors and instituting youth quotas of 25% in local councils, a representation considered higher than the regional average.¹⁷⁵ In addition, an Egyptian youth initiative, the **World Youth Forum (WYF)** aims at connecting global youth with decision-makers, fostering discussions and initiatives in peace, development and creativity.

Beyond government initiatives, in the conference itself, the first ever **Children and Youth Pavilion** was put in place by a collection of youth leaders supported by the UN Climate Change High-Level Champions team.¹⁷⁶ Discussions and events were organized to gather the perceptions, opinions and suggestions of children and youth on the climate crisis and directly debate them with duty bearers such as ministers and UN officials. The Egyptian initiative WYF actively engaged in climate issues through 35 sessions and workshops in the Green Zone, involving international experts and organizations. Although there have been some improvements in the inclusion of children and youth in COP27, many youths have called for more freedom and inclusion in the negotiations and discussions, more balanced numbers of youth activists from different countries, and the fulfillment of promises made in previous COPs.¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, a youth participation and climate action specialist reported that while governmental collaborations with NGOs during the COP provided an opportunity for children and youth to engage, their participation is more often used to check a box on inclusivity, rather than to ensure meaningful participation. Young people's participation is often restricted to showcasing local initiatives or providing verbal contributions without further involvement in decision-making. Moreover, participation continues to be constrained to privileged youth who possess access to such opportunities or possess established networks that facilitate their connection to these forums.¹⁷⁸ Though positive that there are more opportunities emerging for children and youth to engage, there are still significant changes that need to take place before there is meaningful and sustained participation of young people, particularly children, in the COP space.

"I believe that the presence of youth at the recent Youth Conference, even if it was symbolic or superficial, had a significant impact, particularly in encouraging advanced countries to respond to the demands of developing nations."

- Assistant to Director of the Center for Applied Research on the Environment and Sustainability (2023), Cairo, Egypt. May 29.

Despite improvements in youth participation opportunities in policymaking in Egypt, especially regarding climate policy, this area still faces several challenges. Obstacles include disproportionate participation of youth vis-à-vis their significant population, access barriers for a large number of young individuals for meaningful representation of diverse backgrounds, low awareness and educational levels, lack of trust in the process, bureaucratic hurdles and complexity of the legislative system.¹⁷⁹ According to a climate and environmental protection expert, some of the challenges revolve around children and youth's awareness of climate change and the need for them to be actively involved, not just in a symbolic and tokenistic way. The expert further noted that during the 2022 LCOY held before COP, youth sessions produced outcomes, but these were not prominently utilized or integrated, leading to the perception that the outcomes of the LCOY are more symbolic than substantive, with their contributions not being meaningfully considered by the key stakeholders.¹⁸⁰

Indirect Engagement

In Egypt, some organizations have been actively involving children and youth in environmental issues for a considerable period. In 2022, during COP27, an important surge in awareness raising initiatives occurred, initiated by youth groups and NGOs. These initiatives took various forms, including **a caravan traveling from town to town to raise awareness**, facilitated by the Ministry of Youth and UNICEF. Its purpose was to disseminate information about climate change among children and youth in different locations.¹⁸¹ Additionally, INGOs like Save the Children organized **workshops to prepare children and adolescents for COP negotiations**.¹⁸² The Ministry of Education and Technical Education, in a three-year collaboration with UNICEF, **trained 300,000 teachers on climate change, raised the awareness of 25 million children across Egypt to act for preservation of their environment, and arranged an art exhibition focused on climate change for the children**.¹⁸³ Moreover, UNICEF organized summer camps in Minya and Fayoum, aimed at **enhancing the understanding of environmental protection among public school children**; these initiatives were implemented in 70 schools, benefiting nearly 30,000 primary school children.¹⁸⁴ It is important to note that these initiatives were conducted primarily offline, and while some exclusively targeted children, others aimed at engaging youth, or both children and youth.

Although the multiplicity of climate themed initiatives for children and youth is an asset for Egypt, some challenges on nongovernmental climate action are yet to be addressed. For example, Human Rights Watch reports that **arbitrary restrictions in funding, research, and registration** have been imposed on LNNGOs, including environmental ones, keeping them from actively contributing to social, economic and climate change improvement. The difficulty in **registering an LNNGO, of accessing information, and the numerous permits required to conduct fieldwork** have also been highlighted as challenges to effective LNNGO operation and meaningful civic participation.¹⁸⁵

A specialist on youth participation and climate action reports that, overall, INGOs frequently collaborate with the same local partner associations to reach beneficiaries, which leads to a **concentration of projects in certain geographical areas** and repeated assistance to the same individuals.¹⁸⁶ The specialist further indicated that these initiatives are often scattered and involve clean-up **campaigns or community projects that do not provide realistic long-term engagement** and do not necessarily share the government's vision. Meanwhile, the engagement of children and youth often takes a backseat, and assessment of services and projects is prioritized. An environmental protection expert pointed out that communities often don't utilize feedback tools and mechanisms effectively due to a lack of understanding of their importance. The primary issue is that **communities are not kept informed about the outcomes or utilization of their suggestions**, highlighting a need for better communication and transparency.¹⁸⁷

PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON CLIMATE CHANGE, SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE ACTION

Adolescent workshops + Creative survey

In Egypt, 36 individuals participated in the creative survey, including three children (aged 12-17), 22 youth (aged 18-24 and 25-35), and 11 older respondents (aged 36-45). Data collection also involved two adolescent workshops (aged 12-17), including a mixed-gender group of host community children, and a mixed-gender group of refugee children.



Awareness

While children and youth in Egypt are aware of broad climate impacts and vulnerabilities, they seem to lack awareness of the root causes and effective mitigation and adaptation strategies, which remains a primary barrier to climate action and higher-level participation in policy discussions. During the workshops held in Cairo, host community children were able to link the idea of climate change with sudden weather fluctuations, droughts, and decreased rainfall.

Children were also cognizant of the diverse vulnerabilities faced by people working in agriculture and individuals with health problems, aligning with the survey findings, which identify poverty and access to food and water as the challenges most exacerbated by climate change in Egypt. The host community group additionally identified specific regions like Halaib, Shalateen, Aswan, and Luxor as most susceptible to desertification. They also highlighted youth and males working outdoors as highly vulnerable to

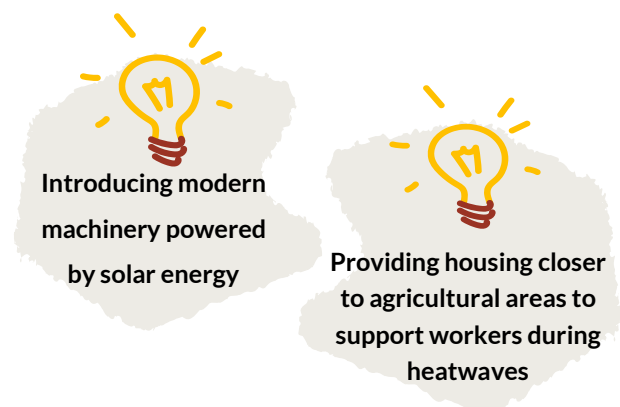
heatwaves, with Giza being identified as the most affected area. The refugee group echoed similar concerns as the host communities and added that the poor are vulnerable to heatwaves due to limited access to air conditioning and lack of emergency transportation during climate-related health crises.

Moreover, host community children correctly identified factors like global warming, industrial emissions, and car fumes as causes of climate change. However, they also mistakenly cited the hole in the ozone layer as a direct cause, indicating some confusion about the primary drivers of the issue. On the other hand, refugee children exhibited a narrower understanding of climate change compared to their peers in host communities. For example, they struggled to identify rising sea levels as a result of climate change, possibly due to their perceived remoteness from the coastline. Moreover, some refugee children confused adaptation with mitigation, mistakenly categorizing energy efficiency as an adaptation measure. This underscores that while children might recognize visible climate impacts, they often have limited comprehension of fundamental climate concepts.

According to youth survey respondents, most youth in Egypt obtain information on climate change primarily from social media, rather than in a structured format from teachers, organizations, or the government. Without guidance on accurate sources of information, children and youth may struggle to move past headlines to correctly understand the root causes of climate change, or how adaptation and mitigation measures may address these issues.

Opportunities, enablers, risks, and barriers to child and youth participation in climate action

When given the chance to identify solutions to climate challenges, children in the host community workshop were more likely to approach family and friends for support when faced with obstacles than to try to use government and policymaking channels. During the role play stage of the workshop, both host community groups – those with and without access to policymakers – tried to address the issue of **heatwaves** but faced challenges of budget constraints and building community buy-in. The first group attempted to introduce modern machinery to reduce reliance on animals, minimize emissions, and have these machines powered by solar energy; they further suggested allowing farmers to pay in instalments to overcome financial barriers. The second group sought to restrict pesticide usage and provide housing closer to agricultural areas to support workers during heatwaves.



In the refugee children's workshop, the group that was provided access to policymakers during the role play acknowledged the significance of policymakers in facilitating solutions as they proposed to create a syndicate for farmers, while the group that was not given direct access felt disconnected and uncertain about where to seek assistance and funding, highlighting the role of policymakers in giving hope and guiding young people to implement climate solutions. Furthermore, both refugee and host community workshops underscored that groups distanced from policymakers felt disheartened, facing numerous hurdles and unsure where to seek resources and backing for their initiatives.

"[Decision-makers] won't listen to us because they are older." "They might not be prepared for the issue we want to discuss, and they're not interested in it."

- Adolescent Workshop participants from Cairo, Egypt. June 12.

On the youth front, the survey revealed that the primary barriers to youth participation in Egypt stem from the absence of transparent and accessible government engagement channels and a prevailing mistrust in these structures.

Iraq



Iraq is the **fifth-most vulnerable country to climate breakdown in the world**, facing **high temperatures, inadequate rainfall, drought, water scarcity, floods and frequent sand and dust storms**.¹⁸⁸ Rising temperatures,



projected to increase by 2.6°C by 2059, create difficulties particularly for rural southern communities.¹⁸⁹ Among



children in Iraq, who make up 38% of the population, 9 out of 10 struggle with extreme temperatures, intermittent air conditioning, and power outages, disrupting their education



and health.¹⁹⁰ In the adolescent workshops, children in both Erbil (Syrian refugees, IDPs, and host communities) and Baghdad (IDPs and host communities) highlighted that they observe

temperature fluctuations, weather shifts, droughts, and heatwaves caused by GHG and industrial pollutants.^{191,192} Children in the workshops also indicated changes in their habits due to these climate impacts, such as reduced outdoor activities like sports and riding bicycles, inability to read for leisure, and unclean public places.¹⁹³ For those who may not be able to afford air conditioning, impacts such as higher temperatures may further affect their lives even when indoors. Syrian refugee children participating in one of the workshops emphasized their limited ability to study and do their homework in a timely manner.¹⁹⁴ In addition, numerous threats to Iraq's water resources exist, including a projected 9% decrease in precipitation by 2050, as well as problems such as drought and saltwater intrusion affecting groundwater reserves in the southern coastal areas.¹⁹⁵ **These issues pose another threat, particularly impacting those employed in agriculture, a quarter of which are women.**¹⁹⁶ In fact, according to a gender-focused climate migration study in the governorate of Salah al Din in central Iraq, women in that region are significantly more vulnerable due to their roles in farmlands adversely affected by climate change, the necessity of walking long distances daily to access farming areas, additional household responsibilities resulting from men's migration for employment, and limited mobility opportunities.¹⁹⁷ As a consequence of droughts and desertification, farming communities also

“Climate Change is a new concept in Iraq, but its impacts are accelerating, the effects on all categories of the community. In the last four decades, there were wars and demographic changes, but now it's drought, desertification, and biodiversity loss.”

- Director of the Climate Change Directorate and Office Manager at the Ministry of Environment of Iraq (2023), Iraq, Baghdad. June 7.

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.6°C by 2059.

struggle from declining income which leads to difficulties in purchasing food, putting approximately half of all children in Iraq at risk of reduced food and water intake.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the projected decline of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers by 29% and 73% respectively, which also impacts Syria, poses a serious water stress issue that is likely to exacerbate food insecurity, land salinization, desertification, and potentially domestic instability.¹⁹⁹ **Around 15% of children in Iraq are expected to experience the impacts of water stress in 2023**, further exacerbating the difficulties already encountered by communities most affected by inequality

and discrimination.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, the shortage of water also has adverse effects on education. As of 2021, less than half of all schools in the country have access to basic water resources,²⁰¹ and even among those that do, not all students have access to adequate water. This is often because many schools operate in shifts to accommodate as many students as possible due to the destruction of numerous schools over decades of conflict in the country.²⁰²

Additionally, **IDPs and refugees living in high precipitation deficit zones, such as the KRI, are heavily affected by drought**, as emphasized by children participating in workshops in Erbil.^{203,204} Another issue that compromises agriculture is desertification, affecting 71% of arable land in Iraq, compared to 13% in Türkiye and 17% in Syria.²⁰⁵ Desertification reduces agricultural productivity, particularly in areas far from rivers, and hampers domestic production. Adversely impacting irrigation and development projects, it endangers plant and animal species and alters their geographic distribution. Additionally, desertification drives displacement from infertile land to urban areas, creating competition for jobs and resources.²⁰⁶ Finally, dust and sandstorms further add to the challenges. The number of dusty days per year has increased from 243 to 272 in the past two decades and is projected to reach 300 by 2050.²⁰⁷ These dust storms reduce visibility, disrupt transportation, public health, and productivity. In May 2022, 5000 people were left needing treatment after a dust storm, and often, schools and offices are forced to close, and children, being more sensitive, are particularly affected.^{208,209}

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 6)

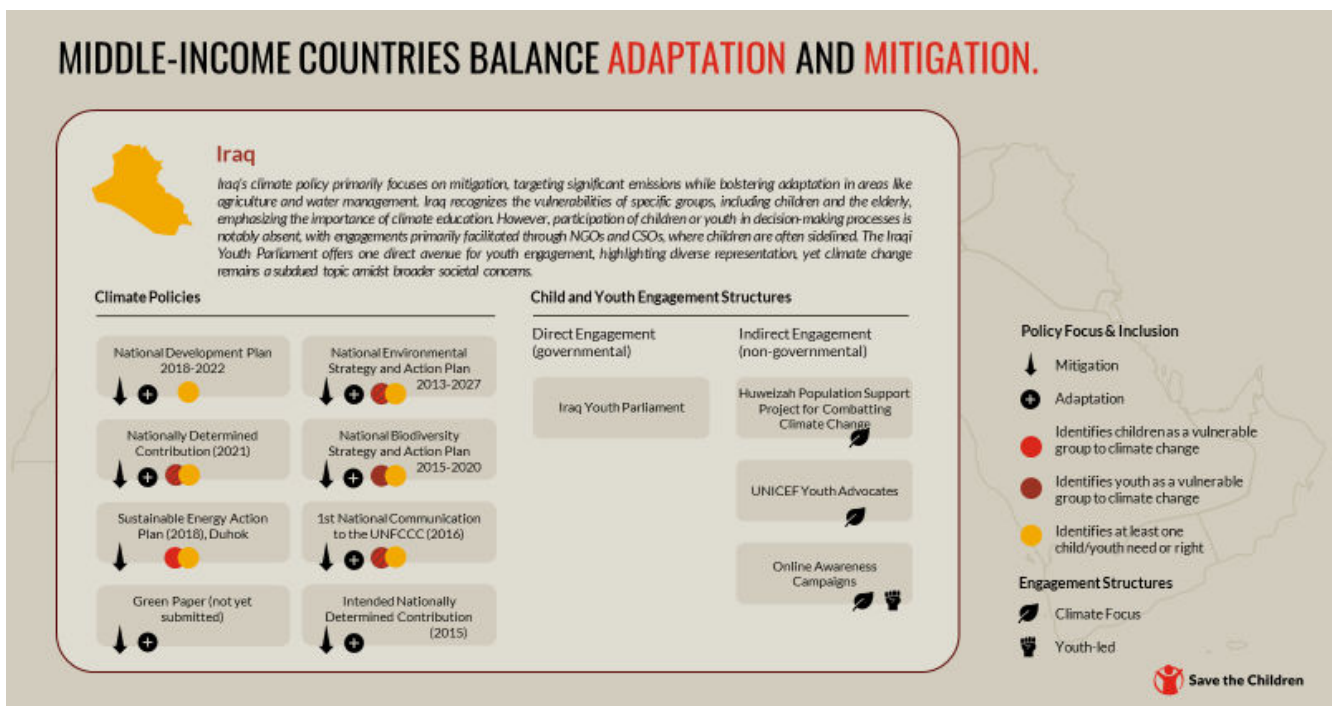


Figure 16. Iraq Climate Policy Snapshot

Climate change is having increasingly adverse effects on Iraq, impacting the country's weather patterns, food security, and the livelihoods of its people. While in previous years insecurity and conflict were prioritized, policymakers in Iraq are growing more concerned about climate change and beginning to focus on climate

strategies.²¹⁰ Since the ratification of the Paris Agreement in December 2021, the Iraqi government has worked on developing a national climate strategy. This includes finalizing Iraq's **NDC**, which sets a goal to reduce GHG emissions by at least 1-2% by 2030, with a particular focus on high-emission sectors such as oil, gas, electricity and transportation.²¹¹ Notably, Iraq's GHG emissions have been on the rise, now constituting 0.45% of global emissions.²¹² Moreover, the NDC also encompasses a range of adaptation strategies, including efficient water management, improved land practices, and the adoption of climate-smart agriculture. The Head of the Climate Change Directorate in the Iraqi MoE has mentioned other strategies that support mitigation measures implemented by the country, such as lifting taxes on electric vehicles and providing loans to households for solar panel installations. These efforts are often complemented by the support of INGOs and UN agencies. For instance, the World Food Program (WFP) partnered with the local government in Basra to plant mangrove trees to enrich the area's biodiversity, act as a carbon sink, and reduce the impact of climate-related disasters.²¹³ However, the government acknowledges the need to improve policy execution and customization to address the issue of unimplemented regulations and legislation.

Iraq's NDC emphasizes the importance of raising climate change awareness among groups most impacted by inequality and discrimination, such as children and women. The government aims to achieve this through various strategies, laws, and policies. Additionally, the NDC recognizes the increased health risks posed by climate impacts on children and the elderly. Despite these improvements in climate policies, Iraq's dependency on oil for economic growth poses a risk to the implementation of mitigation strategies and increases the vulnerability of the population.²¹⁴

Prior to the NDC, Iraq developed other climate strategies, including the **National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan for Iraq (2013-2017)**, Iraq's **NBSAP (2015-2020)**, Iraq's **Initial National Communication** to the UNFCCC (2016), the **Sustainable Energy Action Plan (2018)** created by the Duhok Governorate in Kurdistan and Iraq's **National Development Plan (2018-2022)**. These policies all also acknowledge the adverse impacts on children and/or youth and highlight the government's responsibility to address these impacts while emphasizing the importance of climate education and awareness among those groups.

However, the active participation of children and youth as potential changemakers and decision-makers in policymaking is not explicitly mentioned. According to the Head of the Climate Change Directorate at the Iraqi MoE, the government rarely engages children and youth directly, but rather relies on INGOs and UN agencies efforts.²¹⁵ Additionally, he pointed that one significant challenge for Iraq in mitigating the impacts of climate change on its citizens is the intrinsic link between climate change and social insurance.²¹⁶ For example, if farmers lose their land due to climate change, they lack compensation or insurance to recover from the loss.

“I don't think children are involved directly in these policies and procedures or legislations [related to climate change]. Of course there are benefits to involving children, after all, it is their future and we must hear them, but as government, we do not have that level of awareness, and we don't foresee major inputs from their end.”

- Director of the Climate Change Directorate and Office Manager at the Ministry of Environment of Iraq (2023), Iraq. Online. June 7.

Compounding this issue, the government lacks a clear strategy to assist displaced communities in coping with climate change impacts.²¹⁷ The Director of the Climate Change Directorate explained that the primary focus would not only be to help these communities integrate into their host communities but also to facilitate their safe and voluntary return to their homes and enhance their resilience. According to an Adolescents and Youth Development Specialist working at UNICEF, it is crucial to consider the socio-economic disadvantages of displaced individuals, as they often lack safety nets to withstand climate impacts.²¹⁸

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

Since the 1980s, Iraq has experienced significant political and economic upheavals, encompassing events such as the Iraq War (1980-1988), extended economic sanctions (1991-2003), the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the presence of ISIS in the country, particularly from 2013 to 2017, and the additional strain placed on Iraq's resources as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country's instability, and its oil economy are two dominant factors shaping the future of Iraqi children and youth today.²¹⁹ In this challenging context, climate change has often taken a backseat in the priorities of successive governments. Consequently, the involvement of children and youth in climate policymaking has remained limited. However, the government has made some efforts to develop a direct engagement structure to provide youth with the opportunity to influence climate decision-making. Moreover, NGOs have tried to create indirect engagement structures for Iraqi youth to partake in climate.

Currently, the **Iraqi Youth Parliament** appears to be the only institution that offers a platform for children and youth to voice their concerns directly to elected representatives.²²⁰ This platform, which is part of the formal Iraqi parliament, has been active since 2009 and has seen four mandates which lasted from two to four years. The last mandate started in 2021 and is meant to last until 2023. The parliament is constituted of children and youth between the ages of 15 to 29, and has special measures and quotas to recruit youth from different institutions (schools, universities, NGOs), different age groups, and to keep a gender balance between males and females.²²¹ Moreover, the Iraqi Youth Parliament is an amalgamation of youth parliaments from all Iraqi governorates, ensuring representation from all regions of the country. While the topic of climate change is not highlighted as a central issue in its operational plan, the Youth Parliament recognizes the importance of environmental conservation, aligning it with other notable causes it endorses, including democracy, education, and

Replicable Practice

The Iraqi Youth Parliament has special measures and quotas to recruit youth from different institutions (schools, universities, NGOs), different age groups, and to keep a gender balance between males and females

women's rights. On the other hand, the Iraqi Youth Parliament operates with less clarity, offering limited insights into its structure and methods of participation. It seems to primarily serve to elevate awareness about the significance of youth's political involvement, rather than facilitating a venue for their active participation. Moreover, in 2023, the regional department of the Youth Parliament in Diwaniyah Governorate organized an awareness seminar on the impact of climate change with school students. Despite the progress the Youth Parliament seems to be making, regulations governing the inclusion of people with disabilities and different socio-economic backgrounds remain unclear.

Indirect Engagement

On the other hand, indirect engagement of children and youth in climate action and advocacy programming in Iraq is mainly led by INGOs and UN agencies in collaboration with government institutions. For example, in efforts to support youth to adapt to climate change, the UNDP, in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment, and in cooperation with Missan Governorate launched the two-year project, 'Huweizah Population Support Project for Combatting Climate Change' in December 2020. The project provided potable water for the resettlement of communities in the Al-Huweizah marshlands. Additionally, the project aimed to diversify livelihoods through eco-tourism, creating employment opportunities for women and youth, building local capacity for operating water plants, raising women's awareness, and attracting investment in the governorate.²²²

"The social norms or perception of young people depict them as impulsive. This perception is hindering the youth that actually have plans, who are bold to step, and they don't have the opportunity."

- Adolescents and Youth Development Specialist at UNICEF (2023), Baghdad, Iraq. Online. June 19, 21, 22.

Moreover, on World Children's Day 2022, UNICEF appointed two youth advocates to lead UNICEF's early childhood development and climate change efforts in Iraq. The youth advocates would do so by mobilizing and supporting other youth working and advocating for these issues.²²³ UNICEF also works with a participatory action research approach to include the feedback of children and youth in climate research in several cities like Basra, Duhok and Ninewa.²²⁴

At the local level, online platforms were the most noticeable tools to actively engage children and youth, including a notable awareness campaign to reduce pollution in the Alyahodia River, accompanied by the hashtag **#SaveRiverYahudia (#Saveنهراليهودية)**.²²⁵ Other local initiatives have been taken by **Humat Dijlah**,²²⁶ an Iraqi LNNGO that seeks to protect the natural heritage of the Tigris River in Iraq, by organizing environmental and cultural awareness campaigns.

These initiatives, organizations and networks provide valuable platforms for children and youth to become actively involved in climate action. However, the central emphasis tends to be on enhancing awareness rather than involving them deeply in shaping climate policies and undertaking proactive measures. Meanwhile, these initiatives' presence and influence remain constrained in Iraq. As of 2023, the registration of environmental LNNGOs in Iraq is merely 2.02%,²²⁷ indicating that climate issues have not yet garnered significant prominence within the scope of NGO activities in the country. Children specifically face significant barriers in accessing decision-making processes related to climate change as there is a notable absence of channels for their representation. Moreover, the lack of relevant information and data severely hampers the ability of Iraqi children and youth to take meaningful action. In addition, cultural, financial, and societal barriers, and limited access to digital education and life skills training, discourage children and youth's active participation in climate action. Insufficient financial resources to engage in initiatives or to support youth-led climate initiatives further hamper their efforts to effectively address environmental challenges. The challenges faced by IDPs in Iraq go beyond these issues and include the absence of civil documentation in many cases, which were destroyed during the war and now pose a major obstacle to accessing basic rights, including participation in public affairs. According to a 2022 camp profiling assessment conducted by REACH,²²⁸ the most frequently reported missing civil documents among IDP households were children's nationality certificates (reported by 21% of households) and children's national IDs (reported by 8% of households). This lack of documentation significantly impedes children's capacity to engage in initiatives related to policymaking.




PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON CLIMATE CHANGE, SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE ACTION

Adolescent workshops + Creative survey

In Iraq, 59 individuals participated in the creative survey, comprising four children (aged 12-17), 47 youth (aged 18-24 and 25-35), and eight older respondents (aged 36-45 and 46-60). Data collection also involved four adolescent workshops (aged 12-17), one exclusively for boys from host communities in Baghdad, another for girls from host communities in Baghdad, one with mixed genders from host communities and IDPs in Erbil, and a final workshop for Syrian refugee boys and girls also in Erbil.

Awareness

The participants in the workshops exhibited good awareness of climate change, its causes, impacts, and the vulnerabilities it presents to citizens. This level of awareness could be explained by the severity and prevalence of climate change effects in Iraq and/or the consequent concern levels among the populations in Iraq, as most respondents in the survey reported being either “a little bit worried” or “very worried” about climate change. The children's awareness was further demonstrated by their accurate identification of the causes of climate change, including human activities, GHG emissions, fossil fuels, deforestation, waste management, and transportation. Moreover, participants identified climate challenges in Iraq like heatwaves and desertification.



However, host communities and IDP children in Erbil mentioned additional concerns, including earthquakes, strong winds, and floods, which might be related to the extreme weather events experienced in Iraq during 2023, including deadly floods and storms in the KRI.²²⁹ Overall, young people in Iraq identify a plethora of severe climate impacts, which include extreme weather, as well as loss of forests and air pollution, as indicated by children and youth survey respondents, further highlighting the serious exposure of the country to climate change. Children in several workshops noted the direct effect of changing weather patterns in their communities and daily lives such as animal migration, wilting plants, and the need to avoid outdoor activities in the sun.

Opportunities, enablers, risks, and barriers to child and youth participation in climate action

In Baghdad, the male participants decided to help rural communities face the challenges of **heatwaves** and **drought**. Their suggestions included a dual approach to addressing and adapting to these challenges. Their ideas covered a range of initiatives such as reforestation, promoting environmentally friendly transportation to reduce emissions, implementing sustainable waste management practices, and encouraging the use of solar energy through awareness campaigns promoting the use of solar panels. To implement their solutions, the boys from Baghdad resorted to seeking funding from international organizations.

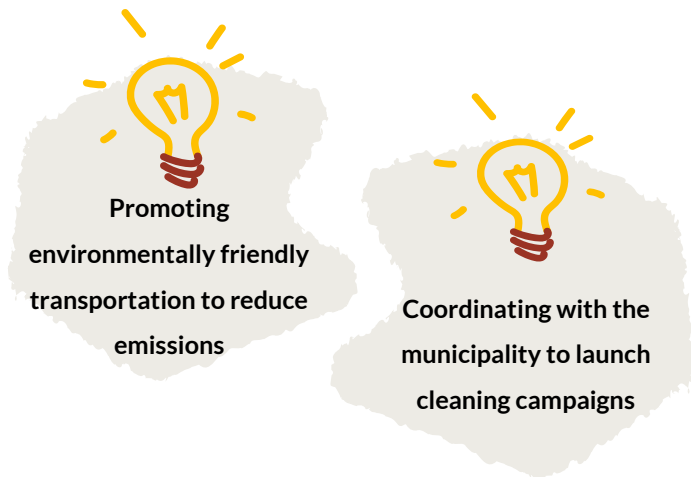
At the second workshop in Baghdad, attended by female participants who also chose to address the same challenges, participants similarly suggested

planting trees using modern irrigation technologies, wastewater recycling to tackle water shortage, and the use of solar energy as effective measures to solve these problems.

In Erbil, Syrian refugee workshop participants set out to address the problem of **water scarcity**, specifically impacting the elderly, children and individuals with disabilities. In particular, they established a link between water scarcity and problems of hygiene and waste accumulation. They believe this situation could potentially contribute to the proliferation of disease. A regional Health Advisor from UNICEF confirmed that inadequate WASH facilities in the Domiz camp in Dohuk increased the risk of disease spread, which could explain why refugee adolescents link this phenomenon to climate induced water stress.²³⁰ To address these issues, participants decided to communicate with LNNGOs and INGOs to have support and convey their message to the government.

In the workshop engaging children from both IDP and host communities in Erbil, participants chose to help urban communities with **heatwaves**. For that, they proposed to coordinate with the municipality to launch cleaning campaigns, seeking financial assistance from family and friends when needed.





This highlighted the perceived community role as a critical supporter of child-driven climate action. This trend, similarly reflected in survey findings from Iraq, also emphasizes the perceived trust placed in NGOs as vital partners in climate action. The survey further revealed that the primary obstacles to Iraq's capacity to confront environmental challenges were the lack of

awareness regarding climate change issues and a shortfall in understanding how to engage in climate action. This gap in knowledge might explain why children and youth often turn to NGOs when encountering difficulties, as these organizations are often perceived to have greater experience, better networks, more resources, and deeper understanding, as shown by survey data.

This reliance on NGOs could also be indicative of a broader reality in Iraq, where there is a lack of effective official structures for children and youth to engage with on climate matters. Nonetheless, it is observed that groups with direct access to policymakers in the workshop's role play were more hopeful and optimistic about finding solutions, while those without such access grew weary of the obstacles and felt hopeless.

Jordan



Research indicates an alarming increase in the frequency of **droughts** in Jordan, accompanied by a significant decline in annual **precipitation** since the 1900s. Furthermore, since the 1960s, there has been a notable **rise in annual temperatures**, leading to more frequent heatwaves and consecutive dry days.²³¹ By 2059, temperatures are expected to increase by 1.7 to 2.4°C.²³² Additionally, **water scarcity** remains a pressing issue in the country, with current water availability levels already

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.4°C by 2059.

below 100 m³ per person per year, far below the standard water poverty threshold of 500 m³ per capita. This scarcity significantly exacerbates the challenges confronted by numerous groups and sectors, particularly affecting agriculture. **Crop loss and failure are increasingly common due to reduced rainfall, while rising temperatures increase the water demand of crops, further straining limited irrigation resources.**²³³ The changing climate has also brought a surge in the frequency and intensity of floods, resulting in lives lost, vast stretches of agricultural lands destroyed, and critical infrastructure damaged.²³⁴

Among those who suffer the direct consequences of these changes are rural communities, mainly farmers, who are the hardest hit by environmental changes, leading many of them to migrate to cities.²³⁵ Research by UNDP Jordan in 2018 indicates that around 15% of farmers may abandon their lands and relocate to areas with better water availability. A climate expert at the Green Generation Foundation interviewed for this research pointed out that a lack of knowledge on how to adapt to the changing weather patterns caused by climate change makes this migration more likely as many farmers continue to rely on traditional agricultural practices, resulting in significant economic losses.²³⁶ A Technical Advisor at GIZ Jordan, who is also a member of the AYCCC and a Jordanian Youth Government Representative, indicated that areas affected by drought and desertification experience the closure of factories and private businesses, leading to a decline in job opportunities for youth.²³⁷ **With a decline in available employment opportunities in addition to rising food insecurity, families may be displaced from their homes and communities.** Children of displaced households face additional vulnerabilities, losing not only their homes but also encountering difficulties in accessing essential services such as healthcare and education. Additionally, they experience a sense of insecurity and loss of belonging associated with a stable home, among other critical aspects.²³⁸ It is crucial to recognize that Jordan already hosts a large number of refugees, with approximately 760,000 individuals seeking refuge within its borders as of 2022, according to UNHCR. Additionally, there are IDPs resulting from 138 climate disaster-induced displacements recorded in 2020.²³⁹ As climate change continues to unfold, the situation is expected to become even worse for these communities and for communities who will be impacted in the future.

The repercussions of climate change on agriculture extend across the entire nation, affecting numerous communities, including displaced ones, leading to limited access to affordable and nutritious food. **Consequently, food insecurity and malnutrition rates are increasing,²⁴⁰ particularly among children, rural populations, and women-headed households.** Research by FAO reveals that poverty and food insecurity are considerably higher among rural populations in Jordan. As of 2018, risks of severe food insecurity affect over 40% of the population in five governorates, namely Mafraq, Jerash, Madaba, Karak, and Maan.²⁴¹ Women and female-headed households, including their children, are also on average able to spend 8 Jordanian Dinar less per person on food, and the percentage of female-headed households classified as food insecure is around 9.1%, compared to 5.7% for male-headed households.²⁴²

“When assessing the future impact of climate change on Jordan, areas outside the capital seem to have a higher vulnerability.”
 - Youth and Climate Change Specialist (2023), Jordan. June 6.

Moreover, the scarcity of water in schools has a specific impact on adolescent girls, especially when it comes to managing their menstrual cycles safely. This issue is exacerbated by the frequent water cuts experienced in these educational institutions. A baseline study conducted in 2015 revealed alarming statistics: 57% of surveyed schools reported insufficient stored and supplied water to meet the minimum quantity required per student. Moreover, 77% of schools received water less than four times per month, while 8% had water access only once or twice a month, and 3% never received water at all.²⁴³ These challenges create significant obstacles for all children, and particularly girls. The lack of adequate water facilities disrupts their education and hinders their overall well-being. **If water shortages persist and worsen, it may lead to an increase in school dropouts.**

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 7)

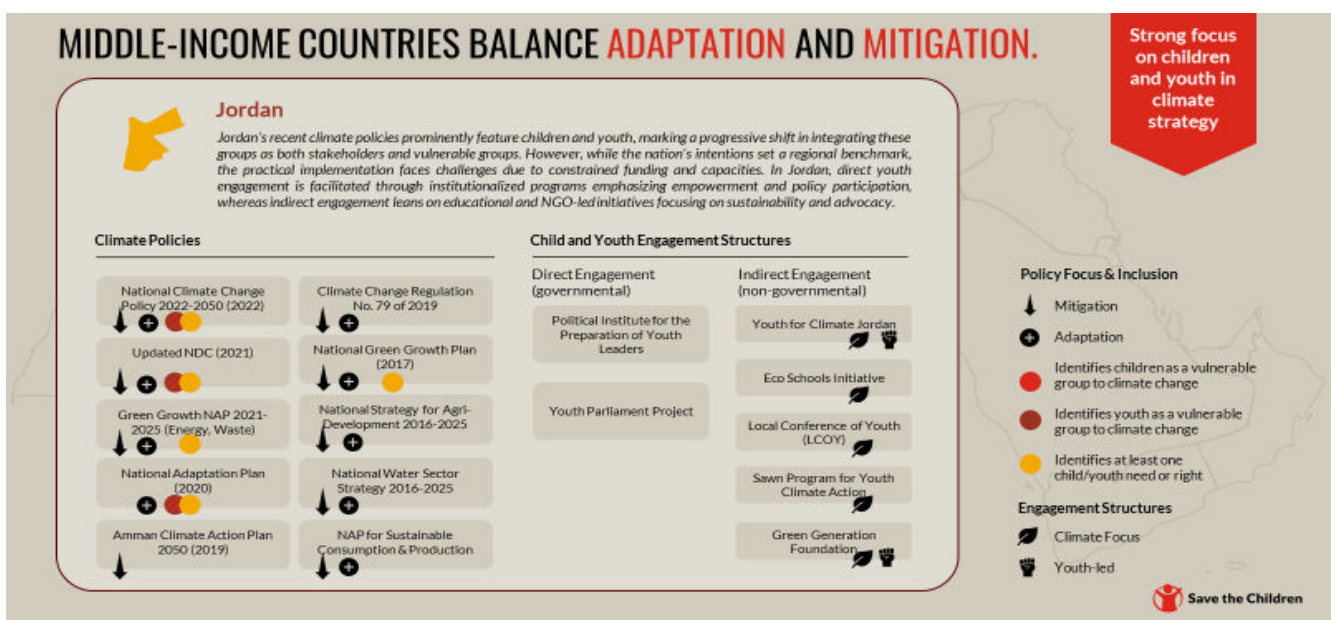


Figure 17. Jordan Climate Policy Snapshot

Jordan's climate change policies stand out in the region for their recognition of children and youth as groups most affected by inequality and discrimination as well as important stakeholders, with specific action points for their participation. Jordan's updated **NDC**, released in 2021, addresses youth unemployment by aiming to create green jobs that meet the youth's needs while fulfilling climate change responsibilities. Moreover, the NDC recognizes the vital role of youth and highlights the importance of investing in them as future decision-makers and key stakeholders. It sets action points for promoting youth awareness and empowerment, enabling them to contribute significantly to climate change adaptation efforts. With a focus on children, the NDC prioritizes integrating climate change impacts and adaptation into education curricula, using both formal and informal means to raise awareness and participation. An enhanced, unified, entry-level curriculum with climate change and environmental themes will be disseminated through various channels to reach a wider audience, including social media, informal settlements, schools, youth centers, and youth incubators.

Moreover, Jordan's national **Climate Change Policy**, formulated in 2022 (CCP 2022-2050), dedicates a section to gender, children and youth mainstreaming. The CCP outlines actions to update laws and establish key stakeholder participation mechanisms at and below the governorate level, including the development of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) to involve children and youth in climate change dialogues and the formulation of sectoral strategies, action plans, and programs. The policy also seeks to strengthen the participation of the private sector and groups most affected by inequality and discrimination, including children, women, youth, and those with disabilities or living in poverty. The CCP further highlights climate education, appropriate outreach through media, and the inclusion of the perspectives of groups most affected by inequality and discrimination, including children and youth, in baseline assessments when formulating sectoral strategies and projects. In addition, it sets out the action point of strengthening legislation to define the role of stakeholders, including children and youth, in the monitoring and evaluation of adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

Jordan's **NAP**, submitted to the UNFCCC in 2020, also places a strong emphasis on children and youth in its objectives and action points, including highlighting the significance of enhancing the adaptive capacity of groups most affected by inequality and discrimination, including children and youth. The NAP also includes a section on integrating gender, youth, and groups most affected by inequality and discrimination, with a special focus on prioritizing youth in awareness-raising initiatives. Moreover, the plan allocates financial resources to actively support youth's participation in climate change adaptation efforts.

Nevertheless, preexisting sectoral policies, such as the **National Strategy of Agricultural Development 2016-2025**, the **Water Sector Strategy (2016)**, and the **National Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production 2016-2025**, appear to lack a strong emphasis on incorporating specific action points that cater to the interests, needs, and rights of young people, despite some inclusion of youth references. It is worth noting that Jordan does have a National Youth Strategy for 2019-2025; however, it does not address climate change issues. The mentioned policies were established before the national CCP, which showed a more specific and targeted approach to tackle such concerns. Since the enactment of the

national CCP, there seems to be a stronger focus on incorporating children and youth-related issues in climate action. To verify this assumption, a thorough examination of future policies and programs will be important.

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

Jordan has been making significant strides in developing climate policies that specifically emphasize the rights and inclusion of children and youth. However, there is still a need to focus on and strengthen the mechanisms that enable their active participation and ensure the effective implementation of action points outlined in these policies. Despite this, there are promising initiatives that suggest the country is making progress, as highlighted by the establishment of the **Political Institute for the Preparation of Youth Leaders**, overseen by the Ministry of Youth which focuses on empowering young people aged 18 to 30 and enhancing their role in public life and decision-making.²⁴⁴ Among Jordan's initiatives, the **Youth Parliament Project** stands out, comprising 40 youth from different genders, organized into eight committees.²⁴⁵ These committees work on legal proposals for bills, submitting them to the House of Representatives, and propose amendments to existing laws and regulations. Notably, two of the committees work on climate-related topics, namely the Committee on Agriculture, Water and Irrigation, and the Committee on Energy and Environment. However, in practice, not much of the work done by the council is related to climate change despite some of its members being very passionate about the topic, one of them being the founder of Youth for Climate Jordan,²⁴⁶ a youth-led movement focusing on exerting political pressure and raising awareness in society to limit the consequences of the climate crisis.²⁴⁷

Climate education is another area that Jordan has emphasized in various policies and laws, such as the **Climate Change Bylaw n.79** and the **National Climate Policy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2022)**. These policies envision climate education being integrated into both school and university curricula. They also target teachers, which is also evident in the **NBSAP 2015-2022**, which calls for specialized Training of Trainers programs for academic lecturers in biodiversity.²⁴⁸

Despite its prominence in policy frameworks, the practical implementation of climate education in educational settings has not been fully realized.²⁴⁹ Nevertheless, certain directorates of education have made commendable efforts to provide students in some schools with opportunities for environmental learning through extracurricular activities. For instance, the Bani Oubaid Directorate of Education organized a competition in 2017 titled "Protecting the Environment," encouraging students to express their understanding of environmental challenges through drawings and essays. Additionally, practical sessions on preservation strategies were conducted, allowing students to actively participate in cleaning their schoolyards and planting vegetation.²⁵⁰

The directorates of education in Jordan have set an example that aligns with the approach outlined in the **Waste Sector Green Growth National Action Plan 2021-2025**. This plan proposes action points, such as a national cleanup campaign targeted at youth, which includes a volunteer program and a social responsibility campaign for university students. However, a Youth and Climate Change Specialist emphasized the need for caution in such initiatives.²⁵¹ While they can be beneficial in educating targeted groups about climate change impacts and causes, there is a concern that these campaigns may

unintentionally suggest that the sole responsibility to address climate change lies with individuals and volunteers. Instead, he suggests that the focus should be on empowering young people to hold companies and governments accountable for their actions, advocate for changes in climate-damaging practices, and promote climate justice. Addressing systemic issues, such as city design and infrastructure contributing to carbon emissions, holds greater significance, whereas encouraging individual actions like walking more or banning plastic bags without providing sustainable alternatives might not be enough to bring about significant change. According to him, the focus should be on advocating for comprehensive and just solutions that involve collective action, rather than solely placing the burden on individual behavior changes.

Indirect Engagement

Jordan boasts a wide array of active NGOs, some of which specifically target youth and, in some cases, extend their efforts to engage children. Several of these organizations have taken proactive measures to support young people and involve them in climate advocacy and action leading to a growing focus on environmental issues within civil society. One such initiative is the **Eco-Schools** program, launched by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) International and first implemented by the FEE in Amman and Aqaba back in 2009.²⁵² The initiative aims to instill in primary school students the motivation and capacities to drive environmental change for sustainability through activities conducted within their schools and communities, and to eventually award the school its Green Flag Certificate. The certificate is an indication that the school has successfully completed a number of steps, including forming an Eco-committee comprising of students and other staff, developing an action plan focused on the school's priorities, and monitoring and evaluating the progress throughout two years. Until 2020, 84 schools were awarded this certificate in Jordan. Another initiative is that when Generations for Peace and UNICEF jointly hosted the inaugural **LCOY** in 2021, with a strong focus on promoting advocacy.²⁵³ This conference provided a platform for over 100 young participants to interact with climate experts including researchers and members of civil society, to share their perspectives on climate issues, and to explore opportunities for taking action. The conference covered themes like the social impact of climate change, the significance of climate education for raising awareness, and the importance of climate policy and advocacy. Upon the conclusion of the LCOY, the **Sawn Program for Youth Climate Action** was launched by the two organizations in conjunction with the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of the

“Addressing systemic issues, such as city design and infrastructure contributing to carbon emissions, holds greater significance, whereas encouraging individual actions like walking more or banning plastic bags without providing sustainable alternatives might not be enough to bring about significant change.”

- Youth and Climate Change Specialist (2023), Jordan, June 6.

Environment.²⁵⁴ This initiative involved the comprehensive training of 36 young leaders, aged 19-28, who are passionate about climate action, representing all governorates in Jordan. The training curriculum consisted of sessions dedicated to topics such as climate change, youth-driven initiatives, as well as advocacy and leadership techniques.

Furthermore, the **Green Generation Foundation**, a youth-led environmental LNNGO established in 2014, exemplifies the participation of youth in environmental matters.²⁵⁵ The organization's primary mission revolves around empowering youth to drive sustainable change in environmental and climate issues within their communities through education, capacity building, and advocacy initiatives. Notably, the foundation has undertaken projects like the "**Youth Engagement in Jordan's National Climate Policy Project**" in collaboration with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the MoE.

This project, conducted in 2017, focused on enhancing the skills and capacities of young leaders in debates, research, and leadership on contemporary environmental issues to prepare them as future climate negotiators representing Jordan. Additionally, as part of its efforts, the organization has spearheaded several climate marches since 2016. These marches aim to underscore the significant role of Jordanian youth in shaping an environmentally secure future and are timed to coincide with the global COP to the UNFCCC, held annually. Youth for Climate Jordan, another youth-led environmental NGO, is renowned for organizing public events at which experts shed light on key climate-related concepts. Their podcast, "**Dry Flood**" covers topics such as the causes of climate change, the green economy, climate justice and the influence of manufacturing on the climate.²⁵⁶

Replicable Practice

Youth for Climate Jordan is a youth-led NGO that initiated a podcast, "Dry Flood" which covers topics such as the causes of climate change, the green economy, climate justice and the influence of manufacturing on the climate

"The creation of a network of indirect engagement initiatives would help to build on existing efforts and increase the visibility of existing initiatives."

- Validation Workshop with Regional Youth Committee, August 25.

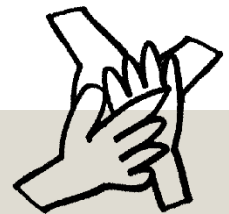
However, despite the commendable progress made by various initiatives, the work of NGOs still faces a number of limitations, as highlighted by a climate NGO activist. Firstly, while numerous existing programs focus on training and capacity building, they often overlook the aspect of facilitating open discussion between young people and policymakers. Moreover, there is a noticeable lack of initiatives specifically tailored to address the unique perspectives and needs of children.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, organizations find themselves facing obstacles such as the prevalent preference for

low-cost, quick implementation projects from donors. The activist further explained that this approach leads to a lack of tangible outcomes that could serve as building blocks for sustainable change. In the same direction,

limited collaboration exists among different organizations which means that initiatives can be repeated but not built on. Another challenge faced by LNNGOs arises when they are invited to contribute to climate policy discussions, as they often lack the technical expertise necessary to provide meaningful insights. This knowledge gap diminishes their capacity to make a substantial impact in policymaking processes, restricting their potential to influence crucial decisions.²⁵⁸

The access of young people in Jordan to existing initiatives led by NGOs is not evenly distributed across different regions in the country. In the capital city, Amman, there are generally more opportunities available as many initiatives are concentrated there. However, in the far south or north, youth encounter limited access to participating in various initiatives.²⁵⁹ Another significant issue is the gender gap, which has seen gradual improvement, particularly in Amman, regarding the participation of women. Nevertheless, young women from distant regions may still face disadvantages, as their families often disapprove of them traveling alone, which hinders their ability to participate in these initiatives.

In summary, Jordan is witnessing a growing wave of climate activism, driven by the increasing interest of its youth in environmental issues. Nevertheless, there are still areas that require attention, such as enhancing inclusion of children, youth engagement outside the capital, and addressing gender disparities in climate initiatives.



PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON CLIMATE CHANGE, SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE ACTION

Adolescent workshops + Creative survey

In Jordan, 109 individuals participated in the creative survey, comprising 35 children (aged 8-11 and 12-17), 57 youth (aged 18-24 and 25-35), and 17 older respondents (aged 36-45 and 46-60). Data collection also involved two mixed-gender adolescent workshops (aged 12-17), involving Jordanian children and Palestinian and Iraqi refugee children.



Awareness

The workshops and survey were conducted to assess the level of awareness among children and youth in Jordan of the climate challenges facing their country and the various impacts these challenges have on different groups of people. The workshop participants seemed familiar with certain terminology associated with climate change. When prompted to share terms that come to mind when the topic of climate change is mentioned, they brought up things like car emissions, forest fires, CO2 emissions, and deforestation, among other ideas. However, their comprehension of the detailed meanings behind these concepts, as well as distinguishing between causes and effects of climate change, could benefit from further enhancement. What's more, their examples indicated a need for more

comprehensive information on the subject. For example, participants believed that an increase in heat can be advantageous for agriculture, lacking awareness of how excessive temperature rise beyond normal levels could negatively impact crops and ecosystems. As for survey respondents, children and youth living in Jordan expressed diverse opinions regarding the impact of climate change on individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds. When it came to those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, opinions varied in close proportion. Some thought they would experience similar impacts as other children and youth in the country (46% of children, 44% of youth, and 24% of adults), while others asserted that they would be more affected (43% of children, 46% of youth, and 65% of adults). On the other hand, opinions varied on how individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds would experience the impacts of climate change, with some respondents stating they would be impacted similarly to other people (37% of children, 44% of youth, and 35% of adults), others suggesting they would face less impact (31% of children, 23% of youth, and 29% of adults), and some believing they would be more affected than others (31% of children, 28% of youth, and 24% of adults).

When asked about other factors affecting people's experience of climate change impacts, including age, gender, education level and living setting, respondents thought that factors had overall similar impacts. The top two factors identified as having a higher impact were the living setting (city vs countryside) and having a health condition such as a respiratory, digestive, or visual problem. On the other hand, the factors least selected by children were gender and disability, and by youth, differences in hobbies and gender. Survey

participants were also asked specifically on whether they think climate change impacted the rights of children and youth. More youth (82%) than children (57%) and adults (75%) thought that it did, with the rights to health, life, education and housing ranking as the top 4 child and youth rights perceived to be most impacted by climate change. Notably, 34% of surveyed children were not sure if climate change affects their rights.

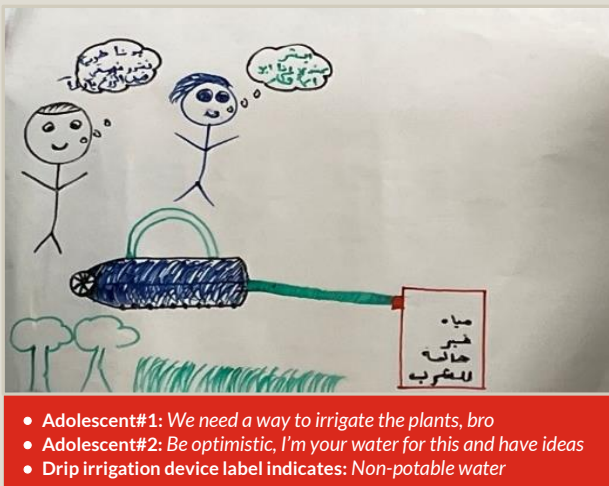
During the workshops, participants provided specific examples of these impacts. For instance, they acknowledged that children might be more susceptible to skin illnesses, while youth could encounter a scarcity of job opportunities, particularly those involving sun exposure. Additionally, they pointed out that men working outdoors could be at a higher risk of sunburn due to direct exposure to sunlight. However, despite these examples, it became clear that participants could still benefit from a more thorough understanding of the wider reality, in which different groups experience the effects of climate change in distinct ways, as they were unable to provide examples based on other facets of vulnerability.

These findings underscore how both children and youth living in Jordan lack a comprehensive understanding of how factors such as socioeconomic background, age, gender and disability can lead to more challenging experiences for groups most impacted by inequality and discrimination in the face of climate change.



Opportunities, enablers, risks, and barriers to participation in climate action

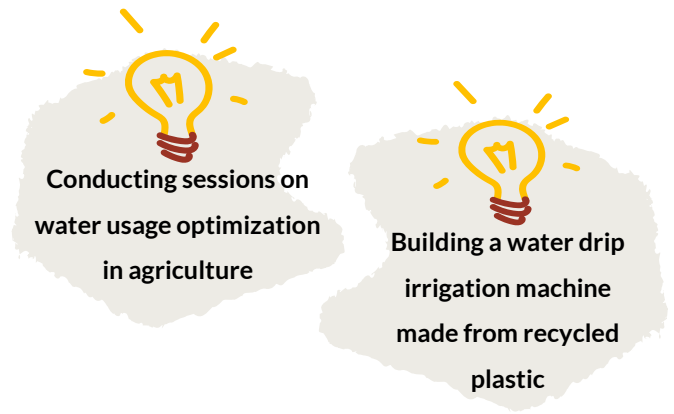
Jordan workshop participants chose two main areas of focus: **water scarcity** and **desertification**. The Jordanian nationals concentrated their efforts on Eastern Amman, particularly Al Nasr refugee Camp, while the refugee group aimed to address these issues for all residents of Amman. Jordanian children proposed a comprehensive approach, which included conducting informative sessions on water usage optimization for agriculture and raising awareness among school children about water conservation. They also presented an innovative solution: a water drip irrigation machine made from recycled plastic to efficiently reuse wastewater.



- Adolescent#1: We need a way to irrigate the plants, bro
- Adolescent#2: Be optimistic, I'm your water for this and have ideas
- Drip irrigation device label indicates: Non-potable water

Figure 18. Adolescent Workshop, Amman

On the other hand, the refugee children proposed solutions involving safeguarding dams, launching campaigns aimed at the government, lobbying for tree protection policies, and creating public awareness about tree preservation.



The stakeholders involved in both groups' initiatives included media channels, social media influencers, NGOs, governmental ministries, the parliament of Jordan, and the municipality. Notably, the refugee group showed a greater emphasis on engaging with policymakers at local and national levels compared to the Jordanian nationals, who seemed to rely more on individual, initiative-driven solutions.

Regarding obstacles and enablers, Jordanian children perceived the low cost of their project as an enabler, making it easier to implement locally. On the other hand, refugees identified obstacles such as opposition from ministries and lack of cooperation from people due to a lack of knowledge, while enablers included local help, support from NGOs, and involvement of schools.

It was clear that the two groups took different approaches. While the refugee group focused on solutions targeting policymakers, the Jordanians emphasized solutions that could be driven by individual initiative, starting from a local scale.

Based on the survey, asking about available options for participating in or initiating climate change mitigation and adaptation projects, the primary references among youth have been: engaging



with NGOs that support community-led programs that engage children and youth in climate action, and utilizing social media platforms to share ideas with decision-makers. The children also highlighted the significance of NGOs and regular dialogues organized by the government or community-decision makers, which involve young people in discussions. However, it is worth noting that the latter aspect lacked substantial support from other data, possibly indicating a lack of familiarity among children with the existing opportunities. Nevertheless, it does indicate an interest among

young people in being involved with government initiatives, as evidenced by both groups choosing “accessible and impactful government structures for children and youth’s participation” as the top additional opportunity children and youth in the country need (49% of children and 46% of youth). Finally, when asked about the obstacles hindering Jordan's ability to tackle environmental challenges, both children and youth pointed out the limited awareness of climate issues and a lack of knowledge about how to contribute effectively.

Lebanon



Climate change poses a multi-faceted threat to people in Lebanon, impacting their health, livelihoods, and coastal ecosystems. The loss of forest and non-forest green areas has contributed to higher urban **temperatures**, intensifying the health risks associated with heatwaves. **Heatwaves** are associated with a rise in temperature which is expected to increase by 2.2°C by 2059.²⁶⁰ Recent data from the Lebanese Red Cross indicates that during a heatwave in 2019, they provided first aid to 88 individuals affected by extreme heat. Heatwaves also pose threats to biodiversity, disrupting ecosystems and compromising their resilience.²⁶¹ **Additionally, climate change-induced water stress exacerbates poverty levels and food insecurity, particularly in vulnerable households.** Agriculture plays a vital role in Lebanon employing more than 20% of active workforce, despite contributing to only 6.4% of GDP. Regions heavily reliant on agriculture, such as Akkar, Dinniyeh, the Northern Bekaa and the South, are significantly impacted, with up to 80% of their local GDP tied to agriculture. Refugees and households most impacted by inequality and discrimination, especially those headed by women, face heightened poverty risks.²⁶² Coastal areas face additional challenges, as **rising sea levels**, projected to increase by 30-60 cm by 2050, threaten sandy beaches and coastal natural reserves like the Palm Islands and the Tyre nature reserves. Lebanon is a highly urbanized, middle-income country with most of its population in coastline cities that are vulnerable to climate-related sea level rise. Saltwater intrusion into coastal aquifers is occurring and will continue to worsen with rising seas. Decreased rainfall and higher temperatures also impact water resources, reducing the availability of irrigation water.²⁶³ Seawater intrusion into aquifers leads to salinization, coastal flooding, erosion, and degradation of ecosystems and reserves, further amplifying pre-existing food security and socio-economic challenges.²⁶⁴ **Furthermore, refugee children who participated in the workshops of this research poignantly underscored the vulnerabilities faced by those living in camps, often in tents, emphasizing how extreme weather conditions due to climate change frequently lead to the loss of their already fragile shelter in Lebanon.**²⁶⁵

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.2°C by 2059.

Against the backdrop of the economic crisis, children and youth are particularly affected by rising food insecurity due to the escalating cost of living. Many households struggle to afford a varied diet, leading to reduced food intake among children and youth.²⁶⁶ This lack of access to nutritious food negatively impacts their health and overall well-being. The compounding effects of climate change and the economic crisis create a challenging environment for children and youth, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive solutions to address food insecurity and ensure a healthier future for the younger generation.²⁶⁷

“Climate change is a threat to each and every life existing and would ever exist on this earth. It means the depletion of our resources and shapes the reality of upcoming generations”

- Environmental Specialist (2023), Lebanon, July 28.

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 8)

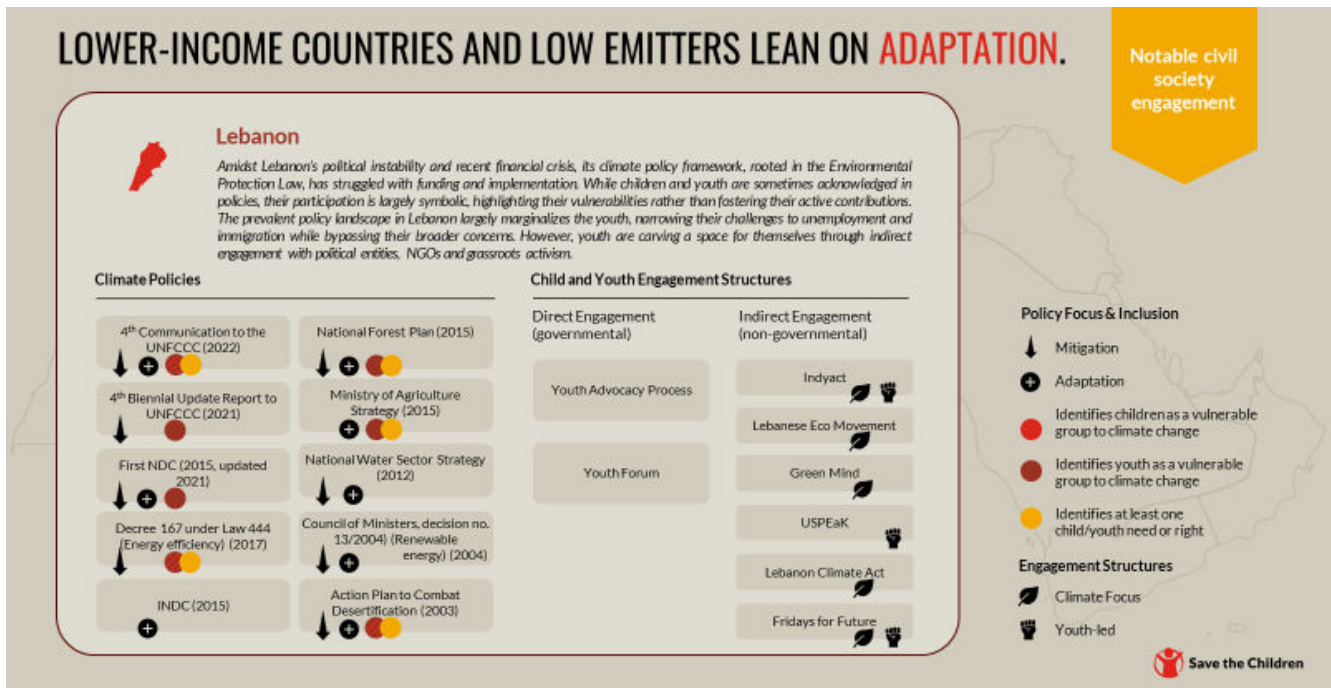


Figure 19. Lebanon Climate Policy Snapshot

Lebanon ranks 106 out of 181 countries in terms of climate vulnerability and 59th in terms of readiness to climate-related hazards. Vulnerability signifies a country's exposure, sensitivity, and capacity to cope with such hazards, considering factors like food security, water availability, environmental conditions, healthcare, and infrastructure. On the other hand, readiness assesses a country's ability to utilize investments and translate them into effective adaptation measures, examining economic, governance, and social readiness.²⁶⁸

The MoE plays a central role in climate change policymaking as the national coordinator and UNFCCC focal point. It coordinates and submits national communications, reports, and inventories. The Climate Change Coordinating Committee (CCCC), led by the MoE, oversees climate change activities and mainstreaming efforts. The MoE also chairs the NCE, which integrates climate change into national development plans through policy approval and coordination among ministries and non-public entities.²⁶⁹

Lebanon's environmental policy structure revolves around the **Environmental Protection Law** (law no. 444/2002), which serves as the overarching legal instrument for environmental protection and management. Several other laws relate to climate change, such as the ratification of the **UNFCCC** and the **Kyoto Protocol** through laws 359/1994 and 738/2006.²⁷⁰ Existing laws and decisions under the Environmental Protection Law focus on environmental aspects, including the reduction of air pollution from transport (law 341/2001), the development of local energy and renewable energies to decrease energy imports (Council of Ministers, decision no. 13/2004), energy efficiency standards and labels, tax incentives for green products, and the promotion of large-scale renewable energy industries (decree 167 under law 444). Additionally, Lebanon has ratified conventions like the UN Convention on Biodiversity and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.²⁷¹

Furthermore, Lebanon signed the Paris Agreement in April 2016, but ratification is pending approval from the Lebanese Parliament.²⁷² The country submitted its **Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)** in 2015 and has submitted its **First NDC** in 2020. Lebanon has provided four **National Communications** (1999, 2011, 2016, and 2022) and four **Biennial Update Reports** (2015, 2017, 2019, and 2021) to the UNFCCC.²⁷³ Moreover, Lebanon has taken steps to integrate climate change adaptation measures into various sectors. This includes mainstreaming climate change adaptation into the biodiversity sector through the **NBSAP** of 2015. In the water sector, climate change adaptation is addressed in the **National Water Sector Strategy** of 2012. Similarly, the forestry and agriculture sectors have incorporated climate change adaptation into the **National Forest Plan (NFP)** of 2015 and the **Ministry of Agriculture Strategy** of 2015.²⁷⁴

These efforts demonstrate Lebanon's commitment to integrating climate change adaptation into key sectors of the economy. Nevertheless, their ability to allocate proper funds and effectively implement these strategies remains limited. An Environmental and Agriculture Advisor noted that Lebanon has not fulfilled most of its commitments from various international agreements, except for achieving a 30% integration of renewable energy, possibly a response to the country's electricity crisis.²⁷⁵ Moreover, according to a UNDP climate change program manager, in response to the decline in international aid for development, countries in the region, including Lebanon, are redirecting their attention towards attracting international funds dedicated to addressing climate change.²⁷⁶ This shift in focus aims to secure funding for the development and enhancement of local infrastructure by proposing projects that target the challenges posed by climate change. As a result, climate strategies in the region primarily prioritize infrastructural development initiatives, driven by the availability of international funding to support such projects.

Moreover, the UNDP climate change expert highlighted that the representation of children and youth in climate policies faces challenges due to the data collection methods employed. As data is collected at the national level, the specific needs and perspectives of children and youth are often diluted. The UNDP expert further indicated that mitigation efforts primarily center around economic and carbon emissions perspectives, evaluating the potential reduction in carbon emissions per dollar invested in a project, without considering the impact on communities residing in targeted areas. Moreover, in terms of adaptation, policies primarily focus on assessing exposure to climate risks, the vulnerability of the community as a whole, and their adaptive capacities, without specifically addressing the unique vulnerabilities of children and youth.²⁷⁷ While some policies such as the **National Action Program to Combat Desertification**, **NFP**, and **Ministry of Agriculture Strategy** acknowledge the heightened vulnerability of children and youth, there is a lack of specific guidance on engaging and supporting them. The policies primarily concentrate on mitigating and adapting to climate change, with limited emphasis on addressing the specific needs and participation of children and youth. Lebanon's **2020 NDC** and **4th National Communication (NC)** recognize the significance of raising awareness among children and youth regarding eco-friendly behaviors, and the NDC acknowledges that youth were consulted during its development process. That said, the focus primarily lies on youth engagement in climate adaptation, particularly youth farmers who possess high digital literacy and can implement digital farming

strategies.²⁷⁸ Meanwhile, the representation of children in these documents is limited to acknowledging their vulnerability to increased climate challenges, particularly in terms of health.

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

According to an interviewed public official, children and youth are not recognized as key stakeholders in policies, and an interviewed UNDP expert further indicated that climate strategies take into consideration the poverty and vulnerability of communities, but they do not directly focus on children or youth.^{279,280} Research as well indicates a complete lack of child participation and a lack of meaningful youth participation in policy-making processes in Lebanon. Public policies often disregard or undermine the active role that youth can play in driving positive change. Policy discourses and actions tend to overlook the complex interplay between youth-related issues and wider societal matters, such as legal, economic, social, political, and urban policies. Youth's needs and desires are not prioritized, and their experiences are not adequately considered. The understanding of youth in Lebanese public policy is limited to a narrow focus on problems like unemployment, and immigration, neglecting the broader range of issues that youth face,²⁸¹ while children are almost completely neglected.

As far as participation goes in Lebanon, there seems to be no active engagement of children, while youth are limited to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which developed a National Youth Policy in 2011. The policy primarily concentrates on social and cultural matters, disregarding the important political dimension and perpetuating a notion that politics and conflict should remain separate from society. While the **Youth Advocacy Process** and the **Youth Forum** were initiated to amplify youth voices and channel their insights into policymaking, their impact has been somewhat limited. The Youth Advocacy Process focused on identifying and addressing youth needs, culminating in actionable policy recommendations presented to key ministries. On the other hand, the Youth Forum emerged as a collaborative platform where LNNGO-affiliated youth and political-party youth wings could jointly advocate for policy changes. However, despite these intentions, there was a noticeable decline in LNNGO participation, and the influence of political-party youth wings became increasingly dominant.²⁸² This analysis underscores the urgent need for enhanced child and youth representation and meaningful participation in policymaking, calling for more inclusive approaches that genuinely address the diverse perspectives and needs of children and youth in Lebanon.

Replicable Practice

Lebanon has a Youth Advocacy Process and a Youth Forum which give spaces for youth and LNNGOs to convey their insights and policy recommendations to policymakers

While Lebanon has made efforts to involve youth in climate change activities and policies, such as organizing a youth engagement and consultation session post COP26 with support from the UK Embassy, it is important to critically analyze the underlying motivations. The inclusion of youth representatives in the **Climate Youth Negotiator Program** and their participation in COP27²⁸³ may be seen as a response to the international trend of youth involvement in climate negotiations rather than a genuine commitment to meaningful youth participation. It is crucial to assess whether these initiatives translate into tangible decision-making power for youth in Lebanon and whether their voices are truly considered in national climate policy development and implementation. While participation in international conferences is important, it is equally essential to create avenues for children and youth participation at the local level, ensuring their active involvement in shaping climate policies and fostering a sense of ownership and agency. This sentiment was echoed by an interviewed public official who mentioned that youth participation is typically done in collaboration with INGOs, and through local initiatives, however, they all tend to be symbolic engagements rather than meaningful ones.²⁸⁴ The findings from this section indicate a complete lack of child participation and a lack of meaningful youth participation in policy-making processes in Lebanon.

Indirect Engagement

“I am not seeing a [government] program for youth and children specifically. It is more general rather than oriented or targeted towards youth and children. [...] But most INGOs work under the general umbrella of climate change and include Youth and Children”

- Public Official (2023), Lebanon, July 7.

Despite the challenging public policy and political economy landscape that dominates their lives, young people in Lebanon actively seek to secure a meaningful future and participate in the political sphere. While children don't seem to have any structures for engagement, research highlights that youth involvement in politics takes shape through three distinct groupings.²⁸⁵ The first category comprises groups which align themselves with political parties. These young individuals choose to work within existing power structures, often with the hope of effecting change from within.

The second category encompasses LNNGOs which mobilize around specific issues and present themselves as alternatives to the political route. They aim to address societal challenges through a focused and specialized approach. Their engagement reflects an attempt to challenge the status quo and provide solutions outside of traditional political channels. Active LNNGOs engaging youth in the climate space in Lebanon include but are not limited to Indyact, Lebanese Eco Movement, Green Mind, USPEaK and Lebanon Climate Act. Nevertheless, according to an interviewed public official, LNNGOs work in isolation and at a small scale, with limited to no link between their activities at the national level.²⁸⁶

The third and final category are activists who reject the LNNGO-centric approach and instead experiment with more flexible institutional formats. These young activists organize campaigns and form coalitions, driven by a commitment to rights-based demands and a collective action agenda. Their approach tends to be more ambitious, seeking transformative change in Lebanon's political system. This includes organizing protests,

strikes and marches in collaboration with local and international movements such as the Lebanese chapters of **Fridays for Future** and **Extinction Rebellion**.²⁸⁷

This analysis highlights the resilience and determination of Lebanese youth in the face of adverse circumstances. Despite the pervasive disillusionment with mainstream politics and the existing power structures, youth are actively seeking avenues to voice their concerns, challenge societal norms, and advocate for change. By organizing themselves into these distinct groups, they demonstrate a multiplicity of approaches to political participation, each driven by a desire to shape a more inclusive and equitable future for Lebanon. Outside policymaking, international organizations are implementing multiple projects aimed at increasing the resilience of communities most impacted by inequality and discrimination in the country. On June 29th, 2023, the World Bank announced a USD 200 million fund to improve the resilience of farmers and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Lebanese agri-food sector. The program is estimated to benefit 80,000 farmers through increased access to finance, improved infrastructure, services, and capacity building.²⁸⁸



PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON CLIMATE CHANGE, SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE ACTION

Adolescent workshops + Creative survey

In Lebanon, 281 individuals participated in the creative survey, comprising 116 children (aged 8-11 and 12-17), 145 youth (aged 18-24 and 25-35), and 20 older respondents (aged 36-45 and 46-60). Data collection also involved two mixed-gender adolescent workshops (aged 12-17), one with Lebanese nationals and the other with refugees.

Awareness

The primary objective of the workshops and survey was to assess the awareness of children and youth in Lebanon regarding the country's climate challenges and the wide-ranging impacts on people. During the workshops, which included both refugee and Lebanese children, there was a diverse range of understanding about climate change. Interestingly, some believed that

earthquakes result from climate change. While there's nascent research suggesting potential links, it's not a widely accepted view. Such perceptions might arise from children associating major local events, like recent earthquakes in Lebanon, with their understanding of climate change. This underlines the importance of tailored educational programs that address these misconceptions and enhance their grasp of climate change's direct effects on their environment.

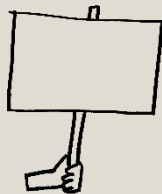
All 281 survey respondents demonstrated an understanding of climate change impacts at a macro level, with only 51% recognizing that communities from lower socio-economic backgrounds would be more severely affected, and 39% stating they will be impacted the same. Furthermore, when asked to pinpoint the primary contributors to heightened climate change impacts on communities, participants emphasized factors like geography and government funding. They placed less emphasis on individual-level socio-economic conditions, suggesting that they

see broader systemic and environmental factors as more influential than personal income levels in determining the impacts of climate change.

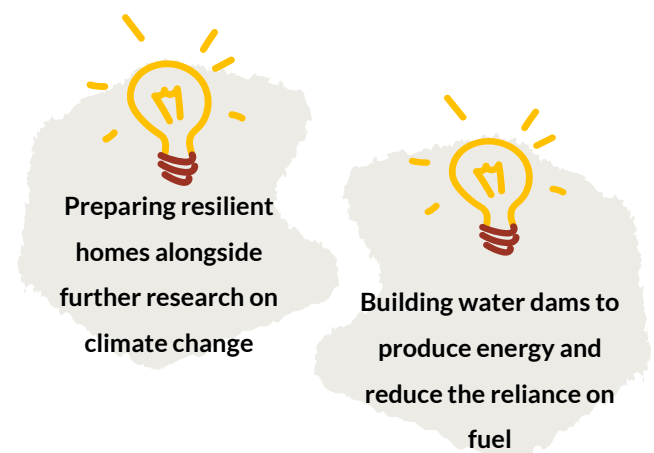
On the other hand, workshop participants' comprehension of how groups most impacted by inequality and discrimination are uniquely affected by climate change was commendable. They demonstrated a clear understanding of how various factors, such as socioeconomic background, health status, age, displacement status, and disability, contribute to differential impacts. For example, Lebanese children pointed out that individuals from more advantaged economic backgrounds might manage heatwaves and power cuts through purchasing solar energy solutions, while those with lower incomes might face financial challenges in doing so. Additionally, they acknowledged the difficulties that people with artificial limbs could encounter in extreme heat. Refugee children also showcased a profound understanding of climate change's effects on groups most impacted by inequality and discrimination, specifically highlighting the plight of refugees living in camps. They highlighted that in refugee camps, increased extreme weather conditions manifest in heightened disputes, tensions, and anger among inhabitants, often resulting in escalated violence over even minor issues.

Opportunities, enablers, risks, and barriers to participation in climate action

Refugee children's workshop participants decided to address the issue of **extreme weather events** impacting refugees and IDPs, leading to the loss of their living spaces. Their chosen solution was to mitigate this problem by raising awareness among communities to contribute less to the changing



climate. On the other hand, the Lebanese children group focused on the impact of **sea level rise** on various groups, including those living on shores and people from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. The solutions proposed by this group included preparing resilient homes, conducting research on climate change, and emphasizing the importance of raising awareness. They also suggested building dams, utilizing energy produced from water, and reducing fuel consumption.



Children in Lebanon displayed a keen understanding of the impacts of climate change, especially on groups most impacted by inequality and discrimination. Their suggestions, like enhancing the resilience of homes, showed depth and relevance. However, some solutions, while insightful, could benefit from a more nuanced approach tailored to specific climate challenges. This only underscores the importance of further enriching their already commendable base of knowledge, guiding them to more specific actions to address the complex facets of climate change. When inquired about enablers and barriers, all survey respondents identified local NGOs and online platforms as primary avenues for involvement. Conversely over 40% identified a

lack of government structures as the primary barrier to participation, and another 29% identified lack of NGO initiatives.

"Given that the government does not attach sufficient importance to this issue, NGOs must make great efforts to disseminate [climate change] information, raise public awareness, and convey a simple message to youth groups about the seriousness of this subject."

- Moussa, Lebanon, 19.

Furthermore, lack of awareness around climate change was selected 130 times (46%) as one of the key obstacles for meaningful participation, this was further amplified with 65% of respondents

stating they are not aware of any climate initiatives taking place in the country. These responses indicate a recognition of existing channels for participation, but also a call for more organized and widespread opportunities, particularly from the government and non-profit sectors.

The insights in this study thus emphasize the need for specialized educational initiatives that not only enhance understanding of climate change but also guide the creation of effective solutions to address it. This, coupled with efforts to enhance equal opportunities for participation, especially through governmental and non-profit channels, could empower young people in Lebanon to become more effective and informed participants in climate action.

Occupied Palestinian Territory



Like its neighboring countries, oPt faces a range of climate induced challenges, including rising temperature, decreasing precipitation, deterioration of water resources, extreme weather events, sea level rise, and desertification.²⁸⁹ Consequently, **the territory is experiencing heightened food insecurity and water scarcity.** oPt heavily relies on imports to meet its needs in food, making it particularly vulnerable to climate change-



induced shocks in other food exporting countries, including Israel.²⁹⁰ Furthermore, **with the expropriation of agricultural lands by Israeli**



authorities and settlers, Palestinian accessibility over land and water resources are further limited,



reducing the possibility of meaningful climate adaptation. Other structures that are critical for the development, livelihoods, health and wellbeing of Palestinians are also routinely torn down, including livelihood and agricultural structures, and water and sanitation facilities. The ongoing occupation and blockade imposed by the Government of Israel on the Gaza strip since 2006 have already placed oPt in a precarious position, resulting in a need for food assistance. In 2021, out of the estimated 5.3 million people in the West Bank and Gaza, 1.8 million required food assistance.²⁹¹ These numbers are projected to further escalate as climate change impacts the accessibility of food imports and disrupts the agricultural sector of the region. Furthermore, water scarcity has a direct and detrimental impact on people and agriculture within oPt. The territory is currently grappling with escalating water shortages attributed to reduced rainfall patterns and higher rates of evaporation, leading to insufficient replenishment of groundwater aquifers.²⁹² Among the areas most affected by this crisis is Gaza, which lacks surface water sources and is solely dependent on these groundwater aquifers. Distressingly, a staggering 95% of Gaza's aquifer is contaminated and unfit for consumption without proper treatment, endangering the health of the entire population.²⁹³ The blockade has played a role in the limited availability of water in Gaza. In the 2021 escalation, a total of 290 WASH facilities, including water wells, water pumping stations, and distribution networks, were either damaged or completely destroyed. This has severely restricted access to water and sanitation services for over 1.2 million Palestinians.²⁹⁴ The ramifications of water scarcity are keenly felt by farmers who bear the brunt of this crisis. Governorates such as Jenin, Tulkarm, and the Jordan River Valley in the West Bank face heightened vulnerability when it comes to agriculture due to water scarcity issues.²⁹⁵ These challenges exacerbate existing hardships, making it increasingly difficult for farmers to sustain their livelihoods. In Gaza, women farmers face significant obstacles due to existing gender inequalities in the agricultural sector. Despite shouldering 70% of the responsibilities related to farming and agriculture, they encounter limited access to crucial resources, including assets, agricultural information, and credit.²⁹⁶ These gender disparities are expected to be exacerbated by the challenges posed by climate change, which directly affect agricultural

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.1°C by 2059.

activities. As a result, the livelihoods of women farmers and their families are at risk, placing increased pressure on them to devise adaptation strategies for survival.

Children, a group which is highly susceptible to the short and long-term impacts of climate change, already face harsh conditions resulting from the compound effects of the occupation and economic crisis. In 2022, oPt witnessed an increase in tensions and violence, leading to a worrisome deterioration in the protection of civilians, particularly children.²⁹⁷ The implications of climate change further worsen the situation and impact various aspects of children's daily life and basic rights,²⁹⁸ including health and education. **With children under 18 comprising 44% of the population in 2023,²⁹⁹ they are heavily affected by food insecurity.** Statistics indicate that 7.4% of children between six and 59 months suffer from severe and moderate malnutrition in Gaza, and this number is expected to rise.³⁰⁰ Child stunting is also prevalent, particularly in Bedouin communities, where it can reach 23%.³⁰¹ According to a recent Save the Children survey, malnutrition is dominant among families living in 'access restricted areas' that are close to the Israeli fence and witness frequent attacks, lack access to basic needs, suffer from poor public infrastructure and a history of waterborne diseases and solid waste pollution. 10% of families surveyed by Save the Children reported losing a child due to a preventable cause before the age of 5.^{2,302} As for education, its current state is already jeopardized by the ongoing occupation, with a total of 19,838 class minutes lost between January and June 2023, representing a significant increase in the number of incidents targeting schools and students compared to the same period of 2022, 2021, 2020 and 2019.³⁰³ Climate change impacts, including rising temperatures, have been shown to affect students' ability to learn, with research suggesting that each degree Fahrenheit increase in temperature throughout a school year reduces the amount learned by one percent.³⁰⁴ Children from both Gaza and the West Bank highlighted that due to the heat, frequent power cuts disrupt their ability to access the internet and that summer camps and outdoor activities had become increasingly difficult to enjoy.³⁰⁵ One child recounted how extreme heat had forced him to skip school, underlining the damaging effects of rising temperatures on education.³⁰⁶ However, the impact of climate change was not limited to scorching summers. Several children spoke of the difficulty of adapting to colder winters when heavy precipitation forced them to stay indoors. Youth in oPt face a myriad of challenges, and employment is a primary concern. The territory has one of the world's highest unemployment rates, reaching 24%. Specifically, for graduates aged 19 to 29, the unemployment rate was 48.3% in 2022.³⁰⁷ Similar to impacts on children's health and education, the potential increase in temperature and extreme weather events may further contribute to higher unemployment levels and job losses for youth. Youth bear the direct impact of these challenges and encounter difficulties in finding viable employment opportunities, while the same risk poses a threat to the future and economic resilience of children.

² In July 2023, Save the Children conducted a study on nutrition in Gaza, using qualitative and quantitative tools: 322 mothers from five geographic locations in Gaza Strip were surveyed, and two focus group discussions were held with 63 parents of children who were diagnosed with malnutrition. All respondents lived in areas that are classified as Access Restricted Areas (ARA) which lack basic infrastructure services due to their closeness to the Israeli fence. Residents of these areas lack access to basic services including health and nutrition. 73% of responding families reported that the main barrier for them to reach a health centre is the long distance.

For both children and youth in oPt, vulnerabilities are exacerbated by the ongoing occupation and economic context but may also be compounded by factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, age, and disability. In the West Bank, children acknowledged that individuals from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds are disproportionately affected by heatwaves, primarily because they lack the financial means to afford air conditioning. They also recognized the vulnerability of pregnant women to climate challenges, while men are at risk due to their increased exposure to direct sunlight in their work.³⁰⁸ Children from Gaza highlighted that climate change impacts not only physical well-being but also emotional well-being. They particularly emphasized how climate challenges could lead to isolation and hardship for the elderly and people with disabilities.³⁰⁹

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 9)

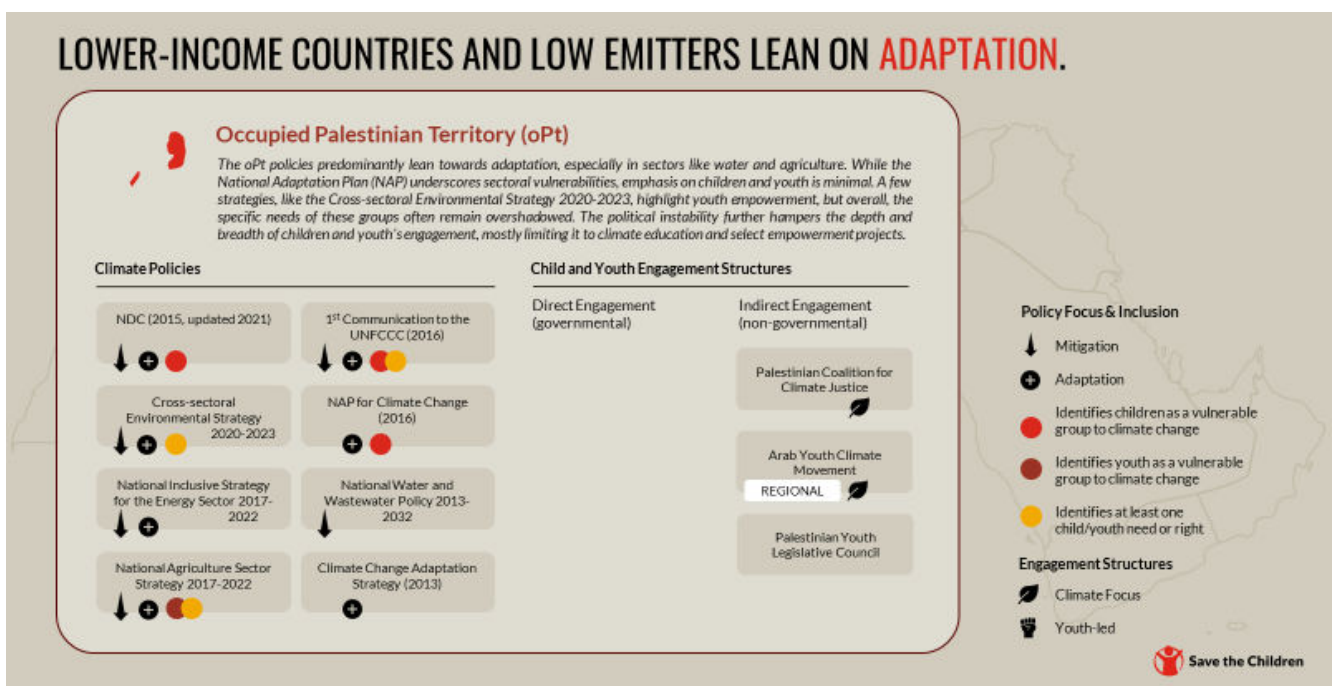


Figure 20. oPt Climate Policy Snapshot

In its commitments to the UNFCCC, oPt has submitted an updated **NDC** (2021) and a **NAP** (2016). The NDC primarily concentrates on adaptation measures, considering oPt's minimal contribution to global GHG emissions and its disproportionate susceptibility to climate change impacts. Nevertheless, the NDC also incorporates mitigation targets, reflecting oPt's intention to continue to minimize its carbon footprint. Nedal Katbeh Bader, an interviewed climate expert highlighted that climate change is increasingly becoming a priority for officials in oPt, and they are more actively involved in international climate-related events. However, it has been observed that these commitments have not yet been effectively translated into action plans of various governmental agencies.³¹⁰

Over the years, the territory has developed targeted strategies to address the impacts of climate change on key sectors like water, energy, and agriculture, including the **Agricultural Sector Strategy 2017-2022** and the **National Water Sector Strategic Plan and Action Plan 2017-2022**. Additionally, the NAP identifies other

sectors or themes as highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, including coastal and marine areas, food, gender, health, industry, terrestrial ecosystems, tourism, urban areas and infrastructure, as well as waste and wastewater. oPt's strategies have also touched on these sectors. A crosscutting theme in many of the strategies is gender, highlighted in the **National Agricultural Sector Strategy - Resilience and Sustainable Development 2017- 2022**, among others. However, when it comes to the focus on children and youth, the strategies have been relatively limited. While some acknowledge the vulnerability of children to the health implications of climate change, like the NDC and the NAP, particularly related to challenges such as lack of safe drinking water and sanitation, most do not specifically highlight children and youth's sensitivities to climate change impacts. Furthermore, specific action points targeting the needs and agency of children and youth are lacking, even in important documents such as the NDC. Despite the NDC stating the commitment to implement measures that ensure equal and equitable protection for vulnerable groups, including women, children and the poor, there is a notable absence of action points specifically targeting young people. Bader further acknowledged that while children and youth are sometimes mentioned as key stakeholders, policies rarely incorporate detailed action plans targeting these groups or effectively addressing their vulnerabilities.³¹¹ Among the few policies that do address specific needs of children or youth, most concentrate on initiatives for sustainable development tailored to youth and integrating climate education into school curricula. For example, the **Cross-sectoral Environmental Strategy 2020-2023** emphasizes the importance of promoting sustainability among young people and sets objectives to support economic empowerment initiatives that promote sustainable development, particularly those targeting women and youth. Moreover, the **National Agricultural Sector Strategy - Resilience and Sustainable Development 2017-2022** includes a noteworthy action point that seeks to empower youth in agriculture. By establishing mechanisms that facilitate access to funding for small farmers, women, and youth, this strategy aims to enhance their existing farming practices and foster the establishment of entrepreneurial agricultural ventures. In general, the policies that target children and youth have a relatively limited scope, primarily focusing on climate education for children and youth, and economic empowerment through training and funding provision for youth.

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

Decades of political marginalization have deeply impacted Palestinian youth, resulting in a pervasive sense of disillusionment and apathy.³¹² Many young Palestinians believe that engaging in the formal political sphere is futile as their voices go unheard.³¹³ Several factors contribute to this disillusionment. Opportunities for meaningful participation, even at the municipal level, are scarce.³¹⁴ Additionally, the representation of youth in decision-making positions is meager, with only 0.8% occupying such roles,³¹⁵ further underscoring the absence of their voices in the decision-making process. Challenging circumstances such as the ongoing

“Unfortunately, there are no policies or structures to protect children and youth at risk due to climate change.”

- Head of Climate Change and Drought Management, Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture (2023), oPt June 1.

occupation, widespread poverty, high rates of youth unemployment, and restrictive measures imposed on youth activities by the political environment further compound the difficulties faced by young Palestinians. For young women, these challenges are intensified by patriarchal societal norms and stereotypical expectations that hinder their inclusion and progress in politics.³¹⁶ Consequently, many young Palestinians perceive engagement in the formal political sphere as a fruitless endeavor, contradicting historical patterns where Palestinian youth once held leadership roles within their communities.³¹⁷ This disengagement is evident in the fact that a significant portion of individuals under the age of 29 have never participated in a national election in oPt.³¹⁸ Engaging youth in climate policymaking is no exception. The current structures involved in climate policymaking, such as the **Environment Quality Authority (EQA)**, which hold crucial responsibilities for strategic planning, legislation, monitoring, and preparing implementing regulations for environmental aspects, often lack active youth participation, as emphasized by Bader.³¹⁹ Similarly, although mentioned in the **Cross-sectoral Environmental Strategy 2020-2023** as holding a role in the engagement of youth, the contribution made by the **Higher Council of Youth and Sports**³ remains unclear in this respect. As per Ahmed Abuthaher, the Director General for Projects and International Relations and UNFCCC Focal point for Palestine/EQA, the **National Committee on Climate Change (NCCC)**⁴ is another entity where the lack of youth representation is evident. Involving youth in the NCCC could have a substantial impact on the development of climate policies and initiatives, while ensuring that youth's views are duly considered.³²⁰

On the other hand, the engagement of children in policymaking is absent. While many policies acknowledge children as particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, only a few of them address their specific vulnerabilities. For instance, the **Cross-sectoral Environmental Strategy (2020-2023)** includes objectives related to integrating climate education in schools, and the **Initial Communication Report to the UNFCCC** highlights the importance of targeted efforts to mitigate health risks for children who may face exacerbated health issues due to climate change. However, no reference is made to efforts to involve children in the climate policymaking process.

Indirect Engagement

Despite encountering numerous obstacles, Palestinian youth exhibit a relatively positive attitude towards civic engagement.³²¹ In 2022, around 19% of Palestinian youth actively participated in volunteering and community work,³²² which is higher compared to their level of political participation. The **Palestinian Coalition for Climate Justice**, launched in 2016 by various Palestinian civil society organizations, is committed to raising awareness about climate change, global warming, and its impacts, with a particular focus on engaging youth.³²³ Through the coalition, specialists, consultants and activists in the environmental and climate change sector collaborate with youth organizations to highlight the effects of climate change on Palestinians' economic situation and livelihoods. The coalition aims to work with the EQA in their endeavors. The **Arab**

³ The Cross-sectoral Environmental Strategy assigns the council the responsibility of raising climate awareness among youth and encouraging their active participation in environmental initiatives.

⁴ The NCCC, on behalf of the Palestinian Government, is responsible for preparing climate-related policies, and following decisions by the Cabinet, monitoring implementation of these policies.

Youth Climate Movement, present in multiple countries across the MENA region, is also active in oPt,³²⁴ conducting activities to promote awareness about sustainable practices. Another initiative, the **Palestinian Youth Legislative Council**, launched by UNDP and the Sharek Youth Forum,⁵ offers young people the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.³²⁵ However, it remains unclear whether this platform specifically addresses climate change. Regarding children's involvement, there is a notable shortage of initiatives. One noteworthy effort involves Save the Children, collaborating with the EQA, **to advocate for the inclusion of child representatives within the NCCC**, thereby enabling their participation in decision-making processes.

Replicable Practice

The Palestinian Youth Legislative Council, launched by UNDP and the Sharek Youth Forum, offers young people the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes

Despite these efforts, existing initiatives remain very few in number and continue to have limitations in terms of outreach, particularly with regard to targeting a broader segment of the youth population. Furthermore, the inclusion of children in these initiatives is even less frequent. Some interviewees have expressed the need for greater consideration of civil society input by the authorities. Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight that civil society actors are members of the Palestinian Government's NCCC.



PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON CLIMATE CHANGE, SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE ACTION

Adolescent workshops + Creative survey

In oPt, 12 individuals participated in the creative survey, comprising 7 youth (aged 18-24 and 25-35) and 5 older respondents (aged 36-45 and 46-60). Notably, no children took part in the survey. Two mixed-gender adolescent workshops (aged

12-17) were also held, one in Gaza with 14- to 16-year-olds, and one in the West Bank with 13- to 16-year-olds.⁶

Awareness

Children in both Gaza and the West Bank had sophisticated reflections on climate sensitivities and impacts on different groups including the elderly, people with disabilities, and those most impacted by socioeconomic inequality and discrimination. For instance, in Gaza, the children highlighted that heatwaves could be life-

⁵ Sharek Youth forum is a LNNGO with the mission to contribute to the development of youth through designing, supporting, and implementing youth initiatives, programs and projects in oPt.

⁶ Since the response rate from young people living in oPt was insufficient for analysis, this section only includes data obtained from workshops with adolescent girls and boys.

threatening for the elderly and infants. They also noted that farmers and construction workers might be at risk of fainting and sunburn due to direct exposure to extreme heat. Moreover, the children recognized that individuals with health conditions that could be worsened by intense heat might need to relocate to safer regions and could face isolation and limited participation in social activities.



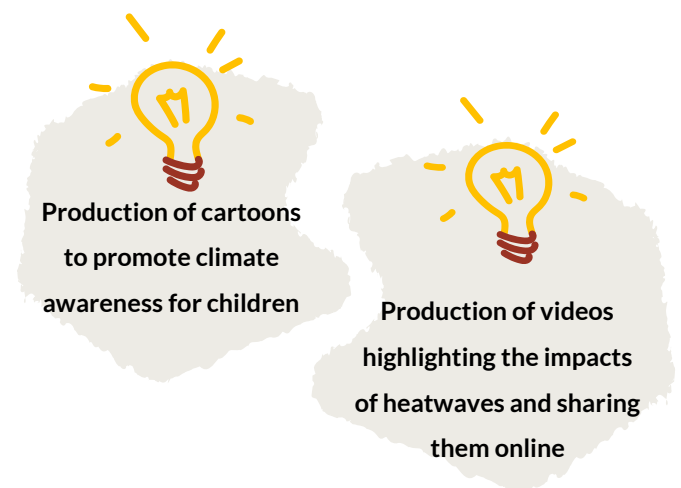
Opportunities, enablers, risks, and barriers to participation in climate action

Both groups identified **heatwaves** as a key challenge, and notably emphasized the impact of these above other climate issues on their daily lives. Notably, their proposed solutions predominantly focused on mitigation strategies, including the adoption of renewable energies, and promoting the use of bicycles instead of cars. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of raising awareness within their communities, suggesting the creation of climate-aware cartoons for children, producing videos that highlight the impacts of heatwaves and sharing them online, as well as integrating climate education into school curricula.

“Every summer I used to sign up for learning activities, such as English courses. This summer I couldn’t because the weather is too hot and there are a lot of power cuts. I thought I wouldn’t enjoy the classes because I get headaches from the heat.”

- Adolescent Workshop participant from Gaza, July 3.

Some participants also advocated for putting pressure on the government to implement policies and allocate budgets to effectively tackle climate change. In terms of adaptation, the West Bank participants identified a specific challenge: the impact of **heatwaves** on older individuals due to water scarcity. To address this, they proposed the construction of reservoirs filled with water that could be utilized during the summer months. The proposed solutions collectively showed that the children from Gaza and the West Bank understood the multi-faceted nature of tackling climate change and recognized the importance of involving various stakeholders in the process.



However, the children also identified several obstacles they might encounter in their efforts. These include a lack of funding sources to launch projects, limited access to decision-makers (the legislative council), a lack of family interest in similar issues, and difficulties in enacting legislation. Additionally, children expressed their desire for an end to the occupation and division, underscoring the broader contextual challenges they face that also exacerbate vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change.

Yemen



According to OCHA, **Yemen is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world.**³²⁶ The combination of



prolonged droughts, depleting groundwater reserves, and decreasing rainfall levels leads to 80% of the population struggling to access safe drinking water.³²⁷ The conflict



that has ravaged the country for the past eight years, has also compounded the water scarcity issue by severely disrupting water infrastructure and access.³²⁸ Another



consequence of climate change in Yemen is the rise in sea levels, which poses a threat to coastal communities in low-lying areas along the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea.³²⁹ This leads to saltwater intrusion, further compromising

the limited water reserves.³³⁰ Although Yemen has always had flooding seasons, certain areas have experienced increased rainfall, leading to more extreme weather events like intense flooding and storms. As a result, the country is now contending with two extremes of both drought and flooding during the rainy season.³³¹ In 2022, Yemen witnessed heavy rainfall and flash floods that affected over 517,000 people. The resulting flooding caused significant damage to infrastructure, including homes, shelters, roads, bridges and essential systems such as irrigation and sewage.³³²

Rising temperatures are projected to increase by up to 2.3°C by 2059.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the shifts brought about by climate change. **Rising temperatures which are expected to increase by up to 2.3°C by 2040-2059,³³³ and changing precipitation patterns have reduced food production, resulting in increased rates of malnutrition, compounded by the ongoing conflict.** Yemen already suffers from alarmingly high levels of malnutrition among children, with Nutrition Cluster identifying 540,000 children below 5 years of age with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in 2023 alone, with a further 1.63 million children under the age of 5, and 1.3 million pregnant or lactating mothers of children under the age of two years with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM).³³⁴ The country's food vulnerability indicator due to climate change⁷ is high (0.690) compared to other Arab countries like Jordan (0.393) and Egypt (0.511). Research highlights that poverty and hunger, worsened by climate change, have contributed significantly to the rise in child protection risks.³³⁵

Yemeni women are also highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, especially regarding water scarcity. **Women and girls typically bear the responsibility of collecting water for their families, and as water sources diminish, they are forced to travel longer distances to access them.**³³⁶ Inaccessibility to water often prevents

⁷ [Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Index \(ND-GAIN\)](#) is a tool used to measure a country's capacity to adapt to the negative effects of climate change on food security. It assesses overall vulnerability by considering six life-supporting sectors, including food. The vulnerability is measured based on exposure, sensitivity, and adaptation indicators. Exposure indicators project the impacts of climate change on food in the coming decades. Sensitivity indicators measure the country's dependence on sectors negatively affected by climate hazards and the susceptibility of the population to climate change impacts on food. Adaptation indicators assess the availability of social resources for sector-specific adaptation in food. The lower the value of the indicator is, the better.

girls from attending school, because they have to travel further to fetch water, while in areas with landmines, women face the additional risk of encountering these hazards during their journeys sometimes due to landmine migration caused by flooding; a migrating landmine is a mine moved by nature from the original position it was laid in to another, without any human intervention.³³⁷ **IDPs are another affected group, with flooding being one of the major threats to IDP sites alongside conflict and eviction;** between June 2021 and January 2023, 521 flood events were reported in 343 IDP sites,³³⁸ including in Marib for example, where flooding on July 13 and 14, 2022 displaced 2,500 IDP families. The flooding has since continued, leading to the displacement of many more individuals.³³⁹

Policy Environment (Annex 1, table 10)

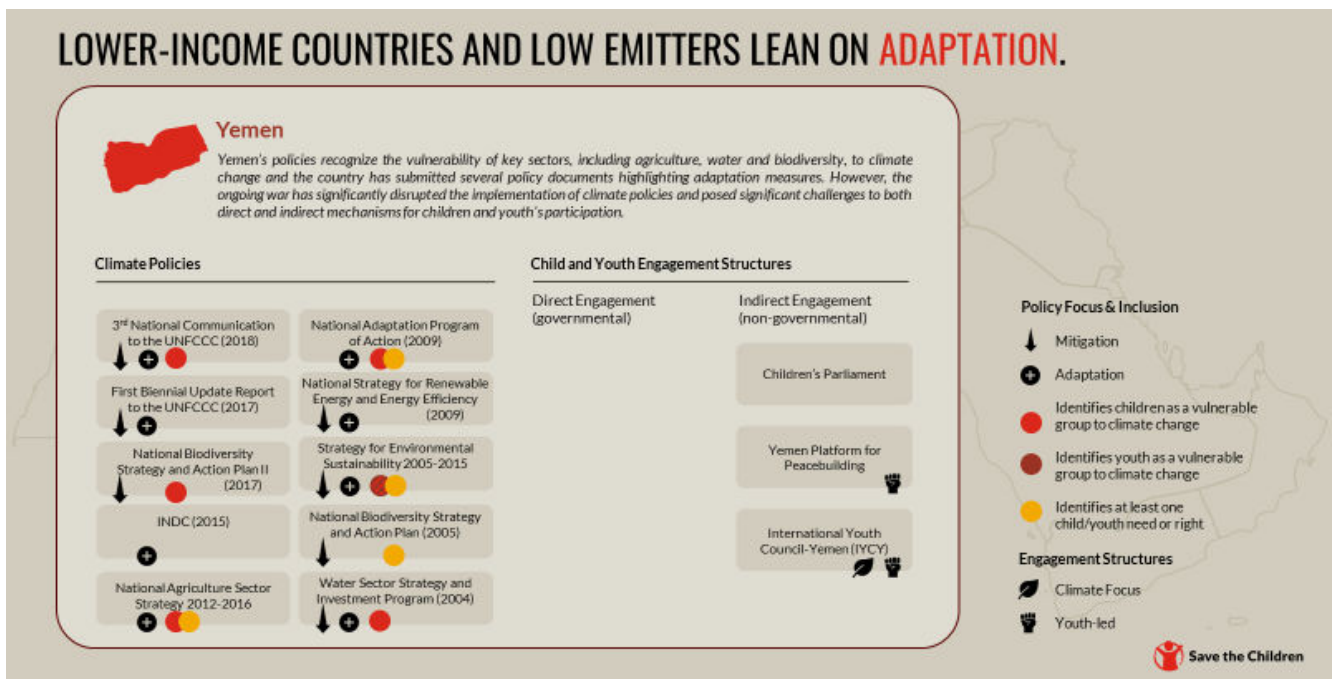


Figure 21. Yemen Climate Policy Snapshot

Yemen's policy framework prioritizes key sectors such as agriculture, water, and biodiversity, recognizing their vulnerability to climate change. Specifically addressing challenges like water scarcity, food security, and declining biodiversity, the country has submitted documents, including its **INDC (2015)**, **National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA) (2009)**, and **NCs**, demonstrating a commitment to adaptation measures in these vulnerable sectors. However, Yemen has not yet ratified the Paris Agreement, resulting in the absence of an NDC. The implementation of climate policies in the country has reached a standstill, mainly due to the impact of the ongoing war. The conflict, starting in 2014, has resulted in the suspension of policy implementation, hindering progress in addressing climate-related issues.³⁴⁰ Moreover, communication with the UNFCCC and other relevant international agreements on the environment and climate has been disrupted. The non-accreditation of the **Climate Change Unit at the Public Authority for Environmental Protection** as a national focal point has further compounded the challenges. This interruption has affected the flow of technical and financial support, as well as the ability to participate in regional and international climate-related activities.³⁴¹

As a consequence of these limitations, many planned activities and initiatives have been unable to be fully executed as intended, resulting in a slowdown of progress in tackling climate change in Yemen.

Upon examining Yemen's existing policies and submitted documents like the **NBSAP (2005)**, **National Water Sector Strategy and Investment Program (2006)**, and **NAPA (2009)**, it becomes evident that children are most of the time identified as a particularly affected group in terms of climate change impacts, particularly in relation to health. Conversely, the recognition of youth-specific vulnerabilities is less prominent. Furthermore, neither group is identified as a stakeholder to be engaged in tackling issues related to climate change. In the few policies that address the specific needs and rights of children and youth, like the **National Strategy for Environmental Sustainability 2005-2015** and **National Environmental Action Plan 2005-2010** and the **NAPA**, the focus often centers on integrating environmental education into school curricula and implementing awareness-raising initiatives. This includes involving children and youth in discussions and providing support to youth organizations and clubs. Despite the lack of progress in implementing policies, small actions were taken by the Ministry of Education such as changing school hours and uniforms to adapt to heatwaves.³⁴²

Children and Youth's Participation in Climate Action and Policymaking

Direct Engagement

Yemen, recognized as one of the poorest countries in the MENA region and facing one of the world's most dire humanitarian crises, has long struggled with challenges such as malnutrition, poverty, and water scarcity.³⁴³ These issues have persisted and been exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, as public and private infrastructure has been destroyed, and livelihoods have been shattered.³⁴⁴ Distressingly, 2.2 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition including over 540,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition – a life-threatening condition,³⁴⁵ while an estimated 2.7 million children are out of school.³⁴⁶ In such circumstances, the opportunities for individuals, particularly children and youth, to participate in policymaking are severely limited. Compounding the challenge is the absence of established state structures in Yemen that would facilitate their meaningful involvement in the decision-making processes. Furthermore, there is evidence indicating a growing disinterest among Yemeni youth in engaging with politics. A study conducted by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in 2022, revealed a significant decline in political interest among young individuals aged 16 to 30.³⁴⁷ In 2016, 38% of youth expressed disinterest in politics, but by 2021, the percentage had risen to over 50%. The study emphasized that these individuals attributed their lack of enthusiasm to a loss of faith in politics' ability to improve their living conditions. Additionally, the ongoing conflict places a heavy burden on young people, as highlighted by the fact that in 2022, ten percent of Yemenis between the ages of 15 and 25 were compelled to engage in work to support their families. Among them, two percent were involved in full-time employment, while eight percent worked as day laborers.³⁴⁸

Overall, the lack of governmental efforts to engage young people in Yemen, combined with the multitude of challenges they face, creates significant barriers to their participation in public life, particularly in matters related to climate change, where awareness remains limited.³⁴⁹

Indirect Engagement

The activism landscape in Yemen is equally influenced by the prevailing political and security conditions within the country. In particular, the civil war that commenced in 2015 has had a significant impact on the functionality of LNNGOs. Statistics indicate that around 70% of Yemeni LNNGOs have ceased their operations, while approximately 60% have faced violence, looting, provocations, harassment, asset freezing, and other forms of disruption. Moreover, activists in different areas of Yemen face a range of challenges including threats, kidnapping and arrest.³⁵⁰

This has led to a notable shift in focus, with many organizations directing their efforts towards providing essential humanitarian aid due to the inherent dangers associated with other areas of work, particularly human rights advocacy.³⁵¹ The redirection of international funding towards the humanitarian sector has further contributed to this shift in focus. As a consequence, youth activism has faced numerous challenges, given the pervasive effects of the war and the difficult economic circumstances prevailing in the country. Community initiatives, including youth-led ones, are rare due to the difficult conditions that the country is going through and the focus on humanitarian relief issues such as food, health, education and shelter.

Despite this, some LNNGOs continue to work to engage youth, but with limited opportunities and a general lack of focus on environmental

issues.³⁵² As for children, one notable initiative by Save the Children and Democracy School was the establishment of a **Children's Parliament** in the year 2000.³⁵³ Over the years, approximately 240,000 children have actively participated in voting processes addressing critical concerns such as child trafficking, access to education, displacement and other child protection risks. The primary objective of this council is to raise children's awareness of their rights and provide them with a platform to express their opinions, thereby fostering meaningful

change and contributing to the peacebuilding process. Through their

participation, children have had the opportunity to meet government officials and draw attention to issues directly affecting their rights. The 2021 elections organized by the children's parliament specifically focused on renewable energy and education

campaigns, demonstrating children's interest in environmental matters. For youth, Save the Children supports a network of youth civil society actors through its regional youth program Al-Bawsala bolstering youth collective action through the **Youth Platform for Peacebuilding**, consisting of 16 LNNGOs throughout the country.³⁵⁴ In 2023, this platform has engaged Waad Network – a youth-led network that aims to empower adolescent girls and boys in Yemen, and equip them with necessary knowledge and skills – in this research within their growing efforts for mainstreaming climate action in their civic work, where youth have facilitated

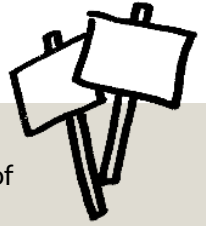
“Initiatives in the field of climate change are rare due to the difficult conditions that our country is going through and the focus on humanitarian relief issues such as food, health, education and shelter.”

- Policy Expert (2023), Yemen. June 12.

Replicable Practice

Around 240,000 children have been participating in Yemen's Children's Parliament since 2000, where they have voted on critical issues and have had direct discussions with government officials

the two adolescent workshops in Yemen.³⁵⁵ Furthermore, the **International Youth Council - Yemen (IYCY)**, a youth-led NGO established in 2001, has programming related to the environment, energy and climate change domains, and offers capacity building for Yemeni youth including vocational training in solar panels installation as well as an introduction to climate change policies, adaptation, mitigation, environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.³⁵⁶



PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON CLIMATE CHANGE, SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE ACTION

Adolescent workshops + Creative survey

In Yemen, 65 participants responded to the creative survey, including 5 children (aged 8-11 and 12-17), 48 youth (aged 18-24 and 25-35), and 12 older respondents (aged 36-45).⁸ Two adolescent workshops (aged 12-17) were organized in Taiz, one for boys and the other for girls, with participants from IDP and host communities.

Awareness

The workshops and survey aimed to assess the awareness of children and youth in Yemen regarding the climate challenges their country faces and the varying impacts on people. The children who took part in both workshops demonstrated a good understanding of the factors contributing to climate change. They correctly identified sources such as factory and car fumes, as well as waste burning. However, although the participants recognized these sources, it seems that the link with GHG emissions as an underlying cause is not clear to them, as evidenced by their

mention of water pollution in the context of the question.

Regarding the effects of climate change on different groups of people, children participating in workshops provided many examples. For instance, when discussing the impacts of sea level rise, girls expressed concerns about the livelihoods of those working on shores being threatened. They also highlighted the vulnerability of children and the elderly due to their limited ability to protect themselves, and the risk of camps being submerged by water, forcing already displaced individuals to relocate once more and jeopardizing their sources of income. On the other hand, boys mentioned that water scarcity could lead to farmers losing their lands, affecting rural areas that rely on agriculture for food, potentially leading to famine. They also noted the potential for the spread of illnesses due to using contaminated water. Both workshop groups recognized the impact of climate change on children. Girls pointed out that climate change could deprive children of education, while boys explained that water scarcity might force children to fetch water which takes long hours, and result in them dropping out of school.

⁸ The analysis in this section is based solely on survey data from youth, as the number of children's responses was insufficient for effective analysis (only 5 children).

“We used to play after school. Now, after coming home from school, we fetch water for our houses.”

- Adolescent Girls Workshop participant from Taiz, June 22.

For youth survey respondents, a majority (54%) believed that individuals from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds⁹ would bear a heavier burden of climate change compared to other children and youth in their country. However, a significant portion (23%) held the opposite view, suggesting they would be less impacted. When asked about Yemeni youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, the prevailing response (42%) indicated that they would face similar impacts as others, while a noteworthy 29% believed they would experience even more severe consequences. Although most respondents acknowledged the influence of different socioeconomic backgrounds on people's experiences with climate change, their answers also highlighted a lack of comprehensive and nuanced understanding. The somewhat contradictory responses suggest that the full implications of socioeconomic factors might not be entirely grasped by the surveyed youth.

A majority of youth in Yemen (77%) believe that climate change has an impact on the rights of children and youth. Interestingly, a significant percentage (19%) admitted uncertainty, indicating a lack of information on the subject. According to

the youth respondents, certain rights were significantly affected by climate change, such as the right to food, health, and education. On the other hand, they perceived that the rights to work, freedom of movement, and participation in decision-making were less impacted. These findings suggest that the youth's understanding of how climate change affects different rights is not entirely clear, including rights that are of major concern to them, such as the right to work.

“I feel that if there were trees in the streets we cross, they would help cool the air and reduce the intensity of the heat.”

- Sama, Yemen, 10.

Overall, the children and youth who participated in the workshops and survey in Yemen exhibited a moderate level of understanding regarding the factors contributing to climate change and its impacts on populations most impacted by inequality and discrimination. It is apparent that knowledge about how climate change affects different individuals could be further strengthened. However, the children's ability to provide detailed examples during the workshops, considering that the workshops included an educational component on how climate change affects people differently, indicates that targeted learning experiences can enable young people to relate the information to their own lives and offer pertinent examples. This emphasizes the significance of experiential and participatory

⁹ The assessment of how survey participants perceived variations in climate change effects vis-à-vis socioeconomic factors relied on their interpretations of the narrative presented in the survey storyline, which featured two sets of siblings characterized as

having differing socioeconomic backgrounds but not explicitly communicated as such. It's important to underscore the possible limitations associated with such analytical approach, particularly regarding the subjectivity involved in assessing the scenario.

climate education in fostering a deeper appreciation of this issue.

Opportunities, enablers, risks, and barriers to participation in climate action

The children from both workshops decided to seek solutions for the **water scarcity** problem. Girls aimed to target affected farmers, and boys intended to assist farmers, women, disabled individuals, and people on the move whose rights, livelihoods, education, and health are impacted by this climate challenge. Proposed solutions focused on adaptation and included building additional dams and reservoirs to harvest rainwater at home, exploring seawater desalination, refraining from irrigating qat plantations, and even the ingenious suggestion of harvesting water from fog. Furthermore, the participants emphasized the importance of creating public awareness about responsible water usage. They stressed the need for awareness-raising campaigns to foster mindfulness and a sense of responsibility towards water resources.

In their efforts to implement one solution to water scarcity – building more dams – the workshop participants acknowledged the value of collaborating with various stakeholders. They mentioned key partners such as the local council, policymakers, NGOs, community leaders, internet influencers and media entities, recognizing their pivotal roles in bringing the proposed ideas to fruition. Notably, community leaders, particularly Sheikhs, were considered essential intermediaries between the groups and local or national policymakers. Similarly, influencers and media channels were seen as effective tools to garner public support for the solution. Interestingly, while the steps towards the solution revolved around

persuading policymakers to support the construction of dams, the children consistently saw other actors as intermediaries. This observation may suggest that the children perceived policymakers as distant and difficult to approach directly.



Workshop participants in Yemen also identified several obstacles that could impede their progress. Notably, the lack of funding emerged as a significant challenge that might hinder the execution of their initiatives. Additionally, reaching duty bearers with the authority to drive change and implement necessary adjustments was seen as a barrier. Moreover, the absence of supportive laws and regulations posed potential hindrances to the implementation of impactful projects. Furthermore, the children acknowledged their own lack of knowledge in presenting project proposals too. Surveyed youth in Yemen identified additional obstacles that would prevent them and their peers from suggesting or creating climate mitigation or adaptation projects, with their top three choices being: the lack of clear and accessible governmental structures for engagement, low confidence in governmental structures, and a lack of interest in activism among children and youth.

Conversely, children and youth have also identified factors that can facilitate participation as well as existing opportunities for participation. Workshop participants see the media, particularly the radio, as well as Internet access as powerful tools for amplifying their message and raising public awareness. In addition, they regard friends and family as a driving force in their quest to put their ideas into practice. As for surveyed youth,

they see the presence of NGOs supporting climate action, social media engagement for children and youth to directly share their ideas with decision makers, and advocacy campaigns focused on climate issues as the top three opportunities for suggesting or creating climate change adaptation or mitigation projects.



REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Countries across the MENA region grapple with escalating climate change challenges. Despite the unique geographical and socio-economic contexts in the region, most countries confront similar climate threats, including **soaring temperatures, water scarcity, crop failures, and extreme weather events**. Notably, these adversities disproportionately impact the populations most impacted by inequality and discrimination, including children, youth, women, and displaced communities.

In Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, temperature increases, and decreased precipitation lead to droughts, crop loss and consequent rural-urban migration, disrupting economic structures and straining resources. Similar temperature extremes in KSA, Yemen, the UAE and Iraq adversely affect their specific demographics. Water scarcity, a shared issue across these countries, exacerbates food insecurity, poverty and significantly affects school-going children. The severe implications on agriculture threaten rural residents' livelihoods in Morocco and Tunisia, where agriculture employs 35% and 15% of the country's workforce respectively. Moreover, coastal areas in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia face threats from sea level rise, disrupting their economies and infrastructure. Concurrently, extreme weather events, such as dust storms in Iraq and floods in Yemen, amplify public health risks and infrastructure damage, further affecting IDPs. Furthermore, political instability and ongoing conflicts in Yemen and oPt exacerbate climate vulnerability, as resources and efforts that could be directed towards climate mitigation and adaptation are diverted, leaving communities more exposed to the adverse impacts of environmental changes.

To better comprehend the climate response strategies adopted by countries in the MENA region, and understand the entry points for international, regional, and national partners to support these strategies to be more inclusive of and empowering to young people, our research team examined a total of 106 climate policies and strategies from across the region. **Our research examined the degree to which these policies identify and prioritize children and youth as significant stakeholders, and what governmental or non-governmental forums engage children and youth in policymaking and climate action.** Finally, through design thinking-inspired workshops with adolescents and a creative campaign and perception survey, this research brought the voices of children and youth to the forefront to highlight their perspectives on the barriers and enablers to effective participation in climate action.

When assessing the policies, climate strategies and participation mechanisms across the different countries in the region, this research contextualized the analysis for focus countries based on the diverse climate challenges faced, the relative contributions to CO2 emissions, and the socioeconomic and other differences in livelihoods and settlement status of the concerned population.

Existing policies on mitigation and adaptation, and their level of child and youth inclusivity

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both with significant GDPs and the highest per capita CO₂ emissions (14, 20 MTP¹⁰)³⁵⁷ in the region have developed strategies for a green transition, despite simultaneously continuing on a steady and accelerating path with oil exploration and production. KSA's SGI focuses on transitioning to renewable energy, while the UAE's 'Energy Strategy 2050' targets raising the clean energy contribution to 50% of the overall energy mix and reducing the carbon emissions from power generation by 70% by the year 2050. Nevertheless, **KSA**, despite having 57% of its population under 24 and substantial wealth, lacks clear policies for engaging children and youth. Their policies stop short at acknowledging the need to raise awareness among youth populations and recognizing children as a vulnerable group experiencing climate impacts, rather than identifying them as key potential contributors to climate decision-making. In contrast, the **UAE**, where only 25% of the population is under 24, has recognized youth as key stakeholders in climate policy and strategy.

Moreover, low emitters (<4 MTP), and low/middle income nations with large youth population such as **Egypt** (50% under 24),³⁵⁸ **Morocco** (42% under 24), **Iraq** (40% under 24) and **Jordan** (50% under 24) demonstrate a mix of mitigation and adaptation policies. Egypt's **Vision 2030**, Jordan's **National Green Growth Plan** and Iraq's **NDC** aim for sustainable energy and lower emissions, while Morocco's **Green Plan** (Plan Maroc Vert) highlights sustainable agricultural practices for both adaptation and mitigation. Among these, Jordan has demonstrated the most significant acknowledgment of children and youth in its policies. Jordan's climate change strategy emphasizes the importance of children and youth as key actors in various facets of climate adaptation and governance. It targets young people through specific outreach, includes them in mainstreaming gender and youth considerations, involves them in baseline assessments and action planning, and focuses on capacity building in both public and private institutions for initiatives related to women, children, and youth.

Meanwhile, low emitters (<2 MTP), and low-income nations like **oPt** (58% under 24), **Lebanon** (44% under 24), **Yemen** (60% under 24), and **Tunisia** (38% under 24) emphasize adaptation strategies in their policy frameworks, which may be reflective of their immediate vulnerability to climate impacts, and the lack of funds for mitigation strategies. While all four countries reference children and youth in their climate policies, oPt and Lebanon, explicitly address their roles, acknowledging the need to include climate change education in school curriculum for children, and to empower youth's high digital literacy in adaptation innovations, especially in the agricultural sector.

In the MENA region, the undeniable presence of the young demographic stands out starkly. Among the ten countries studied, eight have more than 40% of their populations under the age of 24, with only the UAE and Tunisia diverging from this trend. It's widely acknowledged that the climate crisis is intrinsically a child and

¹⁰ Measured in metric ton per capita.

youth crisis. Yet, despite this reality and the significant proportion of young populations, many policies fail to recognize their rights and the crucial role they play in the future of climate action, underscoring a concerning disconnect between demographic realities and policy frameworks. In the review of climate policies, several key insights have emerged. High-income nations with significant per capita emissions lean on mitigation strategies but are often continuing to expand their reliance on fossil fuels. Despite the region contributing less than 8% of global CO₂ emissions, high per-capita emitters, which have a unique responsibility for the problem, must lead the way towards a just transition from investment in fossil fuels towards green jobs, and ensure that low- and middle-income countries are supported to transition to net-zero carbon economies and adapt to the now-unavoidable impacts of climate change. These countries often also forget to include parallel emphasis on adaptation measures, which are complementary and needed in the region as a whole.³⁵⁹ Interestingly, **children and youth are more frequently recognized as vital stakeholders in adaptation policies, particularly in low/middle income countries with a largely young population (below 24)**. To that end, countries with lower emissions tend to prioritize adaptation policies due to climate vulnerabilities and limited resources, while low/middle income nations balance between adaptation and mitigation, often emphasizing their young population's role. However, feedback from interviews underscores a **disconnect between policy and practice**. **While these policies may be written with inclusivity in mind, actual participation of children and youth remain constrained**. In many instances, countries lack the necessary funds to implement these well-intentioned policies, limiting the true participation of this vital demographic in climate action.

Opportunities for young people's participation in climate action and policymaking

Several mechanisms are in place to promote direct and indirect participation of children and youth in climate policymaking, albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness and inclusivity across different countries. A prominent **direct engagement** mechanism across the region is the establishment of **Youth Parliaments**, as seen in countries like Iraq, Morocco and Jordan. They provide opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making processes, attend workshops, and submit recommendations. Out of these, Morocco stands out for having an active youth parliament with well-defined structures for participation and discussion.

Conversely, the Iraqi youth parliament is less transparent, with limited information available on its structure and participation methods. It appears to function more as a body for raising awareness about the importance of political engagement among youth rather than a platform for active participation. Most significantly, none of the available information indicates that these formal structures are specifically engaging youth on climate-related topics. On the other hand, in countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, specialized councils such as the **Saudi Emirati Youth Council**, and the **FYA** have been established, promoting collaboration on sustainable development projects, and establishing youth committees at different ministries. However, the extent to which these councils are inclusive of different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, genders, and other

"We had wished for these COPs to raise more awareness at the decision-making level [...] have more ambitious targets, a declaration for Arab countries to have a concrete action plan for our countries to put forward."

*- Technical Climate Specialist (2023),
Lebanon, July 13.*

groups impacted by inequality and discrimination is unclear. At the international level, youth engagement on climate topics is most prominently seen in some countries' youth representation in the **delegation to the COP** (in Morocco and Tunisia), and it is worth mentioning that these delegations do not include children. Additionally, youth engagement is exemplified through initiatives like the Climate Youth Negotiators Programme (CYNP).¹¹ However, from a meaningful participation perspective, youth participation at the COP often appears more symbolic, with limited evidence to suggest it translates into continuous participation of youth in policymaking at the local level. **As for children**, only Tunisia, Morocco and the UAE have established **Children's Parliaments**, however information on the nature and inclusiveness of these structures, and level and type of participation is limited.

Indirect engagement primarily involves the participation of children and youth in non-governmental structures and initiatives. At the regional level, this includes the Qatar-based **AYCM**, and the UAE-based **AYCCC**, the first is a regional council promoting climate action and education that engages youth from various countries across the region, and the latter is a youth-led non-profit focused on enhancing MENA youth engagement with environmental issues. At the national level, the research found most information on youth-led initiatives to be in Lebanon and Tunisia, including a variety of NGOs, such as **Fridays for Future**, **Youth for Climate Tunisia**, **Indyact**, **Lebanese Eco Movement**, and **Green Mind in Lebanon**, focusing on raising awareness and advocating for climate action. Countries with higher restrictions on NGOs such as Egypt and Iraq see most of their indirect initiatives implemented by UN agencies and social media campaigns, with a **greater focus on awareness raising of climate challenges than on advocacy efforts**. Moreover, KSA and the UAE have less indirect structures due to limited funding and availability of INGOs, however, local foundations like the **Misk Foundation** in KSA **empower young men and women, providing them with a platform for knowledge sharing on sustainability and climate change**. In Yemen and oPt, the dire security situation and political instability have limited focus on climate, and shifted towards providing essential humanitarian aid, however, efforts such as the **AYCM** are active, though face limitations in outreach. **As for children**, various initiatives across the region aim to educate and prepare children for the realities of climate change. In the UAE, there is a significant focus on **sustainability within educational institutions** through the SCI. In Egypt, collaborations between the Ministry of Youth and UNICEF aim to encourage widespread climate awareness, while UNICEF's **large-scale teacher training and climate-centric art exhibitions** further spotlight their proactive engagement strategy in the country. In addition, there are programs by actors in Egypt like Save the Children that include **workshops equipping young people to participate in global climate conferences**. Meanwhile in Jordan, **the Eco-Schools program instills eco-conscious values from early school years**.

Children and youth's engagement on climate issues in the MENA region is shaped significantly by the local context. Direct engagement, through structures like Child or Youth Parliaments in the UAE, Tunisia, Iraq, Jordan and Morocco, emphasizes political participation but varies in transparency and effectiveness, with little specific focus on climate topics publicized. Indirect engagement, driven by NGOs and youth-led

¹¹ A global initiative that seeks to address the underrepresentation of youth in negotiations by tackling its foundational issues.

initiatives, shows robust action toward raising climate awareness and advocacy, but highlights limited coordination at the national level, particularly in Lebanon. In contrast, nations grappling with restrictive policies on local and international NGOs such as Egypt rely on international organizations and focus on awareness-raising initiatives. The overall landscape reveals an interplay between governmental support, civil society vigor, and socio-economic factors, illustrating a complex scenario where youth and child climate participation is increasing but often challenged by political and security barriers. **There's an emerging trend towards collaboration, awareness, and advocacy, yet inclusiveness and meaningful participation remain inconsistent, indicating a need for more strategic alignment between local contexts and global climate goals.**

Barriers and enablers to young people's meaningful participation

Across the region, the participation of children and youth in climate action faces **substantial barriers**. These include **limited representation and inclusivity**, particularly for children, girls and young women, and other groups experiencing intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination. Additionally, the intricacy of climate science and policy often results in **information that is inaccessible for younger audiences**, creating a knowledge gap. The **lack of transparent government communication about climate action progress** exacerbates a trust deficit, fostering skepticism and disengagement. Addressing these barriers requires an integrated approach of age-appropriate climate change science, and increasing government transparency, to create an enabling environment for children and youth's participation.

Various enablers facilitate children and youth's participation. The **institutionalization of young people's participation in national constitutions and the establishment of ministries and parliaments focused on children and youth's participation**, as seen in Morocco and the UAE, contribute to enhancing their involvement and representation. Moreover, **international collaborations** with organizations such as WWF and YOUNGO provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and capacity building.

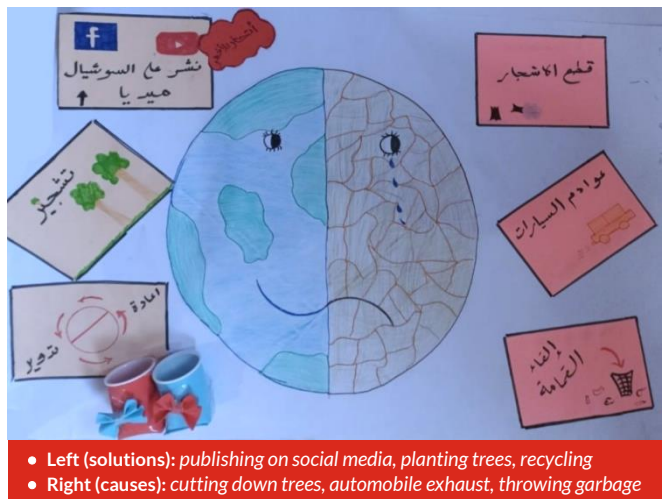


Figure 22. Climate Change Causes and Solutions, proposed by Adolescent Workshop participants in Egypt

Data from the regional children's workshops indicate that children's awareness of climate change in the region demonstrates a nuanced challenge: **while the children in the workshops exhibited understanding of climate change effects, there is a discernible gap in comprehending the underlying causes and the complex mechanisms needed to address the issues.** This knowledge disparity, exacerbated by barriers such as **limited access to participation platforms and funding constraints**, not only curtails children's ability to participate in solution-driven initiatives but also poses the risk of fostering a sense of ineffectiveness and disillusionment in their ability to contribute to climate action. Moreover, while engaged children appear to be acutely aware of how climate change is impacting their lives and altering their daily habits, when tasked with devising solutions to climate challenges, **they often direct their attention towards other vulnerable communities rather than focusing on issues directly affecting their peer group.** This tendency may stem from the fact that climate knowledge, examples of impact, and global discussions rarely center on children, thereby inadvertently having them perceive their problems as less important.

Furthermore, data from the regional survey, which targeted a total of 600 participants – 166 children (59 boys, 107 girls), 347 youth (117 males, 230 females), and 87 adults (34 males, 53 females), shed light on perceptions of climate change, uncovering **a blend of awareness and uncertainty.** While 52% of children, 48% of youth, and 47% of adult participants recognize the disproportionate impact of climate change on different socio-economic groups, many struggle to see how climate change might affect their future rights to work, freedom of movement, or participation in decision-making, regardless of their living settings, with the only slight (<10%) difference of higher emphasis from adults on food and less emphasis on health when compared with the answers of children and youth; nevertheless, with limited sample size and representation, it's difficult to derive conclusions. **Children, youth and adults equally see NGOs as allies, and social media as a platform for action**, but feel adrift in a landscape where paths to participation are unclear. **Despite perceiving NGOs as enablers, 40% of children and youth express frustration over missing government structures for children and youth's participation while only 26% of adults share the same opinion.** Moreover, **lack of visibility of existing initiatives by NGOs** was highlighted as a key barrier by children and youth, with the few identified programs – mainly highlighted by children living in camps – focusing primarily on education and awareness raising. Participants cited the internet and social media as their main information sources, with accessible information seeming to fuel anxiety without guiding them toward action.

When asked, **over 80% of children and youth participants shared that they feel worried about climate change.** Furthermore, **60% of children and 80% of youth identify lack of awareness about climate issues, limited knowledge on how to contribute or act, and lack of governmental climate ambitions and initiatives as main barriers to addressing climate change in their countries.** Meaningful participation of children and youth in climate action across the MENA region requires multi-faceted, context-specific strategies that address both the universal and unique barriers present in each country. By understanding these barriers and capitalizing on the enablers, governments and supporting international and national actors can meaningfully enable the region's young people's power to be part of their countries' sustainable future.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research weave a narrative of young generations keenly observing the climate crisis, carrying shared perceptions, but feeling uncertain about how to become part of the solution. They call for a reevaluation of how stakeholders communicate and involve children and youth, bridging gaps between understanding, emotion and action, to foster a generation not only aware of climate change but equipped to tackle it.

As the MENA region grapples with the rapidly escalating challenges posed by climate change impacts, a discerning focus on preparing future generations for meaningful climate action and policymaking becomes more than a noble endeavor; it transforms into a strategic imperative for creating a resilient future. The complexity of climate action in the region unveils disparities in preparedness, revealing gaps and opportunities in how children and youth are engaged.

Key barriers hindering meaningful child and youth participation have emerged from the research, including lack of awareness, restricted inclusivity, limited evidence of implementation of children and youth's engagement policies, a distrust in political systems in some countries, inadequate government dedication to climate issues – especially in countries undergoing humanitarian crisis such as Yemen, and/or a shortage of accessible and age, gender and ability appropriate climate information. These challenges have illuminated the need for comprehensive strategies that break down these barriers and foster greater understanding and effectiveness.

At a regional level, **the promotion of climate literacy is an urgent necessity**, encompassing the vital need to simplify and disseminate climate science and policies among youth, children, and the adult population in the MENA region. This could be achieved through launching multifaceted initiatives that encompass educational programs, community engagement and media utilization. Climate education and learning programs should be designed to comprehensively encompass both formal and non-formal educational avenues for children and youth. This approach would facilitate their meaningful participation in climate decision-making, not merely as affected groups, but as active partners contributing to change. Moreover, by informing the public about challenges caused by climate change, the impacts on their rights, livelihoods and well-being, and presenting science in a relatable and accessible way, a bridge can be built between abstract global issues and personal, local realities. This foundational understanding acts as the first step towards fostering an adequately equipped citizenry that can actively participate in climate solutions, advocate for responsible policies, and inspire a cultural shift towards environmental consciousness.

The undertaken research identified key entry points for international organisations to support immediate implementation, and long-term strategic recommendations aimed at establishing a regional ecosystem for climate policymaking that effectively integrates and values the contributions of both children and youth.



Key Entry Points for Meaningful Climate Action



Climate Action Education and Capacity:

Children and youth in the region still need support to navigate the climate policy ecosystem locally and internationally to engage constructively in climate policy discussions. **Engage** children and youth through relevant educational programs in schools and universities, as well as skills development and capacity building programs focusing on life skills for negotiations and civic engagement, and internships focusing on climate change issues and policymaking. This will not only provide them with necessary knowledge and skills, but also equip them to communicate effectively during policy discussions.



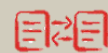
Children as Information Disseminators:

Children have a remarkable ability to disseminate information they care about, not only within their peer groups but also among their families and wider communities. As adults, we need to recognize children as peers and partners in identifying solutions to the climate crisis and go the extra mile to ensure that children most impacted by inequality and discrimination have a voice in

climate policy processes, even in the cases where there are no effective structures to involve children in climate policymaking. **Engage** children through educational programs and hands-on climate action projects. This engagement not only raises awareness and fosters community action but also prepares children to take more active roles in future policymaking.



Accessible Climate Science: Child- and youth-friendly climate knowledge covering countries in the MENA region is not widely available. To engage children and youth more effectively, it is crucial to provide age-appropriate scientific climate information. **Design** gender and disability responsive content tailored to the region and individual countries, utilizing engaging media such as cartoons, videos and interactive games to enhance comprehension.



Enhancing Communication Channels:

Due to the lack of publicly available information, there is a growing misalignment between what child and youth advocates are demanding and what local strategies are implementing, leading to growing frustration and disinterest in engagement. **Support** practitioners in simplifying and communicating climate strategies and facilitate engagements between them and child and youth climate activists to align efforts and enhance the meaningful representation of children and youth's rights in climate strategies.



Advocacy for Child and Youth Rights in Climate Finance: Given that the climate crisis is globally recognized as a children and youth's crisis, it is critical that the impacts of climate change on their rights are addressed through climate finance.

Advocate for climate finance actors to use

specified metrics to ensure child- and youth-responsive investment and including a focus on their rights, equity and inclusion in all relevant systems and processes. This can ensure that projects are designed with the interests and needs of children and youth in mind.



Participatory Policymaking: To foster national ownership and motivation in addressing climate challenges, it is essential to involve children and youth from different demographics and socio-economic backgrounds in the process. **Support** governments in the region to draft NDC to enhance children and youth participation in climate policymaking by engaging them in consultations around relevant topics. Engaging children and youth in the creation of recommendations for NDCs will not only instill a sense of ownership and increase pressure on practitioners to deliver on climate policies but also prepares future policymakers to design their own NDCs.



Policy Monitoring Frameworks: To address the current challenges in evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of existing policies and strategies, it is essential to **develop** and **implement** child- and youth-led robust monitoring frameworks. These frameworks will play a pivotal role in guaranteeing the realization of commitments outlined in climate policies. Moreover, by actively involving children and youth in the monitoring process, it encourages transparency and accountability, while also fostering a generation that is keenly involved in the progression of climate initiatives.



Key Strategic Points for Meaningful Climate Action

In countries with existing structures for direct engagement, such as Jordan, Morocco, Iraq and Tunisia, the focus should not only be on maintaining these structures but also on strengthening their effectiveness through deliberate and strategic actions. **Capacity building of child and youth members**, through training, mentorship and exposure to climate-related projects, is essential to enable them to engage more effectively with policymakers, understand the nuances of climate science, and contribute to well-informed decision-making. Furthermore, **advocacy for more inclusion and support from governments** must be amplified to ensure that these participation structures are not merely symbolic but are meaningfully representative of the diversities and proportionately instrumental in shaping national climate policies.

In countries with regional influence and economic power, such as KSA, the UAE and Egypt, the focus should center on two primary strategies. The first is **amplifying children and youth's regional role in climate action and policymaking**, by promoting the enhancement and inclusivity of existing structures that engage local youth as regional climate leaders in these countries and ensuring they cater to children and youth most impacted by inequality and discrimination. The second is to

garner **robust financial and political support for youth innovators and entrepreneurs in these countries to contribute to a green and just transition** throughout the region through collaborations and exchange of solutions, underscoring the importance of collective action and emphasizing the pivotal role of the green economy in ensuring sustainability and resilience against climate challenges.

In countries with ongoing conflicts and political instability such as Yemen, oPt and Lebanon, the focus should be on tapping into the support networks they receive from international donors and organizations and **advocating for more inclusion of child and youth advocates and networks in climate action**. Facilitating government and young people's participation in climate policy in these contexts is challenging but crucial. By connecting young activists with policymakers and integrating them into decision-making processes, there can be a greater alignment between the needs of the population and the climate strategies being implemented. **International partners can play a vital role in providing platforms for dialogue, resources for capacity-building, and encouragement for innovative thinking**. Even amid political instability, children and youth can be catalysts for change, bridging gaps and contributing to solutions that

not only address immediate climate concerns but also foster resilience, social cohesion and hope for a more sustainable future.

These three-pronged strategic engagement recommendations, tailored to the unique circumstances of different countries, can collectively contribute to building a robust regional ecosystem for climate action. By recognizing the distinct roles, challenges and strengths of various nations, a collaborative network can be established that emphasizes shared vision, mutual responsibility, and interconnected solutions. Whether it's through strengthening existing structures, contributing to the green and just economic transition, or integrating children and youth in conflict zones, all efforts are interlinked and vital to the region's climate resilience. The collaboration between countries with different resources and expertise fosters a synergy that enables the region to approach climate challenges holistically and innovatively. Climate challenges transcend borders, and their solutions require regional collaboration that respects and leverages the uniqueness of each country while uniting them towards a common goal of a sustainable and resilient future.

ENDNOTES

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