Issues

In Zimbabwe, many children can already feel the impacts of climate change. Drought and floods result in food shortages, which lead to hunger and poverty. Some families resort to removing their children from school in order to earn money to pay for food. Floods destroy homes and displace families. The realities of climate change exacerbate the extreme poverty with which many children in the nation are already struggling; joblessness is still pervasive since the economic crisis of 2006 and upwards of 70% Zimbabwe’s population spends 80% of their income on food. At the same time, Zimbabwe is typical of many countries around the world in that children are not consulted on climate change matters. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) outlines children’s rights to be a part of decision making which affect them; yet, few governments provide children the opportunity, training and platform to influence policies on climate change.

Actions

Through partnership with Zimbabwe’s government, academic institutions, the private sector and other UN agencies, UNICEF Zimbabwe ensured that the national policy discourse on Climate Change addressed children’s issues on climate change. In 2013, UNICEF supported the development of the National Climate Change Response Strategy (NCCRS), which provides a framework for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Topics such as Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and development have been integrated into the post-2015 framework in order to understand how climate change will impact current and future risk scenarios for women and children.

UNICEF has prioritized asking children how climate change is impacting them and what changes they want to see to protect their future through a variety of interventions, such as the Children & Climate Change Policy Dialogues.

Results

The work of the NCCRS has produced climate preparedness and response plans that specifically reduce children’s climate change vulnerability, while also framing the issue of climate change as a priority issue for the Zimbabwe public. UNICEF has made a powerful case for making children’s perspectives on climate change an essential component of planning and policy, demonstrating how valuable their voices and ideas are to national discourse. The central role of children in the NCCRS has yielded an array of children-authored recommendations for policy makers, including supporting community management of water resources, providing auxiliary feeding programs at schools in climate-vulnerable areas, strengthening climate and environmental education and involving school children in collaborative research on climate change.

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