

Children and Child-Critical Social Sectors in NDCs 3.0: 2025 Global Stocktake of Progress

Assessing whether the building blocks
of climate resilience for children and
communities are in place



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
What is a child-responsive national climate policy?	5
2025: A critical milestone for national climate policies	6
Key results of the analysis: strong progress in child-responsive NDCs 3.0	8
Spotlight on Good Practices	13
Lessons Learned	18
Next steps: NDC implementation, financing and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning	23
Resources and Tools	24
 Annex 1	
UNICEF Indicator Framework for Assessing Child-Responsive NDCs	25
 Annex 2	
Change in Indicator Coverage from NDCs 2.0 to NDCs 3.0	29

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Cover photo: Pakistan © UNICEF/UNI950922/Yousafi
Fatima, 3 years old, smiles and waves at the camera, dressed in her UNICEF essential winter kit.

Introduction

Children continue to bear the brunt of climate change impacts and will face these increasingly as the climate crisis deepens. According to WMO's 2026 *State of the Climate* report, greenhouse gas emissions hit a record high in 2024 and continued to rise through 2025, with the expectation that emissions will only continue to increase in 2026. As such, urgent and ambitious action to reduce emissions and protect children from climate-related impacts is imperative.

Children represent one-third of the global population and account for half of all people living in extreme poverty – a key driver of heightened vulnerability. Climate change disproportionately affects children notably through impacts on their access to essential services such as **water and sanitation, health, education, nutrition, social protection and child protection services**, on which they depend to survive and thrive. Their heightened vulnerability stems from their unique stage of physiological and psychosocial development, behaviour patterns, and relative reliance on caregivers. **Risks begin before birth** and can be irreversible, affecting their survival, lifelong health, learning and socio-economic outcomes.

Brazil © UNICEF/UNI906341/Marques
On Children's Day at COP30, children and adolescents participated in a dialogue on the ethics of climate negotiations.



Despite these heightened risks, consideration of the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children have historically been omitted in global climate data, evidence and guidance emanating from the UNFCCC process and from the world's leading scientific bodies assessing climate risks and impacts, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In recent years, however, governments have begun to recognize this gap, and to take steps to address it.

At COP28 in 2023, Parties decided to organize an **expert dialogue on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children and relevant policy solutions**. The dialogue, held in June 2024, identified actionable recommendations, including the need to mainstream child-focused measures across UNFCCC decision-making process and within national planning instruments such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), to increase research and evidence, to address critical data gaps, to scale up investment in climate-resilient essential services, and to ensure children's safe, inclusive and meaningful engagement in climate-related decision-making. Outside of the COP process, nearly eighty countries have signed the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action, launched in the margins of COP25 in 2019.



This brief provides a stocktake of global progress in integrating child rights and child-critical social services into national climate policy processes.

UNICEF's Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (2023-2030) and Strategic Plan (2026-2029) outline UNICEF's global commitment to protecting children from the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, including through strengthened climate policy engagement that supports governments to integrate a child rights perspective within national climate policy formulation and implementation, grounded in evidence and data.

This brief provides a stocktake of global progress in integrating child rights and child-critical social services into national climate policy processes, with a particular focus on NDCs 3.0, including progress from NDCs 2.0.¹ It highlights emerging good practice, identifies persistent gaps, and outlines priority actions to move from policy commitments to implementation. Drawing on country level experience and technical assistance delivered in support of governments, the brief offers targeted recommendations to governments and partners to strengthen child-responsive national climate policies, and a forward look to NDC implementation.

¹ Please note that "NDC 2.0" refers to the 172 NDCs submitted between September 2019 and October 14, 2022. "NDC 3.0" refers to the 115 NDCs submitted between November 2024 and April 30, 2026.

What is a child-responsive national climate policy?

Child- and youth-responsive climate policies:

- Strengthen the sustainability and climate- and disaster-resilience of social services that are critical for children's survival and healthy development.
- Are inclusive of children and young people, acknowledging their right to be heard and their role as stakeholders and drivers of change.

In this way, child-responsive climate policies contribute to the respect, protection and promotion of children's rights.



Key elements of child-responsive national climate policies:

- Recognition of **specific and heightened vulnerabilities** of children, accompanied by targeted response measures
- Informed by **age-, gender- and disability-disaggregated** data on climate impacts and mitigation and/or adaptation benefits for children and other vulnerable groups.
- A focus on the decarbonisation and climate resilience of **essential social services** that reach children and communities most at risk.
- **Recognition of children's right to meaningful participation in climate action**, and an inclusive participatory process.
- **Allocation of sufficient resources** to ensure the implementation of child-responsive measures.
- **Strengthening of data and monitoring mechanisms** to track and measure the resilience of essential services as well as their contribution to building the resilience of children and their communities (including e.g. inclusion of age-disaggregated or child-specific indicators).
- **Enhanced coherence** by cross-referencing suggested solutions with existing national policies and plans to identify interventions with the greatest multiplier effect for children.

UNICEF uses the term "child-responsive" to refer to climate action that goes beyond acknowledging the differences between children and adults (i.e., child-sensitive approaches), but rather **promotes the integration of children's rights, needs and capabilities in a systematic way** across the steps of the UNFCCC iterative policy cycle (impact, vulnerability and risk assessments; planning; implementation; and monitoring, evaluation and learning) and cross-cutting dimensions like capacity building, financing, access to information and participation, for example. Specific indicators are used to capture these different elements; for the full list of UNICEF indicators, please reference Annex 1.

2025

A critical milestone for national climate policies

2025 represented a pivotal year for national climate policies, as countries were required to submit their third-generation NDCs. These instruments articulate national priorities across climate action, spanning mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, and play a decisive role in determining whether climate action delivers tangible benefits for children.

Iraq © UNICEF/UNI838193/Anmar

Over 160 children and young people, aged 13 to 29, took part in national consultations that included participants from all 18 governorates across Iraq, to empower children and youth to contribute to the updating of Iraq's NDC.



Against the backdrop of the UNFCCC's latest [NDC Synthesis Report](#), which confirms that collective ambition still falls far short of what is required, Parties were expected to advance more ambitious and inclusive commitments. Although some countries have yet to submit their updated NDC, the majority have done so, and the emerging trends point to important areas of progress.



Global temperature change projections based on full implementation of all NDCs 3.0 still amount to 2.3 - 2.5°C - yet nearly 90 per cent of developing country NDCs have strengthened adaptation commitments and 80 per cent include references to loss and damage.

A major global takeaway is that the third generation of NDCs shows [clear progress](#) in overall quality and ambition. This improvement is evident across core dimensions of ambition, feasibility and alignment. Within **mitigation** efforts, NDCs have improved in scope and coverage of their commitments; Parties are laying out clear paths towards net zero, although accelerated action is still necessary to keep 1.5°C within reach. [Global temperature change projections](#) through the end of the century, based on full implementation of all NDCs will still amount to 2.3-2.5°C. On **adaptation**, nearly 90 per cent of NDCs from developing countries have strengthened adaptation commitments, with over 80 per cent of NDCs referencing alignment with NAPs or other instruments. And, within developing country NDCs, 80 per cent include a reference to **loss and damage**, with 42 per cent dedicating a specific section or chapter. In terms of implementation and financing, over 70 per cent of NDCs specify the overall cost of the commitments, while over half include detailed costings and options within their sectoral commitments. **Overall, NDCs 3.0 have improved across the board in their ambition, scope and planning.**

Key results
of the analysis:

strong progress in child-responsive NDCs 3.0

As of 30 April 2026, **115 NDCs 3.0 have been submitted**, covering 141 countries and representing more than **80%** of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Tanzania © UNICEF/UNI539869/
Zanzibar, despite having an abundance of water, faces a chronic shortage of
safe water for drinking and farming - exacerbated by climate change.



According to UNICEF analysis:

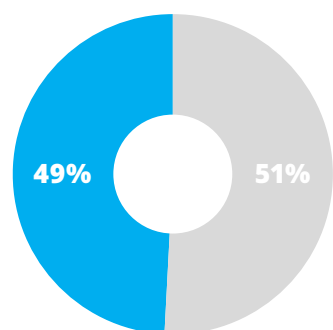
- **70 per cent** are assessed as *child-responsive*, up from **49 per cent** in the previous submission round (Figure 1).
- **77 per cent** of NDCs *strengthened the consideration of children* compared to earlier submissions.
- UNICEF provided technical engagement or support in at least **64 per cent** of submitted NDCs.

Together, these trends suggest growing recognition of children as a priority group within national climate commitments, while also highlighting the role of targeted technical support in strengthening policy design.

Figure 1.
Comparing the child-responsiveness of NDC 2.0 submissions to NDC 3.0 submissions.

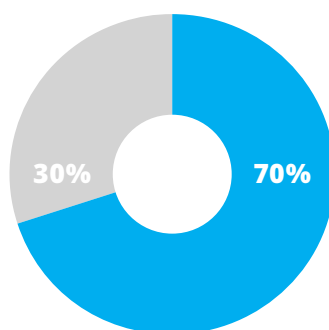
Are NDCs 2.0 child-responsive?

● **Yes** · 74 ● **No** · 98



Are NDCs 3.0 child-responsive?

● **Yes** · 80 ● **No** · 35



Children and young people are better able to survive, grow and thrive when child-critical social services are more climate and disaster resilient, and when children and young people are recognized, included and influential in decisions that affect them. Below are the four criteria UNICEF developed for analysing child-responsiveness in climate and environmental policies, plans and actions that were applied in this study. These criteria are underpinned by 47 indicators, of which 22 are used to assess child-responsiveness; a full list of indicators and definitions can be found in [Annex 1](#), and for more details on methodology, please reference UNICEF's ["Climate-sensitive climate policies for every child."](#)

The progress of NDCs 3.0 is reflected consistently across UNICEF indicators used to assess child-responsiveness in NDCs: NDCs 3.0 improved across all four criteria (Figure 2). Across the full set of 47 indicators applied in the analysis framework, nearly all show an increase in coverage between NDCs 2.0 and NDCs 3.0, while the remainder indicators remain stable. These results reflect a strengthening in how children and young people are recognised within national climate commitments.

UNICEF criteria for child-responsiveness



References to children and young people

The criterion assesses the inclusion of explicit and meaningful references to children and young people, including those who are disadvantaged and marginalized.



Rights-based

The criterion considers children and young people as rights holders and assesses the inclusion of meaningful references to child rights or intergenerational justice and equity.



Holistic and multisectoral

The criterion addresses the specific risks and vulnerabilities of children and young people by assessing the inclusion of child-responsive commitments across multiple child-critical sectors.

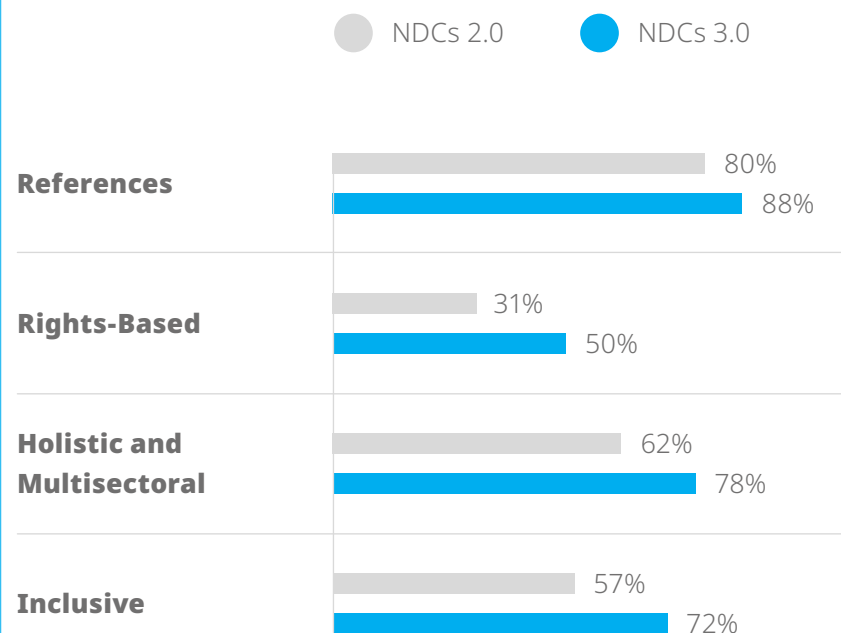


Inclusive of children and young people

The criterion identifies children and youth as important stakeholders and ensures inclusiveness by assessing the integration of children and youth in the consultation process or commitments to enhance child and youth participation and empowerment.

Beyond expanded references, NDCs 3.0 demonstrate deeper integration of children's rights considerations, greater recognition of child- and youth-specific vulnerabilities and associated responses, and more systematic approaches to inclusion than previous submissions, suggesting that attention to children is increasingly being mainstreamed within national climate policy rather than treated as a marginal or optional consideration. For a full analysis of how progress against the 47 indicators changed from NDCs 2.0 to NDCs 3.0, please reference [Annex 2](#).

Figure 2.
**Comparing NDCs 2.0 and NDCs 3.0
by UNICEF criteria for child-responsiveness.**



Several key indicators illustrate this shift clearly:

Indicator	NDC 2.0	NDC 3.0
NDC developed or updated with child participation	5 (3%)	31 (27%)
NDC developed or updated with youth participation	45 (30%)	67 (58%)
Existence of references to children and young people in vulnerable situations, including the most marginalized children	28 (19%)	74 (64%)
NDCs referencing child rights or intergenerational justice and equity	47 (31%)	55 (48%)

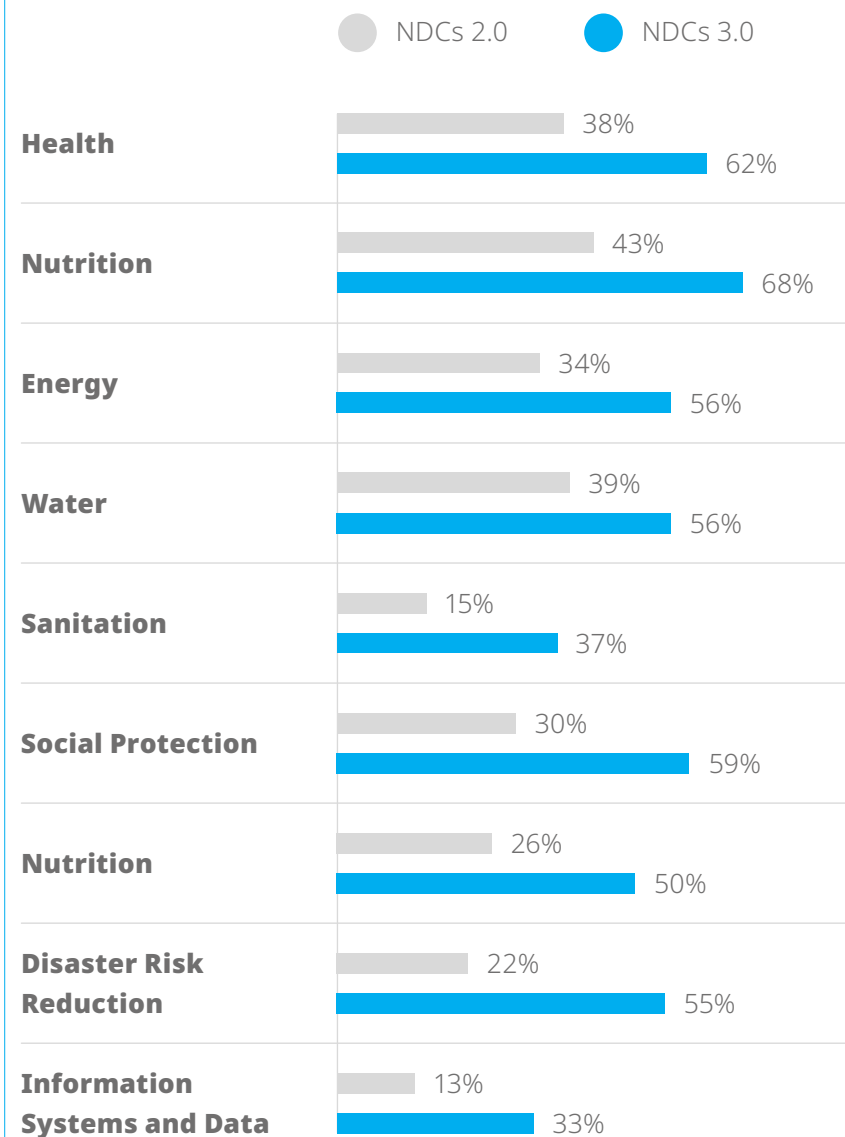
Furthermore, 52 (45%) of NDCs 3.0 reference girls, a notable shift in attention to the gendered impacts of climate change that includes children, rather than women alone.

A

Sectoral trends

This upward trend is also reflected at the sectoral level. Comparison of NDCs 2.0 and NDCs 3.0 shows steady increases in child-responsive commitments across all major sectors, including health, energy, water and sanitation, social protection, food security and nutrition. Increases are also evident in cross-cutting areas such as disaster risk reduction (DRR) and the use of climate information systems and data, including efforts to capture age-disaggregated data and data on sectors and services on which children depend. While the changes are incremental rather than transformative, they are consistently positive, indicating that consideration of children is occurring more systematically within sectoral climate planning.

Figure 3.
Comparing child-responsive commitments
by sector between NDCs 2.0 and NDCs 3.0.



B

Action for Climate Empowerment

Commitments related to the UNFCCC Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) agenda are now widespread across national climate plans. In the NDC 3.0 cycle, 95 per cent of submitted NDCs contain at least one commitment across the six ACE pillars (climate education, training for climate action, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and international cooperation). Mirroring the broader sectoral trends, the analysis shows a clear and consistent increase in child-responsive commitments across each ACE pillar between NDC 2.0 and NDC 3.0.

ACE pillar	NDC 2.0 child-responsive commitments	NDC 3.0 child-responsive commitments
Any ACE pillar (generic, not considering child-responsive commitments)	147 (97%)	109 (95%)
Education	66 (44%)	78 (68%)
Training	50 (33%)	69 (60%)
Public awareness	47 (31%)	68 (59%)
Public access to information	27 (19%)	48 (42%)
Public participation	60 (40%)	78 (68%)
International cooperation (note that UNICEF analysis does not track if this component is child-responsive)	132 (87%)	94 (82%)

As attention shifts from planning to delivery, this overall progress in the child-responsiveness of NDCs provides a strong foundation for investment and implementation to operationalizes commitments to address children's distinct vulnerabilities and empowerment, and to deliver tangible outcomes for children and young people on the ground.



In the NDC 3.0 cycle, 95 per cent of submitted NDCs contain at least one commitment across the six Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) pillars.

Indonesia © UNICEF/UNI891468/Nuraeni
Holistic-Integrative Early Childhood Development centres in
Indonesia link health, nutrition, education, protection, and
WASH services around the child and family.



Spotlight on Good Practices

The following examples illustrate different entry points through which governments are integrating child-responsive approaches into NDCs 3.0, including sectoral integration, participation, data systems and links to climate finance.

DRC © UNICEF/UNI869176/
Participants at the final workshop of the Youth Consultation for
NDC 3.0 on in Kinshasa, DR Congo.



South Asia
Bangladesh



Bangladesh's third NDC provides a strong example of how child-responsive approaches can be integrated in national climate commitments. The NDC explicitly identifies children and youth as vulnerable groups, rights-holders, and agents of change. It includes a dedicated section on children and youth participation, outlining actions across sectors that directly involve children and youth and describing their expected contributions. These actions span mitigation sectors such as energy & industrial processes, agriculture, forestry and waste, as well as cross-cutting areas including as education and transport systems.

The NDC also highlights the participation of children and youth in the consultation process, reflecting efforts to ensure their perspectives inform national climate decision-making. In addition, Bangladesh includes measures addressing child protection risks associated with climate-related disasters, including actions to prevent child abuse, early marriage and domestic violence. The NDC further incorporates age-, gender- and disability-responsive commitments within DRR and social protection measures – an approach that remains uncommon across many NDCs.

 UNICEF technical assistance

UNICEF provided technical support to the Government of Bangladesh during preparation of the third NDC, contributing evidence and policy inputs to strengthen integration of child-responsive measures across social sectors. This included collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and relevant line ministries to support the inclusion of child-responsive targets, as well as facilitating consultations with children and young people. UNICEF supported a series of regional

youth consultations and a U-Report survey reaching 30,000 young people, helping to ensure their voices informed development of the NDC. These efforts were complemented by climate clean-up drives and workshops on the Global Plastics Treaty, fostering youth-led advocacy and skills development.

UNICEF will continue to support the Government of Bangladesh during the NDC implementation phase, including through work on climate education, youth engagement and broader efforts to strengthen child-responsive climate action.

Western and Central Africa
Liberia



Liberia's third NDC systematically integrates children and youth as a cross-cutting priority across national climate action and was developed through a process that included meaningful child and youth participation, including dedicated dialogues and representation in consultations. The NDC contains a dedicated section on children and youth and includes specific commitments child-critical sectors. For children, these span education, health, social protection, and water and sanitation, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to addressing children's needs. The NDC also includes commitments to strengthen age-disaggregated data and to track child-critical loss and damage, such as school days lost due to climate events and child morbidity associated with heatwaves. In addition, Liberia commits to developing a pipeline of adaptation projects focused on children for submission to multilateral climate funds, including the Green Climate Fund or Adaptation Fund.

UNICEF technical assistance

The preparation of Liberia's NDC 3.0 involved an inclusive, countrywide consultation process that built on lessons from the previous NDC cycle. UNICEF supported the Government of Liberia in facilitating multisectoral consultations across all 15 counties, engaging youth networks, the Liberia Children's Parliament, school environmental clubs, women's groups and disability organizations alongside government institutions and other stakeholders. Capacity building workshops were also organized to help children understand climate change and the NDC process, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to regional meetings, technical workshops, and green-skills sessions.

A dedicated child-youth-gender dialogue resulted in the Ganta Declaration, which identified child protection, youth employment, gender-responsive climate action, disability inclusion, and climate education as priority areas for the NDC. This Declaration was formally presented to the Government and incorporated into the final NDC, contributing to commitments on children's rights across adaptation and cross-cutting targets, climate-resilient schools, improvements in WASH services and proposals for youth and child representation on the National Climate Change Steering Committee.

The NDC also identifies UNICEF as a partner for supporting development of adaptation project proposals for submission to international climate funds, including the GCF and Adaptation Fund. This includes technical support to cost priority interventions and develop NDC investment plans, helping translate child-responsive commitments into implementable and finance-ready programmes.

Eastern and Southern Africa

Angola



Angola's third NDC incorporates a strong child rights perspective. Drawing on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the NDC recognizes key aspects of how children are impacted differently by climate change. For example, it notes that girls may withdraw from schools to fetch water during droughts while boys may withdraw to accompany livestock over wider grazing areas, and that girls often face additional burdens through domestic tasks and unpaid labour. The NDC also identifies particularly vulnerable groups of children, including orphans, street children, and migrant or refugee children. At the same time, the NDC recognizes children not only as a vulnerable group but also as agents of change, involving them in participatory processes and recognizing them in climate decision-making spaces.

UNICEF technical assistance

UNICEF supported the Government of Angola in strengthening youth engagement and integrating child-responsive priorities into the revised NDC, through initiatives like the first National Youth and Climate Forum, six provincial forums, and the creation of "Campus Kanvash," a youth advisory board with nationwide representation. These efforts led to the development of a Youth and Climate Action Plan with the Ministry of Environment focused on capacity building, civic engagement and advocacy. UNICEF continues to support the Government of Angola in advancing child-responsive climate action and is now supporting development of the country's first National Adaptation Plan, including child-responsive DRR as a cross-cutting priority, through strengthened sectoral engagement in areas such as WASH, education and health, and by supporting financing strategies.

Europe and Central Asia

Moldova



Moldova's NDC 3.0 stands out as one of the most advanced child-responsive climate policies in Europe and Central Asia, incorporating a strong child rights-based approach and clear recognition of children and youth as stakeholders. The NDC promotes child- and youth-led initiatives, including in locally led adaptation, and highlights the role of children and young people in disaster risk management. It includes commitments to engage children in managing disaster risks and in developing disaster risk management plans in schools. The NDC also includes measures to ensure that early warning systems are accessible to children and young people, as well as to women, rural populations and people with disabilities. In addition, it recognizes the need for gender- and age-responsive approaches within Moldova's broader disaster risk reduction framework, promoting coherence between climate commitments and the National Strategy on DRR.



UNICEF technical assistance

UNICEF supported the Government of Moldova during the preparation of NDC 3.0 by providing technical inputs to strengthen the integration of child rights considerations across sectors. This included conducting a gap analysis of the previous NDC and sharing policy recommendations with the Ministry of Environment and relevant line ministries, including health, education, and social protection. Through this process, the NDC incorporates commitments on health, education, social protection, and access to a clean environment. UNICEF also supported coordination with partners and youth outreach during the NDC preparation process and continues to support alignment between NDC commitments and national plans in education and disaster risk reduction.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Colombia



Colombia's third NDC demonstrates strong integration of child-responsive and youth-inclusive climate action. The NDC explicitly recognizes children and youth as vulnerable groups, rights-holders and agents of change, and includes a dedicated section outlining their roles and needs. This includes commitments to strengthen the participation of children, adolescents and young people in climate decision-making processes. The NDC integrates intergenerational justice and child rights considerations across key sectors. Commitments are accompanied by recognition of their implications for children's rights. The NDC also includes provisions to strengthen child-sensitive climate information systems and data, notably through the development of the Methodology of Child-sensitive Indicators (MISNI). This methodology will support the inclusion of age-disaggregated data and child-sensitive indicators within a public climate information dashboard.



UNICEF technical assistance

UNICEF supported the Government of Colombia in strengthening the integration of child-responsive priorities within its NDC 3.0. This included technical engagement with relevant ministries and support for mechanisms enabling meaningful child and youth participation. UNICEF also supported a series of child-led workshops across 15 territories and is piloting the MISNI methodology to translate NDC objectives into sector-specific indicators. These efforts strengthen monitoring and accountability for child-responsive climate action and support alignment with national sectoral policies.

Middle East and North Africa

Iraq



Iraq's third NDC includes a dedicated section on children, youth and education, recognizing that young people under 25 make up the largest and most influential demographic group in shaping the country's future. The NDC includes a comprehensive set of commitments to address the impacts of climate change on children and young people, including the integration of mental health and psychosocial support within climate and education programmes, as well as capacity building to support their engagement in national climate consultation processes. The NDC also highlights gender-responsive approaches, including measures to support girls' access to services, decent work and leadership roles. In addition, it includes a detailed section on loss and damage, with commitments that, while not explicitly child-specific, are relevant to addressing impacts that affect children and their communities.

UNICEF technical assistance

UNICEF actively supported Iraq's Ministry of Environment in revising the NDC and contributing to adaptation chapters, with a strong focus on child-responsive climate action. A major achievement was the inclusion of a dedicated chapter on children and youth in the new NDC, shaped through national consultations with 150 young people. UNICEF provided technical leadership on the water chapter and coordinated inputs for education, skilling and awareness components, ensuring these priorities were embedded in the NDC. Building on Iraq's COP28 declaration to integrate children and youth perspectives in climate decision-making, Iraq continues to position itself as a champion for child-responsive climate policy at both national and global levels, while UNICEF reinforces its role as a trusted partner in advancing inclusive climate action.

East Asia and the Pacific

the Maldives



The Maldives' third NDC recognizes children and young people as agents of change and includes measures to empower, support and protect them within climate action. The NDC contains a dedicated section on gender, children and youth, which highlights the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children and outlines measures to strengthen resilience, awareness, engagement, and the evidence base on climate impacts affecting vulnerable groups. The NDC notes that children and youth make up more than 40% of the population, highlighting the need to prioritize their involvement in climate action. Specifically, it includes commitments to engage children in disaster management, including ensuring access to psychosocial support. In addition, the NDC integrates child-responsive measures across sectors, including strengthening WASH education in schools, and includes a comprehensive section on Action for Climate Empowerment elements.

UNICEF technical assistance

UNICEF contributed technical inputs to the NDC 3.0 revision process, including through engagement with government counterparts and the provision of targeted recommendations to strengthen the integration of child-responsive measures. A key success was enabling a "Climate Guidance" youth cohort to participate in consultations, helping to ensure that children's and young people's perspectives informed the NDC development. These contributions are reflected in the inclusion of child-responsive elements in NDC 3.0, including gender-responsive climate services, multi-hazard risk assessments and strengthened disaster risk management frameworks. This represents a significant step forward from NDC 2.0, which did not include references to children.

Lessons Learned

Drawing on country-level experience in the development and implementation of NDCs 3.0, a set of recurring lessons has emerged on what is most effective in strengthening the child-responsiveness of NDCs. These lessons reflect practical approaches that have supported the integration of children's rights, needs and participation in national climate commitments and can inform future national climate policy development and implementation processes.

Across countries, four consistent entry points emerged:

- Institutionalizing the meaningful participation of children and young people
- Embedding child rights and priorities across sectors and institutions
- Strengthening the evidence base, data systems and accountability
- Designing for implementation: linking policy commitments to delivery pathways

These entry points are reflected across the practices and country examples below.

North Macedonia © UNICEF/UN0738986/Georgiev
Children in North Macedonia celebrate World Children's Day.



A

Institutionalizing the meaningful participation of children and young people

The meaningful participation of children and young people in NDC development contributes to more inclusive and comprehensive NDCs. Inputs from children and youth provide concrete, actionable recommendations that governments can integrate, frequently grounding climate commitments in human and child rights.

Inclusive consultation processes help ensure that policies reflect lived experiences and respond to the needs of children and their communities.

Activities



Examples of UNICEF support



Co-designed consultations

Malaysia

Co-developed consultation questions and formats with adolescents to ensure relevance across diverse regions.

Culturally sensitive facilitation

Malaysia

Trained facilitators from ministries, CSOs and youth networks to conduct safe, child-responsive consultations.

Bangladesh

Supported in-person consultations and digital [U-Report](#) polling to include children across climate-vulnerable districts.

Child-friendly materials

Viet Nam

Developed a child-friendly NDC version using visuals and interactive elements to make the content accessible to children.

Institutionalized youth platforms

Türkiye

Youth Climate Envoys from 200+ universities integrated into national dialogues.

Iraq

Supported the government to establish formal youth engagement structures.

Senegal

Green Generation platform mobilized over 1,000 youth.

Angola

Youth advisory boards and provincial youth forums linked to national climate processes.

Multi-modal engagement

Kenya

Combined regional youth dialogues with an 11,000-response U-Report poll.

Bangladesh

Conducted eight regional youth consultations alongside a 30,000-response U-Report survey informing NDC priorities.

Youth-led advocacy pathways

The Maldives

UNICEF supported capacity building for youth climate cohorts, enabling them to communicate technical recommendations within policy discussions where broader formal access was limited.

United Arab Emirates

UNICEF supported youth-led communication efforts through national media and COP platforms to elevate climate education and other child-responsive climate priorities.

B

Embedding child rights and priorities across sectors and institutions

Embedding child rights and priorities across sectors and institutions is critical to ensuring that national climate policies respond to the full range of risks faced by children. Lessons from NDC development processes indicate that strong governance and coordination mechanisms are essential to sustain child-responsive priorities throughout the policy cycle, particularly as drafts move between ministries and external actors. Early and sustained engagement of sectoral ministries reduces the risk that child-related priorities are deprioritized during inter-ministerial negotiations and revision processes.

Given that climate risks to children span sectors such as education, health, WASH, social protection, and disaster risk reduction, cross-sectoral coordination is critical. Approaches that engage multiple ministries from the outset result in greater coherence and more operationally feasible and implementable climate strategies, including through clearer roles, stronger policy alignment, and more durable commitments across successive drafting iterations.

Activities



Examples of UNICEF support



Inter-ministerial coordination platforms

Iraq

Advising an inter-ministerial working group including Environment, Youth, Sports, Education.

Senegal

Convened cross-ministerial policy workshops around youth inputs.

Decentralized engagement

Pakistan

Supported localized NDC planning and integration of sectoral priorities through provincial technical advisors.

Regular coordination touchpoints

Bangladesh

Regular inter-ministerial working sessions helped ensure social-sector proposals were retained in the NDC.

Moldova

Supported sustained cross-sector coordination among Ministries through aligned technical inputs and consultation support.

Cross-sectoral participation in climate structures

Nepal

Sector ministries participated in the NDC 3.0 technical committee, as well as UNICEF and other key actors.

Colombia

Sector working groups provided entry points to influence NDC content.

Sector-specific technical inputs for line ministries

Moldova

Developed targeted technical briefs for line ministries linking child rights to sectoral climate priorities.

Colombia

Delivered tailored proposals across education, WASH, health.

Alternative ministry entry points

Kenya

Engaged Education and Health Ministries counterparts where access to Environment was limited.

Cambodia

Worked across ministries to integrate child protection and social protection.

Early technical engagement to shape scope and structure

Moldova

Early support to ministries to inform NDC scope and structure ahead of formal drafting.

Subnational entry points that build momentum

United Arab Emirates

Support for subnational initiatives (e.g. Child-Friendly City initiative in Abu Dhabi) that integrated climate considerations into urban policy and helped build wider momentum.

C

Strengthening the evidence base, data systems and accountability

Robust, child-focused data provides a strong rationale for integrating child-critical social sectors and corresponding commitments into NDCs and supports the design of more feasible and targeted interventions. Governments are more likely to adopt child-responsive measures when evidence clearly demonstrates the scale and urgency

of climate impacts on essential services and child well-being. This highlights the importance of systematic evidence generation and use of UNICEF tools such as [Climate Landscape Analyses for Children \(CLACs\)](#) and the [Global Child Hazard Database \(GCHD\)](#) to inform national policy processes.

Activities



Examples of UNICEF support



Using CLAC/CCRI and child vulnerability data

Cambodia

Used child risk evidence from sector studies to support integrating social sectors into NDC adaptation priorities.

Moldova

Provided child vulnerability data to inform pre-draft recommendations.

Applying best-available baselines

Bangladesh

Used proxy indicators where sectoral baselines were limited.

Chad

Leveraged child vulnerability and climate risk data to inform engagement in NAP and NDC processes.

Specialized technical analyses

Pakistan

Conducted methane emissions analysis for mitigation commitments in wastewater systems.

Colombia

Piloted technical approaches to translate NDC actions into sector-specific child-responsive indicators.

Strengthening monitoring systems

Angola

Identified data gaps and supported improvements in climate monitoring systems.

Chad

used data-informed approaches to support climate finance access and readiness activities.

D

Designing for implementation: linking policy commitments to delivery pathways

Lessons from NDC drafting processes show that child-responsive priorities are more likely to be retained and actionable when commitments are designed for implementation. Ministries working under tight timelines benefit from clear, concise and policy-relevant inputs that can be readily integrated into national climate commitments and retained through multiple review cycles. Aligning proposed measures with national sector plans, budgets and

implementation frameworks also strengthens feasibility and supports the transition from policy text to delivery. Where available, costed and prioritized proposals also support investment readiness; where detailed costing is not yet feasible, structured inputs that clarify actions, responsible institutions and delivery mechanisms provide an important foundation for next steps.

Activities



Examples of UNICEF support



Providing ready-to-integrate draft proposals

Bangladesh and Türkiye

Provided ready-to-integrate technical adaptation and social-sector elements for NDC text.

Colombia

Provided consolidated written proposals aligned with sector priorities during consultations.

Moldova

Provided written recommendations ahead of formal drafting.

Ministry-facing technical briefs to support internal coordination

Moldova

Prepared concise technical briefs for line ministries with to support internal engagement and government coordination during NDC approval.

Aligning measures with existing plans and budgets

Pakistan

UNICEF provided NDC inputs anchored in costed sectoral plans (e.g. for WASH and waste management).

Bangladesh

UNICEF used national sector budgets to ground adaptation proposals.

Next steps

NDC implementation, financing and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

With the submission of the third generation of NDCs, attention is increasingly shifting toward implementation, with high and growing demand for support by Parties.

Implementation of NDCs is expected to occur primarily through national and sectoral instruments, including NDC implementation plans, sectoral strategies, and national budgeting and investment frameworks. Under the newly established **Belém Mission to 1.5°C** and the **Global Implementation Accelerator**, governments and partners will need to tackle the persistent bottlenecks that stall progress.

Cameroon © UNICEF/UNI994264/Beguel
A joyful crowd of preschoolers pile up at their classroom window in Cameroon.



Financing will be a central determinant of implementation success. Governments and development partners are expected to place greater emphasis on costing, prioritisation and investment readiness of NDC commitments. For child-responsive climate action, this underscores the importance of ensuring that commitments related to essential social services, child protection, education, health, nutrition and water and sanitation are clearly articulated, costed and linked to national financing mechanisms and climate funds, including through the development of investment pipelines and finance-ready programmes.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting will also become increasingly important as countries track progress toward their NDC targets and prepare for future transparency and stocktake processes, including under the Enhanced Transparency Framework of the Paris Agreement and in Biennial Transparency Reports. This creates a key opportunity to strengthen child-responsive indicators, improve age-, gender- and disability-disaggregated data systems, and ensure that the impacts of climate action on children and young people are systematically measured and reported.

In this implementation phase, UNICEF can continue to support governments by translating policy commitments into actionable, child-responsive measures; strengthening the resilience of child-critical social services; supporting participatory implementation and monitoring; and helping to bridge the gap between national climate policies, sectoral plans and financing frameworks. Dedicated guidance on NDC and NAP implementation for UNICEF Country Offices is forthcoming. UN system support will be delivered through existing coordination mechanisms, including UNDP's Climate Promise Forward, which will bring together UN agencies, multilateral development banks, and the NDC Partnership.

Resources and Tools



NDCs for every child Data Platform:
Interactive country-level information on children in climate planning.



UNICEF toolkit on Child- and Youth-Sensitive NDCs:
Practical guidance for integrating child rights, needs, and participation into NDCs (2024).



Child-sensitive climate policies for every child:
Guidance on UNICEF methodology and indicator analysis (2022).

Annex 1.

UNICEF Indicator Framework for Assessing Child-Responsive NDCs (47 indicators)

Please note that commitments should be understood as the establishment of specific objectives, targets, indicators or activities. A statement of intent in the document that does not translate into concrete and measurable commitments will not be considered if the indicator is specifically tracking commitments.

No.	Name	Description
1	Existence of references to child and young people – new or updated NDC	The indicator refers to the existence of references to children or young people in any part of the document (of the new submitted NDC). These words of reference can be any of the following, including direct and indirect references to children and youth: → Child / Children, Adolescent, Youth, Young, Infant / Baby, Girl, Boy, Age*, Intergenerational, Generation*, School, Primary*, Secondary*, Preschool, Teacher, Human rights, Child rights, Family. * Please make sure that these marked words are related to children and youth and not to other topics, such as energy, forest, or others. → Children and youth are addressing together as many countries include adolescents (and sometimes children) in the group of “youth”. As this is not always made clear in the NDC, but in other national frameworks, it is difficult to assess whether each country is being inclusive when using the word youth.
2	Existence of references to child and young people – former NDC	The indicator refers to the existence of references to children or young people in any part of the previously submitted NDC.
3	Existence of references to marginalized and disadvantaged children and youth	The indicator refers to the existence in any part of the document of references to most disadvantaged and marginalized children or youth, which includes, and is not limited to, children of traditional, indigenous, and ethnic groups, children of linguistic, racial, or religious minorities, children with disabilities, children from poor households or neighbourhoods, children whose families have climate-sensitive livelihoods, children who have entered the labour force, stateless and undocumented migrant children, displaced children, children in refugee communities, children on the move, gender minority and LGBTQIA+ children, children in street situations, children deprived of liberty, and children in institutions.
4	Existence of references to human rights (right-based approach)	The indicator refers to the existence of references to human rights in a meaningful way, for example, as part of a cross-cutting approach, element, part of the vision or a pillar on which the NDC is built.
5	Existence of references to child rights	The indicator refers to the existence of references to the rights of the children or intergenerational justice and equity in a meaningful way, for example, as part of a cross-cutting approach, element, part of the vision or a pillar on which the NDC is built.
6	Inclusion of a child-specific section	The indicator refers to the existence of a specific section on children or youth, whether it is included as part of the vulnerability assessment or diagnosis, or as a section of specific commitments.
7	Existence of references to disproportionate climate impacts due to gender	The indicator refers to the existence of references on the unequal impacts of the climate crisis due to gender
8	Existence of references to private sector engagement for climate action	The indicator refers to the existence of references to private sector engagement for climate action beyond a donor-based approach, for example, the implementation of climate commitments in the NDC through Public Private Partnerships.
9	Identification of children as a vulnerable group	The indicator refers to whether children are identified specifically as a vulnerable group to the impacts of climate change.
10	Identification of young people as a vulnerable group	The indicator refers to whether young people are identified specifically as a vulnerable group to the impacts of climate change.
11	Identification of children as drivers of change	The indicator refers to whether children are identified as an important stakeholder or agents of change in climate action.
12	Identification of young people as drivers of change	The indicator refers to whether young people are identified as an important stakeholder or agents of change in climate action.

13	Reference to the NDC development or update process being done in a participatory manner	The indicator refers to whether the process to develop the new NDC or to update it was done in a participatory way. A participatory process should be understood as a process developed with the participation of other stakeholders than the public sector, such as civil society, academy, private sectors, youth and children organizations, etc.
14	Reference to inclusion of children in the participatory process to elaborate or update the NDC	The indicator refers to whether the participatory process carried out to develop the new or updated NDC specifically included children or adolescents and is specifically mentioned in the NDC document.
15	Reference to inclusion of young people in the participatory process to elaborate or update the NDC	The indicator refers to whether the participatory process carried out to develop the new or updated NDC specifically included young people and is specifically mentioned in the NDC document.
16	Addressing mitigation commitments	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes mitigation commitments.
17	Identification of social co-benefits of mitigation commitments	The indicator refers to whether the NDC explicitly identify the social co-benefits from mitigation commitments, such as benefits in health, education, food security, nutrition, access to basic services, etc. For example, Chile's NDC recognizes that its commitments to reduce black carbon emissions will generate significant co-benefits in air quality and reduce human health impacts and associated costs.
18	Addressing adaptation commitments	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes adaptation commitments.
19	Inclusion of commitments on the health sector	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to climate action in the health sector in a broad sense.
20	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on health	The indicator refers to whether the health sector commitments included in the NDC can be considered child-sensitive. This means that it addresses or considers actions to improve directly the health of children, young people, family or community (for example, reduction of air pollution and short-lived climate pollutants, promoting the use of more fuel-efficient cook stoves, etc.); to improve health care facilities (climate-resilience solutions and environmental sustainability) and systems (including their preparedness, response, and monitoring capacity); to develop responsive primary care that incorporates children's environmental health; or to embed environmental health in school programmes.
21	Inclusion of commitments on the education sector	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to the education sector in a broad sense.
22	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on education	The indicator refers to whether the education sector commitments included in the NDC can be considered child-sensitive. This means that it specifically addresses or considers the educational needs of children including commitments to develop or strengthen curricula (environmental and climate education); to improve learning facilities or associated infrastructure that enable learning (based on resilience, safety, sustainability, adaptation and mitigation of climate change and risks); or to develop skills and knowledge in education staff (on climate, environment and DRR).
23	Inclusion of ACE commitments	The indicator refers to whether the NDC integrate the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) framework by including commitments in at least one of its components: education, training, public awareness, public access to information, public participation and international cooperation; even if the NDC doesn't explicitly refer to ACE.
24	Inclusion of commitments on training	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to training, fostering a better understanding of and ability to address climate change and its effects. Training provides the core technical and soft skills as well as advanced knowledge needed to support the transition to green economies and sustainable, inclusive climate-neutral and resilient societies. Training is about develop practical skills – individuals, communities and organizations can all benefit from ongoing learning.

25	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on training	The indicator refers to whether the training commitments in the NDC can be considered child/youth-sensitive. This means that it addresses or considers specifically the training of children and young people.
26	Inclusion of commitments on public awareness	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to public awareness in a broad sense, promoting community engagement, creativity, and knowledge in finding climate change solutions.
27	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on public awareness	The indicator refers to whether the public awareness commitments included in the NDC can be considered child/youth-sensitive. This means that it addresses or considers specifically the awareness of children and young people, families or the sectors and services on which children depend, such as teachers, health professionals or social institutions through targeted and systematic communications.
28	Inclusion of commitments on public access to information	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to public access to information in a broad sense, including that information is freely available to enable community engagement, creativity, and knowledge in finding climate change solutions.
29	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on access to information	The indicator refers to whether the public access to information commitments included in the NDC can be considered child- and youth-sensitive. This means that it specifically addresses or consider the capacities and needs of children and young people to access information, including that information is available in a child-friendly manner – in age-appropriate and suitable for the capacities of children of all groups and backgrounds.
30	Inclusion of commitments on public participation	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to public participation in a broad sense, engaging stakeholders (others than public sector) in debate and partnership to collectively respond to climate change.
31	Inclusion of child-sensitive public participation commitments	The indicator refers to whether the public participation commitments included in the NDC can be considered child- and youth-sensitive. This means that it specifically addresses or considers meaningful participation of children and young people in decision making spaces on the climate agenda”
32	Inclusion of commitments on international cooperation	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to international cooperation in a broad sense, engaging them in debate and partnership to collectively respond to climate change, including access to expertise and financial and technical resources.
33	Inclusion of commitments on energy	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to energy in a broad sense (energy production, energy supply, energy consumption, transportation).
34	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on energy	The indicator refers to whether the energy commitments included in the NDC can be considered child-sensitive. This means that it addresses or considers access to energy services at the household or community level or in sectors on which children depend (e.g., energy in health or learning facilities, clean cookstoves).
35	Inclusion of commitments on water	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to water in a broad sense.
36	Inclusion of child-sensitive water commitments	The indicator refers to whether the water commitments included in the NDC can be considered child-sensitive. This means that it addresses or considers water resources from a human right to water perspective, including, for example, commitments to ensure water infrastructure, services and behaviors are sustainable, safe and resilient to climate-related risks; increasing access to drinking water in households, communities, or sectors on which children depend (e.g., health care or learning centers); contributing from WASH systems to building community resilience and increasing capacity to adapt to climate change; or implementing efforts to monitor and manage drinking water resources; among others.
37	Inclusion of sanitation commitments	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to sanitation in a broad sense.

38	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on sanitation	The indicator refers to whether the sanitation commitments included in the NDC can be considered child- sensitive. This means that it addresses or considers water resources from a human right to water perspective, including, for example, commitments to ensure sanitation infrastructure, services and behaviors are sustainable, safe and resilient to climate-related risks; increasing access to proper sanitation solutions in households, communities, or sectors on which children depend (e.g., health care or learning centers); or contributing from WASH systems to building community resilience and increasing capacity to adapt to climate change; among others.
39	Inclusion of commitments on social protection	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to social protection in a broad sense.
40	Inclusion of child-sensitive social protection commitments	The indicator refers to whether the social protection commitments included in the NDC can be considered child/ youth- sensitive. This means that it specifically addresses or considers commitments to act against poverty, cash transfers in favour of children and young people, implementation of social insurance to children, youth or families (health, productive, etc.), support for child care services and youth employability, development and strengthening of social services personnel, strengthening of integrated delivery systems, development and strengthening of national social protection systems, among others.
41	Inclusion of commitments on food production	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to food production (agriculture, livestock, fishery/ aquiculture).
42	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on food and nutritional security	The indicator refers to whether the food production commitments included in the NDC can be considered child- and youth- sensitive, including commitments to enhance food and nutritional security of children, young people or families.
43	Inclusion of commitments on DRR	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to disaster risk reduction in a broad sense, including inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms, early warning systems, protection infrastructure, nature-based solutions, etc.
44	Inclusion of child- sensitive commitments on DRR	The indicator refers to whether the DRR commitments included in the NDC can be considered child- and youth- sensitive, including the development and strengthening of preparedness, response and resilience capacity of children, youth, families, and the services and systems on which they depend.
45	Inclusion of commitments to implement or improve information systems & data	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes specific commitments to implement or improve information systems and data collection.
46	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments to implement or improve information systems & data	The indicator refers to whether the commitments regarding the improvement or implementation of information and data systems included in the NDC can be considered child- sensitive. This means whether it specifically addresses the collection of information disaggregated by age group or those sectors or services on which children depend.
47	Inclusion of commitments to monitor and evaluate the progress of the NDCs	The indicator refers to whether the NDC includes commitments to establish or improve mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of NDC indicators and targets, to measure how the NDC and its commitments are being effectively implemented.

Annex 2.

Change in Indicator Coverage from NDCs 2.0 to NDCs 3.0 (summary table)

The table reports whether an NDC includes a reference, approach or commitment aligned with each indicator. It does not assess quality, adequacy of financing, or implementation. Indicators reflect the presence of relevant language or commitments in the submitted document. This analysis includes 172 NDCs 2.0 and 115 NDCs 3.0.

Indicator		NDC 2.0	NDC 2.0	NDC 3.0	NDC 3.0
1	Existence of references to child and young people – new or updated NDC	122	80%	101	88%
2	Existence of references to child and young people – former NDC 2.0	58	38%	86	75%
3	Existence of references to marginalized and disadvantaged children and youth	28	19%	74	64%
4	Existence of references to human rights (right-based approach)	74	49%	72	63%
5	Existence of references to child rights	47	31%	55	48%
6	Inclusion of a child-specific section	25	17%	50	43%
7	Existence of references to disproportionate climate impacts due to gender	99	65%	98	85%
8	Existence of references to private sector engagement for climate action	129	85%	98	85%
9	Identification of children as a vulnerable group	65	43%	63	55%
10	Identification of young people as a vulnerable group	61	40%	77	67%
11	Identification of children as drivers of change	25	17%	35	30%
12	Identification of young people as drivers of change	71	47%	62	54%
13	Reference to the NDC development or update process being done in a participatory manner	137	91%	108	94%
14	Reference to inclusion of children in the participatory process to elaborate or update the NDC	5	3%	31	27%
15	Reference to inclusion of young people in the participatory process to elaborate or update the NDC	45	30%	67	58%
16	Addressing mitigation commitments	152	100%	115	100%
17	Identification of social co-benefits of mitigation commitments	114	76%	83	72%
18	Addressing adaptation commitments	145	96%	109	95%
19	Inclusion of commitments on the health sector	115	76%	91	79%
20	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on health	58	38%	71	62%
21	Inclusion of commitments on the education sector	98	64%	85	74%
22	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on education	66	44%	78	68%
23	Inclusion of ACE commitments	147	97%	109	95%
24	Inclusion of commitments on training	118	78%	96	83%
25	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on training	50	33%	69	60%
26	Inclusion of commitments on public awareness	112	73%	86	75%
27	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on public awareness	47	31%	68	59%

28	Inclusion of commitments on public access to information	97	64%	74	64%
29	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on access to information	27	19%	48	42%
30	Inclusion of commitments on public participation	112	74%	93	81%
31	Inclusion of child-sensitive public participation commitments	60	40%	78	68%
32	Inclusion of commitments on international cooperation	132	87%	94	82%
33	Inclusion of commitments on energy	151	99%	115	100%
34	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on energy	52	34%	64	56%
35	Inclusion of commitments on water	131	87%	97	84%
36	Inclusion of child-sensitive water commitments	60	40%	64	56%
37	Inclusion of sanitation commitments	116	77%	82	71%
38	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on sanitation	23	15%	42	37%
39	Inclusion of commitments on social protection	99	66%	89	77%
40	Inclusion of child-sensitive social protection commitments	46	31%	68	59%
41	Inclusion of commitments on food production	134	89%	104	90%
42	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments on food and nutritional security	39	26%	57	50%
43	Inclusion of commitments on DRR	127	85%	94	82%
44	Inclusion of child- sensitive commitments on DRR	34	23%	63	55%
45	Inclusion of commitments to implement or improve information systems & data	122	81%	94	82%
46	Inclusion of child-sensitive commitments to implement or improve information systems & data	20	13%	38	33%
47	Inclusion of commitments to monitor and evaluate the progress of the NDCs	135	89%	102	89%
Consideration of NDC as child-sensitive		74	49%	80	70%
Criteria 1. References: Explicit and meaningful reference to children and youth		122	80%	100	87%
Criteria 2. Rights-based: Consider children and youth as rights-holders		48	31%	55	48%
Criteria 3. Holistic and multisectoral: Addresses the specific risks and vulnerabilities of children		94	62%	88	77%
Criteria 4. Inclusive: Identifies children and youth as an important stakeholder		85	57%	83	72%

