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The Green School Initiative

The UNICEF approach to building resilience and accelerating climate action for children in and through education in West and Central Africa

unicef
for every child

Overview

In West and Central Africa, UNICEF has been addressing the impacts of emergencies, disasters, and conflict on children and their education for decades. More recently, UNICEF country offices have worked on re-orienting their education programmes to respond to the escalating climate crisis. The **Green School Initiative (GSI)**, presented in this document, is the UNICEF regional approach to building resilience and accelerating climate action for children in and through education. The vision is for every child to thrive on a liveable planet, as per UNICEF's Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2030. Achieving this vision in West and Central Africa, which comprises 17 of the 30 countries where children are the most exposed to climate risks, and 3 of the top 10 countries with the highest risk to education, is of vital importance. The document also provides guidance - including technical resources - for UNICEF country offices and partners to achieve the **GSI**.

Given the scale of the challenge, and the **climate crisis** affecting education systems generally in a state of crisis, the **GSI** also serves as a call to action for partners to join forces towards transforming the lives of as many children as possible, leveraging education both in view of its high vulnerability to climate change, and as a key vehicle to accelerate climate action.

Children in Senegal.

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Strategic approach

The Green School initiative - or **GSI** - is based on four pillars, aligned with those of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) 2022-2030, as well as interventions recommended in UNICEF guidance on risk-informed education programming for resilience:

Foundation Pillar: Integrate sustainability and climate action into education strategies, policies and plans, including risk-informed analysis and budgeting.

Key interventions: support governments to integrate sustainability and climate action in education plans and budgets; develop and implement national strategies for disaster risk management and adaptation in education; enhance multistakeholder coordination including the ministries of education and environment, to ensure a strong and supportive enabling environment; and fully integrate risk analysis and climate resilience into Education Management Information Systems (EMIS).

Pillar 1: Build climate resilient and greener school facilities.

Key interventions: promote the climate resilience of new and existing educational facilities to ensure that they remain safe, effective and operational during and after disasters in order to provide life-saving and essential services, including climate-resilient WASH in Schools (WinS); establish, support and enforce building codes and retrofit policies and guidelines; and advocate for inclusive green spaces on school grounds.

Pillar 2: Strengthen school safety and protect educational continuity.

Key interventions: map school vulnerabilities and capacities to overcome climate-related hazards; develop school emergency management plans and protocols, ensuring schools receive early warning on disasters, while including a focus on mental health and psychosocial support; promote anticipatory action in the education sector; and provide alternative learning opportunities, non-formal education opportunities, and catch-up or accelerated education classes to address any breaks in education continuity.

Pillar 3: Promote disaster risk reduction and climate education and empower children and young people as agents of change.

Key interventions: advocate for the integration of climate change, disaster risk reduction, and environmental education into formal and non-formal curriculum across the education cycle based on a lifelong approach to learning, starting from pre-school, and invest in teacher professional development in these areas; and equip young people with skills for the green economy, including opportunities for out-of-school children and young people.

Thematically, the **GSI** focuses on several areas, reflecting the four Areas of Accelerate UNICEF's Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2030: child-centered disaster risk reduction; sustainable energy for schools; climate-resilient WASH services in areas most vulnerable to climate change; and youth engagement and empowerment. The latter is for children and young people to be part of the solution, as they should be. These core interventions will be complemented by other strategies on environmental health; health and nutrition in education; conflict sensitive education and peacebuilding; child protection in education; and social protection in education. Areas of work will be adjusted to contextual needs and priorities at country and sub-regional levels, as the impacts of climate change on education are different in the Congo Basin, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), coastal countries, and the Sahel.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation in education in a nutshell

Ensuring children know how to survive and respond to increasing climate risks and hazards is essential, and it is their right. Children must have the ability to participate in all aspects of comprehensive school safety, school and community disaster management and learn safety rules for specific hazards. Teachers must be trained on inclusive risk reduction methods, materials and curricula. Likewise, formal and informal education should provide children with knowledge of climate change, green skills and resilience techniques and ensure children participate in climate action, adaptation and resilience activities. Climate education enables youth to be part of the solution, to influence household behaviour, and ultimately drives greater national action and commitment to promote sustainable development and address the climate crisis.

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School children preparing a climate fresk on Earth Day (22 April), Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

The GSI's pillars will be implemented in line with the following cross-cutting approaches:

- **Gender and inclusion:** Climate action needs to include vulnerable groups, reach the last mile and every young person, especially girls and adolescent girls. Engaging young people living with disabilities is also paramount. With close to 60 million out-of-school children in West and Central Africa in 2022[1], and situations of displacement resulting from conflicts and disasters, informal and non-formal education is a prerequisite for resilience building among children, while contributing to effective access to quality education for all.

- **Multi-crisis approach:** The various crises simultaneously faced by children and young people across West and Central Africa - in addition to the climate crisis - call for a holistic and integrated response, taking into consideration common causes and consequences, as well as the multiple feedback mechanisms linking these crises to one another.

- **Multi-stakeholder approach:** The education sector's leadership in tackling the climate crisis is critical. However, the country level response to climate change in the education sector requires a whole-of-society approach involving other sectors in a synergistic way, and a broad range of well-coordinated stakeholders, including the ministries covering the environment, given the complex ecosystem that enables effective climate action. Besides, interventions must be sustainable and contribute to system strengthening at all levels.

1 Source: https://www.unicef.org/media/132051/file/2023-HAC-WCA.pdf

Generating evidence

UNICEF has developed various tools to generate evidence on the impacts of the climate crisis on children. UNICEF's flagship climate reports, including The Climate-Changed Child, Loss and Damage for Children and Falling short: addressing the climate finance gap for children[2], all contain chapters on education, including best practices and key recommendations. In West and Central Africa, the Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC) represents the main tool utilized by Country Offices to assess climate impacts on the right to education. CLACs conducted across the Sahel have clearly highlighted how drought, desertification, as well as floods and other climate calamities - the impacts of which are exacerbated by protracted conflicts and displacement, and vice versa - have left millions of children and young people out of school or at risk of dropping out. CLACs also outline response capacities and formulate sectoral recommendations, including for the education sector.

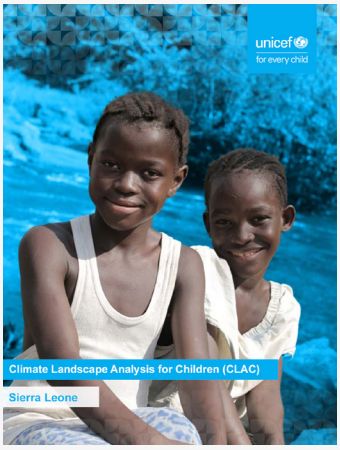
2 Published as part of a coalition, the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI).

What is a Climate Landscape Analysis for Children?

Since 2017, dozens of UNICEF Country Offices around the globe have conducted a Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC), as a key component of UNICEF efforts to "step up its work on climate, environment, sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction for children". (CLAC) represent an important milestone in the UNICEF programming cycle by facilitating the integration of climate change and more generally Climate, Environment, Energy and Disaster Risk Reduction (CEED) issues into UNICEF's strategies and interventions. A CLAC also contributes to improving the understanding of climate change impacts on children, and may be used in several other ways, including to support the mobilization of resources needed to strengthen child-responsive resilience programmes and climate action. Finally, an objective is to foster new partnerships between UNICEF and relevant stakeholders, beginning with children and young people, whose future is at stake.

CLACs conducted in West and Central Africa: Cabo Verde (2018), DRC (2019), Cameroon (2021), Central African Republic (2022), Guinea (2022), Sierra Leone (2022), Niger (2023), Nigeria (2023), Mauritania (2023), Chad (2024), and Mali (2024). Upcoming in 2024: Benin, Cabo Verde (updated), Central African Republic (updated), Congo, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, São Tomé and Principe, Senegal, and Togo.

Cover pages of various UNICEF reports.



Impact of climate change on education

Globally, the impact of climate-induced disasters on education, including damage to educational facilities and disruption to educational services, is escalating. Education systems in West and Central Africa have not been spared. On the contrary, the climate crisis has become a full-fledged reality in the region, with floods of a scale or frequency that had never been experienced, with a devastating impact on education. In addition, climate-induced disasters strongly affect the viability of rural livelihoods, adding financial stress to vulnerable families who may not be able to afford basic expenses, such as school-related costs for their children, and may decide to involve them in farm labour, pastoral activities or other forms of income-generating activities. Food and water insecurity resulting from disasters are other major threats to children's access to education, as household priorities shift, which may lead to school drop-out.

Children walking back from school, northern coast of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Examples of disaster impacts on education in West and Central Africa[3]

- In **Cameroon's** Far North, flash floods have repeatedly devastated school infrastructure and materials, adding to the existing conflict-related impacts on the education sector. While the region is flood prone and some degree of flooding occurs annually due to the Logone river overflowing, in 2020 the scale was more severe: 162,000 people were affected, in comparison to 80,000 in 2019.

Children in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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- In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, 82 per cent of respondents in areas affected by disasters in 2021 reported that schools did not have a sufficient number of covered latrines, and 96 per cent said that they did not have sufficient drinking water and hand-washing points. As of late May 2023, more than 443 people were confirmed to have died as a result of the massive flooding and mudslides in South Kivu. However, more than 2,536 people were still missing, including 12 teachers and more than 1,000 school-aged children.

- In **Guinea**, a survey conducted among school principals revealed that, apart from the Ebola epidemic that hit the country from 2013 to 2016, the main external risk to the education system over the period 2012-2017 had been flooding and strong winds, which affected 87% of the schools.

- In **Guinea-Bissau**, the southwest zone of the capital, located in low-lying areas, with an extensively built area and a high number of houses in precarious conditions, will be the most affected by coastal flooding. In recent years, some families were already forced to abandon their homes, while others continue to live with the risk, which also threatens public infrastructure, such as schools.

- In **Niger**, hit by historical floods in 2022, only 42% of classroom walls are built of durable materials; more than half (52%) are built out of red mud brick or straw, and therefore extremely precarious. With only one in five (19%) having a fence, very few schools are protected from high winds. Additionally, schools face the risk of additional damage related to their occupation by populations displaced by disasters.

- In **Nigeria**, disasters in 2021 interrupted schooling for 14 per cent of children, and 23 per cent of children living with disabilities, destroying schools and the roads to reach them. As well as affecting children's ability to get to school, flooding affects the ability of schools to be used for education purposes. During flooding events, such as the historic floods of 2022, displaced families commonly utilize school grounds and buildings as temporary camps, severely restricting their usage as learning spaces.

- In **Sierra Leone**, heavy rains and flooding make travel to school by students and teachers highly challenging, with many, instead, having to stay home. Waterlogging and saline intrusion gradually contaminate school water supplies and cause buildings to deteriorate, making them more susceptible to collapse. Poor drainage systems, particularly in schools located at lower elevations, result in wet and damp conditions, which lead to further damage to school infrastructure and furniture.

- In **Togo**, 96 schools were affected by the loss of their roofs due to strong winds in 2020 alone, adding to 4,526 affected houses and other buildings.

3 Main source: Climate Landscape Analyses for Children (CLACs) conducted by UNICEF Country Offices.

UNICEF in action in West and Central Africa

Globally, UNICEF has long demonstrated strong leadership on the climate and education agenda, through seminal research - from guidance on DRR in education[4] to calls for education systems to respond to the climate crisis,[5] transformative programming, and support to countries based on the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) 2022-2030, co-created by UNICEF and partners. UNICEF also supports the Greening Education Partnership and the COP 28 Declaration on the Common Agenda for Education and Climate Change. In West and Central Africa, UNICEF is playing an active role in the regional education coordination platforms, such as the Regional Coordination Group for SDG4 (RCG4) and the Regional Education in Emergencies Working Group, while as a part of the Transforming Education in Africa[6] agenda, UNICEF has initiated various events such as Thought Leadership Webinars in the context of the 2024 African Union Year of Education.

UNICEF Country Offices in West and Central Africa have already made significant strides in advancing the **GSI's** four pillars. Since 2020, success stories have included various green school initiatives, such as in Cote d'Ivoire (case study 1), the promising CRIBS project in Nigeria (case study 2), the solarization of climate-resilient WASH services in schools and many other projects. Brought together, these initiatives provide an inspiring view of what can be achieved in a relatively short time span, and with limited resources.

4 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in education: an imperative for education policymakers, UNICEF-UNESCO (2010). URL: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000213925,

5 It is getting hot: Call for education systems to respond to the climate crisis.pdf (unicef.org)

6 Transforming Education in Africa | UNICEF

Children in Djobel, Guinea-Bissau.

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Many school children in West and Central Africa are learning in challenging conditions.

UNICEF-SUPPORTED INTERVENTIONS BY GSI PILLAR

Foundation Pillar: Integrate sustainability and climate action into education strategies, policies and plans, including risk-informed analysis and budgeting.

- In **Chad**,
  UNICEF will advocate for the elaboration and adoption of new norms for the construction of climate-resilient schools. UNICEF will also support the development of sectoral adaptation plans for the education and WASH sectors.
- In **The Gambia**,
  UNICEF is working with the government to leverage climate finance to build the resilience of education, including by promoting inter-sectoral collaboration.
- In **Nigeria**,
  UNICEF supported the development of a Framework for Environmental and Climate Literacy Education for Children and Youth, with the aim to reach 950,000 learners and 37,000 teachers.

Pillar 1: Build climate resilient and greener school facilities.

- In **Benin**,
  UNICEF introduced climate-resilient WASH services in 7 schools and 15 health centres, as well as at the community level for the construction of latrines, including the construction of 1,482 improved latrines. Likewise, eight health centres and one school benefited from disaster-proof water works, and of an environmental management plan (tree plantation, waste management).
- In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**,
  UNICEF developed a modular sustainable school, which can be upgraded with locally available materials, in order to provide a more accurate response to the country's requirements for both adequate school infrastructure and rapid response capacity. The ministry of education approved this solution as an addition to the nationally applicable standards for school construction.
- In **Mauritania**,
  UNICEF supported over 70,000 students in 227 schools with access to climate-resilient WASH facilities and increased knowledge and skills on the importance of hygiene, with a focus on sustainability in terms of operation and maintenance. UNICEF also introduced menstrual hygiene management in the WASH in Schools domain with the construction of private, gender-separated sanitation and washing facilities for girls, providing basic materials to safely manage periods and organizing specific sensitization programmes for students and school personnel to break the taboo on menstruation.

- In **Nigeria**,
  UNICEF since 2014 has expanded solar-powered water supply infrastructure and climate smart WASH systems serving over 15,000 communities and 4,458 schools, health care facilities and public places.

- In **Senegal**,
  UNICEF will enhance the school environment by implementing reforestation programmes and establishing green areas to enhance air quality, reduce the impacts of heat waves, and install climate-resilient WASH infrastructure.

Pillar 2: Strengthen school safety and protect educational continuity.

- In **Gabon**,
  UNICEF works with the government to develop a Contingency Plan for the Education Sector, including the identification of high-risk areas; train education sector actors on emergency preparedness and response; and preposition contingency stocks. UNICEF will also produce tools to raise awareness on climate, environmental and disaster threats through children and youth participation.

Pillar 3: Promote disaster risk reduction and climate education and empower children and young people as agents of change.

- In **Burkina Faso**,
  UNICEF supports the government's programme Ecole de Qualité Amie des Enfants, through which school clubs named Deen Kan (« voice of children ») are created to implement student-led interventions in areas including sanitation and hygiene and environmental protection. As part of the same program, UNICEF supported the development of a training module covering eight themes, entitled ''Module de Formation à l'Adaptation aux Changements Climatiques à l'Intention des Enseignants et des Formateurs des Ecoles de Formation".

- In **Equatorial Guinea**,
  UNICEF will establish and support environmental clubs within communities and schools, while advocating with The Ministry of Education to integrate climate change and sustainability topics into formal curricula, based on the evidence gathered via U-Report.

School children during a consultation on climate change at the Youth Centre in Bata, Equatorial Guinea.

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CASE STUDY 1:

Green schools initiatives - the Ivoirian model

In video: Identifying a problem is easy. Finding a solution is not

The Green Schools initiative in Cote d'Ivoire was conceived by and for young people. Its vision is that all children should attend school in a healthy environment, with climate-resilient latrines, handwashing stations, clean drinking water, trees, and a vegetable garden. This supports their rights to good health, nutrition, and wellbeing, and creates respect and care for the environment. The initiative was also envisioned to support the empowerment of younger generations to become eco-citizens. In October 2019, UNICEF trained 65 young people from different backgrounds and regions and supported them to work together to identify issues of concern in their communities. One of these was that schools are sometimes too dirty or too hot for students to focus, learn, and reach their full potential. In reaction, 10 young people decided to advocate for cleaner and environmentally friendly schools, based on the slogan: 'For every child, a Green School'. Having a formal space to present their ideas – with decision-makers willing to listen and respond – led young people to translate the latter into a concept: the Green Schools initiative. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Water and Forests jointly committed to support the proposal and provided 1 million seedlings for planting in schools and surrounding communities.

UNICEF and partners embedded the initiative into an innovative programme to build low-cost, durable and easy to assemble plastic bricks schools, which can be constructed with just a hammer. In these schools, environmental volunteers encourage students to implement green practices. In Gonzagueville, for instance, students have collected plastic waste, installed handwashing stations, planted trees, and revived their school's environmental club. They then went to another school to support more clean-up and tree planting activities.

School greening activity in Cote d'Ivoire.

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Other green school initiatives

In video: Let's dance with Congolese school children (Democratic Republic of the Congo) | Yes, we planted Kano (Nigeria)

In **Cameroon**,
UNICEF and partners are planning to create a Green School model. This "dream" school will include all elements of making a school sustainable and climate resilient, from disaster-proof infrastructure to eco-activities tailored to each age group, such as environmental awareness and nutritious tree planting for children under 10 years; initiation to green skills and zero waste lifestyle for adolescents; and building a professional pathway in a green sector (for example, solar PV installation) for young people aged 15-18.

In **Mauritania**,
UNICEF plans to support the government's recently introduced green schools programme, which is critical especially in the context of Mauritania's vulnerable situation with regards to water scarcity, desertification and environmental degradation. UNICEF is working with multi-sectoral stakeholders on integrating the concept with UNICEF's well established 3-Star Approach for WASH in Schools. The envisaged 3-Green Stars approach would be a first globally, where Mauritania can provide learning on the shift towards more climate resilient programming in schools, with a focus on further integrating environmental learning in policy, guidelines and curricula.

In **Niger**,
UNICEF launched the Green Schools project with youth networks, together with the ministry of environment and the ministry of education, based on the slogan: 'One child, One youth, One tree'. Children and young people have since the launch started planting trees to fight climate change and protect the environment.

School children at a local school on flood-prone M'bamou island, Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo.

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CASE STUDY 2:

Integrated education, health and WASH programming: the case of UNICEF Nigeria's Climate-Resilient Infrastructure for Basic Services (CRIBS) project

In **Nigeria**, UNICEF is working with State governments to develop a scalable model of climate-resilient and sustainable health and education facilities, placing community ownership at the centre. The Climate-Resilient Infrastructure for Basic Services (CRIBS) project aims to:

- Upgrade schools as accessible shelters for all children and community members through the repair and rehabilitation of schools and community centres (e.g. rehabilitation of classrooms; replacement with steel trusses; installation of climate-friendly and inclusive/accessible doors and furniture; disability-inclusive emergency exits, ramps and handrails; solar panels; and replacement of blackboards with whiteboards).

- Make schools and community centres climate- and disaster-resilient, particularly against flood risks (e.g. a foundation that withstands flooding and erosion; stormwater management; and water-proof windows), heat waves (e.g. facades painted in light colours; ventilation/fans; and trees for shade), wind damage (e.g. installation of windbreakers and tree planting for windbreaking effects), and fire risks (e.g. fire alarm system, fire extinguishers and inclusive fire escape signage).

©UNICEF/Nigeria

School children washing their hands in northern Nigeria.

- Increase environmental sustainability by improving water-energy-food ecosystems (e.g. rainwater harvesting, school gardens, food storage; and waste management system with recycling centres and/or a composting site), with a focus on identifying opportunities for using locally viable alternative technologies (e.g. fluid mechanics and evaporative cooling).

- Enhance school/community centres safety following the minimum school safety standards (e.g. installation of perimeter fences, lockable gates; school safety and first aid kits; and the distribution of disability-inclusive hazard-awareness materials to school and community members), including the establishment of early warning systems.

- Ensure the provision and continuity of learning in emergencies by equipping schools and community centres with solar-powered radios and mats for remote learning ECD play.

- Rehabilitate WASH facilities in selected schools/learning centres, including upgrading (e.g. gender and disability-inclusive latrines, boreholes, taps and basins and menstrual health and hygiene facilities) and connecting the water supply infrastructure to solar motorized systems, where appropriate.

Youth voices on climate education

Youth passion for the climate education agenda is driving UNICEF's commitment to transform education in the face of the climate crisis. Since the Transforming Education Summit at the United Nations in 2022, youth movements across West and Central Africa have formed to call for a radical shift in the way education is used to equip children of today, as well as future generations, with the skills and talents they need to face the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. One of the objectives of UNICEF's Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2030 is to "EMPOWER every child through their life course with the developmental opportunities, education and skills to be a champion for the environment". Across West and Central Africa, UNICEF collaborates with children and young people as partners, with the aim to empower them to take action. This may be summarized into three overarching objectives:

- Transforming education for sustainability and climate action
- Creating green training and employment opportunities (e.g. Green Rising initiative)
- Fostering environmental stewardship

UNICEF COLLABORATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON CLIMATE EDUCATION

- At the Three Basin Summit organized in October 2023 in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, young people issued a manifesto, demanding the following:

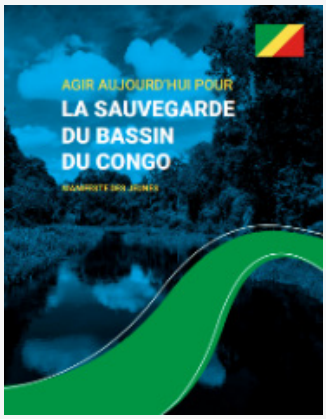
  WE, THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE CONGO, call on governments to work towards the adoption and application of legislation integrating environmental education into school curricula, from primary school; and strengthening the capacities of teachers in the field of environmental education.

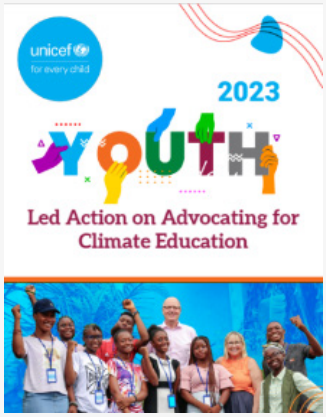
- In **Ghana**, the Youth Climate Council, with the support of UNICEF, is working to strengthen the entrepreneurial skills and capacities of young people as a contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The collaboration with a locally-led youth council is mobilizing youth voices in climate change advocacy at the national level by providing technical and financial support to new and existing youth-led advocacy initiatives.

- In **Nigeria**, the Youth Manifesto: Action on Climate Change and Education is based on responses of over 47,000 young people from across Nigeria to a U-Report poll on climate change and education, as well as inputs from 2,168 primary and secondary school-aged students in both formal and non-formal education and 289 young people.

  WHAT WE DEMAND: we call on decision-makers to ensure that every child and young person in Nigeria, regardless of the educational setting or educational level, participates in comprehensive climate change and environmental education.

- In **Sierra Leone**, UNICEF is collaborating with a group of youth advocates who published the advocacy brief Youth-led Action on Advocating for Climate Action in December 2023. Their aim is to increase awareness of the need to integrate climate smart education into the national curriculum in their country. For this, they conducted research engaging students, teachers, parents and community members. They will next receive extensive training and coaching on ways to translate climate-smart education into practical actions.





Cover pages of Youth Manifestos from the Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone.

Greening schools in West and Central Africa

Time to act!

The time to act, and place children from West and Central Africa in the climate change spotlight, is now! Since the Transforming Education Summit of 2022, a great momentum has taken shape, through the Greening Education Partnership that brings all stakeholders together, the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) revised in 2022 to better respond to the accelerating climate crisis and, most significantly, a clear shift by major multilateral funds that have converged and joined forces to address the child rights-education-climate nexus. In 2023, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) released the strategy Toward climate-smart education systems: A 7-dimension framework for action, the intent of which is to help governments articulate how they can better maximize the co-benefits of efforts to build climate resilience, advance environmental sustainability and achieve quality education for all. This was followed by the launch of a global program that is funding capacity-building activities for ministries of education in areas related to climate resilience: the Climate Smart Education Systems Initiative, introduced in West and Central Africa from 2024. The GPE is partnering with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Save the Children on the Building the Climate Resilience of Children and Communities through the Education Sector (BRACE) project, which is the first ever major investment by a multilateral climate fund in the education sector. Education Cannot Wait (ECW) also issued Right Here, Right Now: An Emergency Appeal to Support Education for Children and Adolescents Affected by Climate Hazards.

In West and Central Africa, UNICEF needs to develop strong partnerships to build resilience and accelerate climate action for children in and through education, with no delay. UNICEF has several comparative advantages. Firstly, we are on the ground before, during and after climate-induced shocks, to protect education from the impacts of climate change. Secondly, we have the capacity to achieve impact for children by sitting at the policy table in countries, generating evidence and scaling up country level programming, which can then be replicated regionally. Thirdly, UNICEF staff have extensive expertise and a network of trusted contacts and relationships, including by co-chairing local education groups at country level. Fourthly, partnerships with child and youth advocates are our most valued assets, and our compass to ensure that we are on the right track.

Teenagers relaxing on the beach during after-school hours, Santa Catarina, São Tomé and Príncipe.

Adolescent girl in Senegal.

First steps for UNICEF Country Offices in West and Central Africa to scale up their Climate & Education programming through the Green School Initiative (GSI)

UNICEF Country Offices in West and Central Africa are committed to promoting the **GSI** in a contextualized manner, in partnership with local, national and regional stakeholders. Some of the essential first steps to translate this commitment into action include:

- ☑ Document and prioritize best practices on building resilience and accelerating climate action for children *in* and *through* education at country, regional and global levels, including UNICEF experience in other regions (ex: ICAR-Dominica GCF concept note, initiated by UNICEF with a focus on education, nutrition and health).
- ☑ Conduct climate and multi-hazard assessments focused on the education sector.
- ☑ Advocate for countries to endorse the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) 2022-2030, and support stakeholders in implementing it, from national to school-level.
- ☑ Encourage countries to join the Greening Education Partnership.
- ☑ Mobilize resources to build the resilience of education systems, in partnership with multilateral education funds (GPE, ECW) and climate funds (Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund), as well as bilateral and private donors.
- ☑ Develop strategic partnerships for joint programming, including multi-country programmes with other UNICEF Country Offices in West and Central Africa, and external stakeholders such as UN agencies (ex: UNESCO) and relevant ministries (education, climate change, disaster management, etc.).
- ☑ Develop a country-level **GSI** framework and/or investment case based on the above.

Annex: Proposed list of interventions per pillar

This annex lists indicative interventions that can be implemented for each of the **GSI's** pillars, as per the UNICEF Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2030 (+ the associated Menu of Options for education) and UNICEF guidance on risk-informed education programming for resilience:

Foundation Pillar: Integrate sustainability and climate action into education strategies, policies and plans, including risk-informed analysis and budgeting

●	Advocate at local, national and intergovernmental levels to have sustainability and climate education recognized as an essential tool for addressing the planetary crisis.
●	Support governments in integrating sustainability and climate action, including disaster risk reduction, in education plans and budgets.
●	Establish, support and enforce policies requiring education system hazard preparedness, prevention, response and recovery at the national and sub-national levels.
●	Advocate for the adaptation of the school calendar for changing seasons, floods and agricultural patterns.
●	Assess and allocate appropriate financing for risk-informed education programming.
●	Establish accountability mechanisms at all levels to monitor and support risk-informed programming.
●	Develop and implement national strategies for disaster risk management and climate adaptation in education.
●	Connect climate change scientists with educators and education policy makers to ensure that education plans and policies are informed by climate change.
●	Enhance multistakeholder coordination including the ministries of education and environment to assess the investments and restructuring needed to advance climate and environmental education.
●	Fully integrate risk analysis and climate resilience into Education Management Information Systems (EMIS).

Pillar 1: Build climate resilient and greener school facilities

●	Advocate for inclusive green spaces on school grounds.
●	Develop climate- and disaster-resilient physical and virtual learning environments, including the provision of temporary learning spaces as needed.
●	Promote the reduction of schools' ecological footprint, including the monitoring of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, water and energy consumption and waste production.
●	Promote the resilience of new and existing educational facilities to ensure that they remain safe, effective and operational during and after disasters in order to provide life-saving and essential services.
●	Conduct multi-hazard, child-centred risk assessments focused on the education sector.
●	Establish, support and enforce building codes and retrofit policies and guidelines.

●	Select sites and construction materials based on information about risk.
●	Foster community ownership of school construction and maintenance.
●	Conduct independent assessments of structural (e.g. buildings), and non-structural (e.g. heating) safety systems of buildings.
●	Restore, reconstruct and retrofit learning spaces to make them hazard-resilient.
●	Map local impacts of climate change.
●	Map local adaptive strategies.
●	Build barriers, e.g. around schools, wells, bodies of water, and ditches.
●	Implement school-based environmental practices for water and sanitation, like harvesting rainwater.
●	Ensure that emergency shelters are stocked and accessible.

Pillar 2: Strengthen school safety and protect educational continuity

●	Improve community climate resilience by training young people to assess school safety in areas affected by or at risk of climate change.
●	Establish child-focused, multi-hazard early warning systems (EWS) within the educational system, while including a focus on mental health and psychosocial support.
●	Adopt operating procedures for hazards in formal and informal education settings, conduct regular simulation emergency drills and have risk reduction included in curriculums.
●	Enhance learning continuity measures and learning recovery following periods of educational disruption because of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.
●	Develop school emergency management plans and protocols.
●	Map school vulnerabilities and capacities to overcome climate-related hazards.
●	Provide first aid kits and train students and teachers in their use.
●	Promote anticipatory action in the education sector.
●	Provide alternative learning opportunities, non-formal education opportunities, and catch-up or accelerated education classes to address any breaks in education continuity.
●	Conduct community awareness programmes, working with students, educators and community members to establish community disaster preparedness and response committees.
●	Include hazard preparedness, prevention, response and recovery in teacher training and new staff orientation.
●	Train children to conduct school safety monitoring.
●	Encourage children and youth to carry out contingency planning with their families or guardians.
●	Consider developing and disseminating standard operating procedures for school-level disaster response and mitigation for all schools in climate risk areas.

Pillar 3: Promote disaster risk reduction and climate education and empower children and young people as agents of change

●	Mainstream climate change education in national curricula.
●	Equip teachers and early childhood development (ECD) service providers with the tools to teach climate change awareness and action.
●	Roll out approaches to climate change and resilience education to strengthen skills, knowledge and practices at school and community levels in relation to environmental hazards, climate change and other risks to children and the education system.
●	Support adolescents to develop the green skills they need to participate in the green economy, including STEM digital skills for girls.
●	Expand access to digital and edutainment platforms and resources to ensure that accurate, age-appropriate and accessible information is widely available on climate action and environmental preservation.
●	Support school clubs on climate action and environmental preservation.
●	Create opportunities for out-of-school children and young people to engage in green skills sectors such as renewable energy, green construction, and sustainable agriculture.
●	Advocate for the integration of climate change, disaster risk reduction, and environmental education into formal and non-formal curriculum.
●	Integrate climate change across multiple subjects to address not only the science, but also the values, attitudes and skills needed to address it.
●	Mobilize environmental clubs to raise the awareness of children and youth on climate change and adaptive strategies.
●	Encourage environmental stewardship projects.
●	Establish vocational training programmes for new industries in areas where old industries are destroyed by climate change.
●	Consider working with national and local education departments to develop materials and teacher trainings to educate children on the relationship between climate change and unsustainable land use and flooding, for example.
●	Promote and support hands-on learning approaches and extra-curricular activities proposed by various government entities and NGOs, as essential components of climate and environmental education.
●	Assess possible changes to the content and structure of pre-service and in-service teacher education, and other requirements to support teachers towards integrating climate change and environmental sustainability into their teaching.
●	Re-orient and build coherence and synergies between second chance education and training programmes, in order to enhance their contribution to economic sectors most relevant to climate action and environmental sustainability.
●	Identify targeted measures to respond to the educational, training and other needs of groups that may be left out of the country's climate and environmental agenda.
●	Equip young people with skills for the green economy.

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