Ollscoil na Gaillimhe University of Galway

World Vision

Methodological Note: Updated Hungry Future Index 2026

1. Purpose and scope

The updated Hungry Futures Index 2.0 (HFI) assesses the extent to which countries recognise and respond to child hunger, malnutrition and food (in)security within national climate policy and action. Focusing on documents submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the analysis examines countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and, where available, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), identifying the extent to which these documents recognise hunger and nutrition as climate-related concerns, address the needs of children and young people, provide opportunities for participation, and commit to concrete action.

NDCs are central instruments of the Paris Agreement. Under Article 4, Parties communicate successive national contributions setting out their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. NDCs are documents, expected to plan and represent progression over time for each submitting nation. NAPs, established under the UNFCCC to address countries' medium and long term adaptation needs, provide a complementary framework for identifying vulnerabilities and developing strategies to strengthen adaptive capacity and resilience. Unlike NDCs, NAPs are not mandatory. Consequently, while all 83 parties included in this analysis (82 countries and the European Union) had submitted an NDC, only 38 (46%) had submitted a NAP to the UNFCCC at the time of analysis completion (August 5th 2026).

Many NDCs nevertheless include dedicated sections or commitments relating to climate adaptation. The growing number of countries developing and submitting standalone NAPs can therefore be seen as an additional indication of increasing policy attention to the need to anticipate, prepare for and respond to the impacts of a changing climate. The analysis therefore examines both the recognition of issues and, importantly, the extent to which this recognition is translated into actionable commitments. This distinction is central to the Hungry Futures Index, which is intended to assess not simply whether hunger, food security and malnutrition are mentioned in climate plans, but whether countries demonstrate meaningful policy attention and commitment to addressing them particularly in the context of children's lives.

2. Data sources and analytical process

A systematic desktop analysis was undertaken of the NDCs and NAPs submitted to the UNFCCC by the countries and regional bloc included in the analysis (total 83). These documents formed the primary sources for the analysis, resulting in a dataset of 180 climate policy documents: 84 originally submitted NDCs, 58 updated NDCs and 38 NAPs. Where both an NDC and a NAP were available for a country, both documents were reviewed, recognising that they address complementary aspects of national climate policy. The original NDCs were also retained and reviewed alongside updated NDCs because the revised analytical framework incorporated additional/reprioritised search terms and categories, including a separate search for food security and food insecurity and expanded terminology relating to children and young people (see rational for this below). This ensured that the revised framework was applied consistently across the full dataset and enabled comparison of findings across the original and updated policy documents.

Before undertaking the full analysis, a five-country case study exercise was conducted drawing on Brazil, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Mozambique and Timor-Leste. The cases were selected purposively from countries with both an NDC and NAP, providing variation across geographical regions and national contexts while ensuring that both types of policy document could be examined together. The five cases provided a sufficiently broad sample to test the analytical framework across different policy and

geographical contexts, while remaining manageable for detailed, iterative review during the methodological development stage. The case studies were not intended to be geographically representative; rather, they served as a structured scoping exercise to assess the availability and consistency of relevant information, identify limitations and differences in how issues were presented across source documents, refine search terms and categories, and establish a consistent approach to coding and scoring before the framework was applied across the full dataset.

The case study exercise was discussed collaboratively with World Vision representatives. The research team reviewed the existing World Vision scoring framework and subsequently workshopped the definitions, keyword searches and analytical categories to be applied across the full and updated dataset. This process was contextualised by the original HFI framework and was extended and strengthened by augmenting a focus on food security and the relationship between hunger, children and climate action. To capture the different ways in which food-related concerns are framed in national climate policies, the updated analysis departs from the initial HFIby distinguishing between two sets of search terms. Hunger and associated terms (see relevant section below), were searched together to identify explicit references to nutritional deprivation and its impacts, while food security and food insecurity were searched separately to capture broader references to the availability, access, stability and affordability of food. This methodological refinement strengthens and extends the original analysis by allowing us to distinguish between direct recognition of hunger and malnutrition and wider attention to the structural and systemic dimensions of food security. It therefore provides a more nuanced picture of how food-related concerns are represented in national climate policies, while maintaining continuity with the original HFI.

3. Analytical framework and keyword searches

The analysis used structured keyword searches to identify relevant content within each NDC and NAP. Keyword searches provided a systematic means of locating potentially relevant passages within lengthy national policy documents; identified passages were subsequently reviewed in context and coded according to the agreed scoring framework. The approach therefore combined systematic document searching with qualitative interpretation, rather than treating the presence of a keyword alone as evidence of policy commitment.

Four broad analytical categories were incorporated into the analysis:

- **Hunger and malnutrition**

Searches captured references to hunger and related forms of undernutrition and malnutrition, including hunger, child hunger, nourishment, undernourishment, starvation, stunting, wasting, malnutrition, nutrition, underweight, overweight, obesity, micronutrient deficiencies and nutrients.

The analysis recognised that there is no single universally accepted definition of hunger. UNICEF describes hunger as an uncomfortable or painful sensation resulting from insufficient dietary energy and associates the term with chronic undernourishment. Malnutrition is broader, encompassing undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity. The search strategy therefore deliberately used a broad range of related terms to capture the different ways in which hunger and nutrition may be conceptualised within national climate plans.

- **Food security and food insecurity**

The updated analysis separates references to food security and food insecurity from references to hunger and associated terms such as malnutrition (as described above). Food security was included in the original HFI as a proxy for policy attention to hunger, recognising that hunger is not consistently

used as a formal policy term and that national climate policies more commonly frame related concerns through the language of food security and food insecurity. For this update, food security and food insecurity were therefore parsed out as a distinct analytical category rather than being treated as part of the hunger search. This refinement enables the analysis to distinguish between explicit references to hunger and malnutrition and broader policy attention to the conditions that shape food security, including food production, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, food systems, supply chains and access to food. It thus builds on the original HFI while providing greater analytical precision about how food-related concerns are represented in national climate policies. The inclusion of this category also enabled the policy analysis to be considered alongside population-level food insecurity data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (included as a reference point on the HFI Scorecard).

- **Children and young people**

Searches for child/children, youth, young people/person, boy and girl were used to identify references to children and young people, including their health, wellbeing, vulnerability and access to food and nutrition.

This provided an additional layer of analysis to determine whether hunger, malnutrition and food security were considered specifically in relation to children rather than the general population only.

- **Participation**

Searches for participation, child participation, youth participation, stakeholder and engagement identified references to the involvement of children and young people in climate policy processes. This included their participation in the development, implementation and monitoring of NDCs and NAPs.

- **Commitment to action**

The final category examined whether recognition of hunger, malnutrition, food security and participation was accompanied by evidence of action and implementation. Searches included climate finance, targets, indicators, budget, budgetary allocations, billion, millions and agriculture. These terms were used to identify commitments, financing, targets, indicators and other mechanisms through which policy intentions could be translated into action. It is important to note that this category is weighted differently to other categories, with double weighting applied (i.e. 0 = No Action Commitment; 2 = Somewhat of an Action Commitment; 4 = Yes with Commitment)

4. Analysis of non-English documents

The keyword searches were applied consistently across English-language documents and translated versions of non-English documents. The approach generated a structured dataset for subsequent scoring and comparison across countries.

The 180 document dataset included documents in several languages, including Spanish, French, Chinese and Arabic. Where an English-language version was available through the UNFCCC, this was used. For documents without an accessible English version, online translation using Google Translate was employed.

Where documents were too large to translate directly, they were converted into editable text and non-essential material (e.g. images), was removed before translation. This enabled systematic searching and analysis while retaining the substantive policy content.

The use of online translation represents a methodological limitation, particularly where terminology relating to hunger, nutrition, food security or children's rights may have nuanced meanings. The

translated documents were therefore treated as analytical sources rather than as authoritative translations. In a small number of instances we referred these documents to World Vision staff and requested they complete the searches on each document separately to ensure quality, consistency and rigor in approach.

5. Scoring framework

The scoring framework was designed to distinguish between recognition of an issue and commitment to action. In most (though not all) instances, the analysis incorporated a 0–2 scale for most variables; this reflects the initial World Vision coding framework.

For hunger, malnutrition and food security:

- **0 – No recognition:** the issue is not identified within the NDC or NAP in relation to climate change.
- **1 – Sub-issue:** the issue is recognised but addressed primarily within a broader policy area, such as agriculture, poverty reduction or social protection.
- **2 – Key issue:** the issue is explicitly identified as an important component of the country's climate strategy.

This same principle was applied to malnutrition and the additional food security category and all related keyword searches.

A separate score assessed commitment to action. Here, greater weight was assigned to evidence of specific and implementable commitments:

- **0 – No action:** no meaningful action identified.
- **2 – Some action:** action is identified but lacks clear implementation mechanisms or sufficient detail.
- **4 – Strong action:** commitments are specific and supported by mechanisms such as budgets or climate finance, timelines, measurable targets, indicators or monitoring arrangements.

The higher weighting for strong action reflects the central purpose of the Index: to value and distinguish meaningful policy action rather than simply the presence of policy language.

Child and youth participation was also scored on a 0–2 scale:

- **0 – No:** no evidence of child or youth participation.
- **1 – Somewhat:** the importance of participation is acknowledged, but there is limited evidence of mechanisms or actual engagement.
- **2 – Yes:** children or young people are actively involved in the development, implementation or monitoring of climate policy, with documented mechanisms for participation.

6. Child sensitivity

The analysis also incorporates UNICEF's established child-sensitivity assessment. UNICEF assessed NDCs against a set of indicators (e.g. holistic or multisectoral indicators; Reference indicators or inclusive indicators) examining the extent to which climate policies recognise and respond to children's specific needs, vulnerabilities and rights. The framework categorises countries as Category A (highly child-sensitive), Category B (moderately child-sensitive) or Category C (limited or no child sensitivity).

For the purposes of the HFI, these categories were converted to numerical values of 0–2 to enable their integration into the overall scoring framework. This conversion did not alter UNICEF's underlying assessment or weighting; it provided a consistent numerical format for combining the child-sensitivity measure with the HFI indicators.

The inclusion and updating of the child-sensitivity measure strengthens the analysis by enabling the Index to assess not only whether hunger and food security are recognised, but whether national climate policies demonstrate a broader consideration of children's needs and rights.

7. Incorporating FAO food (in)security data

Policy commitments were considered alongside population-level data on food insecurity from the FAO. The FAO indicator used examined the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the total population, expressed as a percentage and reported as a three-year average. The dataset used in the drafted excel file incorporates the most recent available figures for 2023–2024.

These data provide contextual information on the scale of food insecurity within each country and complement, rather than replace, the assessment of national climate policy. A country may have a high prevalence of food insecurity but relatively strong climate-policy commitments, or relatively low prevalence but limited policy action. Considering the two dimensions together allows the Index to distinguish between need and policy response.

Some countries had missing, suppressed or estimated values in the FAO dataset. These cases were retained and identified in the underlying dataset rather than excluded automatically, ensuring transparency regarding the availability and quality of the supporting evidence.

8. Calculating the Report Card

The Draft Report Card score was calculated by aggregating the individual frequency scores, with a maximum possible score of 23. Each country's total score was then converted to a percentage of the maximum possible score to facilitate comparison across countries. For reporting purposes, scores were grouped into five Draft Report Card classification bands: A = 85–100%; B = 70–84%; C = 60–69%; D = 40–59%; and F = 0–39%. These bands provide a transparent and consistent means of grouping scores and comparing results across countries; they are classifications developed for the Report Card rather than an external grading standard and should not be interpreted as measures of policy quality, effectiveness or implementation. Initial examination of the draft classifications identifies a significant number of countries in the F band, indicating limited recognition of, and/or commitments relating to, child hunger, malnutrition and food security within their national climate plans (both NDCs and NAPs where applicable). These results are retained in the Report Card to make visible the scale of the policy gap identified through the analysis and the extent to which stronger policy recognition and action is needed.

Table 1 Summary of Report Card Classification and Interpretation

Report Card classification	Score range	Interpretation
A	**85–100%**	Very high level of recognition/commitment
B	**70–84%**	High level of recognition/commitment
C	**60–69%**	Moderate level of recognition/commitment
D	**40–59%**	Limited level of recognition/commitment

F	**0–39%**	Very limited level of recognition/commitment

9. Interpreting national policy language

An important consideration when interpreting the findings is the nature and purpose of NDCs and NAPs as national policy and planning documents rather than independent assessments of population-level need or deprivation. Countries are unlikely to describe their own populations using highly negative or politically sensitive terms such as 'starvation' or severe hunger within these documents. Instead, challenges may be expressed through policy-oriented language such as food security, nutrition security, vulnerability, food systems, agricultural resilience, livelihoods or access to food. This is particularly relevant in the context of climate adaptation, where food production and nutrition security are recognised as established areas of adaptation planning.

Consequently, the absence of explicit references to 'hunger' or 'child hunger' should not be interpreted as evidence that hunger or food insecurity is absent within a country. Conversely, the presence of terms such as food security or nutrition does not necessarily demonstrate that a country is experiencing high levels of hunger or that effective action is being implemented. The Report Card therefore assesses the extent to which hunger, food security and related issues are recognised and addressed within national climate policy, rather than attempting to measure the actual prevalence of hunger. The inclusion of independent food insecurity data from the FAO provides an important complementary measure of population-level conditions and helps distinguish between the scale of need and the extent of policy response.

This distinction is particularly important when interpreting Report Card scores. A lower score may indicate that hunger and food insecurity receive limited attention within national climate plans, but it should not be interpreted as evidence that a country has low levels of food insecurity. Similarly, a higher score reflects stronger policy recognition and commitment; it does not, in itself, demonstrate successful implementation or improved nutritional outcomes. The Report Card should therefore be understood primarily as an assessment of national climate-policy attention and action on child hunger and food security, rather than as a direct ranking of countries according to levels of hunger.

10. Quality assurance and limitations

Several measures were used to strengthen consistency and reliability across the data set. The initial five-country case study exercise provided an opportunity to test and refine the analytical framework before applying it across all 83 entities (82 countries and the European Union). The research team also undertook a collaborative review of keyword definitions, categories and scoring criteria before commencing the full analysis. Identified text was reviewed in context rather than being scored solely on the basis of keyword occurrence.

Nevertheless, document-based analysis has inherent limitations. NDCs and NAPs vary considerably in length, structure, terminology, level of detail and date of publication. The absence of a keyword or explicit reference should therefore not necessarily be interpreted as evidence that a country has no activity relating to hunger or food security; relevant action may be described using different terminology or contained in other national policy and strategy documents. Similarly, the presence of a commitment in an NDC or NAP does not demonstrate that the commitment has subsequently been implemented.

The analysis of non-English documents introduces an additional potential source of interpretation error because online translation may not capture all linguistic or contextual nuances. Finally, the

assessment reflects the content of the documents available at the time of analysis and should therefore be understood as an assessment of national policy commitments, rather than a direct measure of implementation or outcomes.

11. Overall approach

Taken together, the methodology provides a structured assessment of how national climate plans recognise and respond to hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, with particular attention to children and young people. By combining systematic document analysis, child-sensitivity measures and population-level food insecurity data, the HFI moves beyond assessing whether hunger is mentioned in national climate policy. It examines whether countries recognise the issue, identify children as affected populations, involve children and young people, and, most importantly, commit resources, targets and mechanisms to meaningful action.

The resulting scores provide a basis for comparison across the 83 entities and identify areas in which national climate policy could be strengthened to better address hunger and nutrition as part of climate adaptation and resilience.

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