World Vision

PROTECTING CHILDREN'S FUTURES IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Hunger, Resilience and Wellbeing in Small Island Developing States







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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change is increasingly threatening the wellbeing of children across Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea (PNG)[1]. These countries are among the most climate-vulnerable in the world despite contributing only a negligible share of global greenhouse gas emissions. Home to more than 13 million people, including over 8 million children and young people, they face the dual challenge of persistent food and nutrition insecurity and growing exposure to climate-related hazards.

Drawing on the experiences of nearly 1,000 children and young people across the four countries, this research shows that climate change is already affecting children's daily lives through its impacts on food systems, livelihoods, health, education and community resilience. In Timor-Leste, 98.7% of respondents reported that climate change affects their lives, while 91.1% of children and young people in Vanuatu reported the same.



[1] All four countries are recognised as Small Island Developing States (SIDS). While Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea are classified within the Pacific SIDS grouping, Timor-Leste is classified within the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) SIDS grouping. Timor-Leste was included in this policy brief due to its geographic proximity to the Pacific region, shared climate and food security challenges, and relevance to the regional analysis.

Our conversations with children reveal five key messages.



First, climate change is increasing child hunger and food insecurity. Children reported declining harvests, damaged food gardens and reduced access to nutritious food. In Timor-Leste, 42% of children reported reduced access to food due to climate change, while almost half reported reduced food availability.



Second, climate change is weakening livelihoods and the natural resources that sustain communities. Children described declining agricultural productivity, reduced fish catches, drying water sources and environmental degradation affecting both household incomes and food production.



Third, climate change is affecting children's health, education and wellbeing. Children reported water shortages, illness and disruptions to education. In Timor-Leste, 56% of children reported climate-related water shortages, while nearly one-quarter reported health impacts such as dehydration and malnutrition and disruptions to services.



Fourth, climate change is threatening the land, ecosystems and natural resources on which children's futures depend. Children observed coastal erosion, flooding, changing coastlines and increasing pressure on productive land and natural resources, raising concerns about their communities' ability to grow food, maintain livelihoods and thrive in the future.



Fifth, children are informed actors and important partners in climate action. Children demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of climate change and proposed practical solutions, including ecosystem restoration, climate-smart agriculture, disaster preparedness and stronger environmental protection. They consistently called for their voices to be included in decisions affecting their futures.

The research highlights that climate change is not experienced by children as an isolated environmental issue. Rather, it affects the food systems, water sources, services, ecosystems and livelihoods that sustain daily life. It also exposes a profound climate justice challenge: children in these countries have contributed least to the climate crisis yet are already experiencing some of its most severe impacts on their food security, wellbeing and future opportunities.

Governments, development partners, civil society organisations and the international community must place children's food security, nutrition, wellbeing and rights at the centre of climate action. This includes investing in climate-resilient food systems, protecting ecosystems, strengthening essential services, supporting child wellbeing, enabling meaningful child participation, increasing climate finance and delivering ambitious global action to keep the 1.5°C goal within reach.

The voices captured through this research offer both a warning and a call to action. They highlight the urgent need to strengthen resilience while recognising children not only as those most affected by climate change, but also as important partners in shaping solutions for a more sustainable and just future.

1. INTRODUCTION

Small Island Developing States are among the countries facing the greatest challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2), which commits the international community to ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition by 2030. Across many SIDS, persistent food insecurity, undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies coexist with rising rates of overweight and obesity, creating a "triple burden" of malnutrition. Recent research found that 94% of SIDS fail to meet minimum food group requirements and none achieve recommended levels of essential micronutrients, highlighting the scale of nutritional vulnerability across these countries[2]. These findings highlight the structural food system challenges already facing many SIDS and underscore how climate change is compounding existing vulnerabilities. Children are particularly affected, with stunting rates reaching almost half of all children under five in some Pacific countries. Climate change is compounding these challenges, placing additional pressure on food systems, livelihoods and access to essential services.

*"Continuous rainy seasons that result in flooding always wash away our gardens, leaving us with no food. We experience hunger and related health issues."**

[2] Atzori, D., Sonneveld, B.G.J.S., Alfarra, A. and Merbis, M.D., 2024. Nutrition fragility in isolation: Food insecurity in Small Island Developing States. Food Security, 16(2), pp. 437–453



* All child quotations in speech bubbles throughout this document are direct quotes gathered through consultations with children across the four countries as part of this research.

"Climate change affects our lives by destroying our food gardens during the rainy season and contributing to food shortages in our gardens."

SIDS are among the most vulnerable regions in the world to the impacts of climate change. Despite contributing less than one per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, Small Island Developing States are among those experiencing some of the most severe consequences of climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)[3] identifies small islands as particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, with food security, water security, livelihoods, infrastructure, ecosystems and human wellbeing already being affected by climate-related hazards, with risks projected to increase as temperatures rise. Small islands are experiencing sea-level rise, coastal erosion, changing rainfall patterns, tropical cyclones, flooding, droughts and ecosystem degradation, placing increasing pressure on communities and development outcomes.

Hunger and climate change are deeply interconnected. Climate change affects food security through multiple pathways. Floods, droughts, changing rainfall patterns and rising temperatures can damage crops, food gardens and fisheries, reducing the availability of food. Climate shocks can also disrupt livelihoods, household incomes and local markets, making it more difficult for families to access nutritious diets. Water scarcity, environmental degradation and declining agricultural productivity further reduce the stability and quality of food supplies. For communities that depend heavily on subsistence agriculture, coastal fisheries and natural resources, these impacts can have significant consequences for children's nutrition, increasing the risks of hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.

"They affect our lives by causing a shortage of food from our gardens. Flooding can also lead to the loss of property and even lives."

"It affects people's lives and the environment by destroying food and water sources, gardens, and properties, resulting in hunger and homelessness."

This policy brief focuses on four climate-vulnerable Small Island Developing States: Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea. Together, they are home to more than 13 million people, including over 8 million children and young people. Despite differences in geography and scale, all four face significant food security, nutrition and climate vulnerability challenges. Climate change is increasingly threatening the ecosystems and livelihoods that underpin their food production, food security and community resilience.

To better understand these challenges from the perspective of those most affected, World Vision consulted nearly 1,000 children and young people across the four countries. The urgency of the issue is reflected in children's own experiences: 98.7% of respondents in Timor-Leste and 91.1% in Vanuatu reported that climate change affects

[3] IPCC (2022) Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Chapter 15: Small Islands. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

their lives. Their testimonies reveal that climate change is not experienced as an abstract environmental issue, but through its impacts on food, water, health, livelihoods, education and community resilience. This policy brief examines these impacts and highlights children's priorities for building a more food-secure and climate-resilient future.

> *"In our community, the changes we have observed mainly include sea level rise, which impacts our local food supply and coastal areas."*

Study Approach

This policy brief draws on primary and secondary data to examine the impacts of climate change on hunger and children's wellbeing across Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea.

World Vision consulted with nearly 1,000 children (aged 6-17 years) and young people (aged 18-25 years) across the four countries. Most participants were engaged through schools, churches and World Vision-supported IMPACT clubs. The research adopted a child-centred approach that enabled children and young people to share their experiences, concerns and solutions in locally appropriate ways. The findings presented in this policy brief reflect the experiences, perceptions and priorities shared by participating children and young people across diverse island contexts.

A mixed-methods approach was used, allowing country teams to adapt data collection methods to local contexts. In Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, the research primarily utilised qualitative methods, including school-based and community-based focus group discussions. In Timor-Leste and Vanuatu, quantitative surveys were used to reach larger numbers of children and young people through existing programme activities. While data collection approaches differed between countries, together these methods provide a rich and complementary picture of children's experiences of climate change.

In addition to surveys and group discussions, more than 100 media records were collected, including voice recordings, videos, drawings, photographs and written responses, providing further insight into children's experiences of climate change and food insecurity.

The primary research was complemented by key informant interviews and focus group discussions with World Vision technical specialists, programme staff and other subject matter experts. Additional research support was provided through collaboration with postgraduate researchers from the University of Galway.

Quantitative data were collected using ODK-based digital survey tools and analysed using R statistical software. Qualitative data were analysed using an inductive approach to identify recurring issues, experiences and priorities raised by children and young people. Findings from across the four countries were reviewed and validated through a cross-country workshop, where recommendations were jointly developed and refined.

> *"If climate change continues to affect us, it will disrupt our lives and impact our livelihood, especially gardening, which could result in hunger."*

2. CLIMATE AND HUNGER: AN ISLAND PERSPECTIVE



The region is home to some of the world's most geographically dispersed and climate-vulnerable populations. This research focuses on Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea, four countries that together span approximately 518,849 square kilometres and comprise around 1,678 islands scattered across the Pacific and eastern Indonesian seas. While these countries differ in scale, geography and development trajectories, they share many common challenges: dispersed populations, high dependence on natural resources, limited infrastructure and increasing exposure to climate-related hazards. More than 80% of people across the four countries live in rural areas, often in remote communities where livelihoods depend directly on agriculture, fisheries and healthy ecosystems, making communities particularly vulnerable to environmental and climate shocks.

"Before, when we planted crops, our harvests were very good. But now, our crops are not producing as much as before."

Together, the four countries are home to approximately 13.4 million people. Children account for an exceptionally large share of the population, representing approximately 43–50% of all inhabitants across the four countries. This youthful demographic profile means that climate change, hunger and malnutrition have significant implications for current and future development.

"Many children get sick because our gardens do not produce enough for children to eat a healthy meal."

Despite significant progress in development outcomes, hunger and malnutrition remain persistent challenges across the region. Rates of chronic undernutrition are among the highest in the Asia-Pacific region. Nearly one in two children under five in Timor-Leste (46.7%) and more than four in ten children in Papua New Guinea (43.7%) are stunted, reflecting long-term nutritional deprivation during critical periods of growth and development. Stunting rates also remain high in Solomon Islands (31.7%) and Vanuatu (28.9%). At the same time, wasting remains a significant concern across the region, while anaemia affects almost one-third of women of reproductive age across all four countries. These indicators highlight not only the scale of nutritional challenges but also the vulnerability of food systems on which children depend.

Food insecurity in these countries is driven by a combination of structural, geographic and environmental factors. Many families rely on smallholder agriculture, subsistence food production, coastal fisheries and forest resources for both food and income. Geographic isolation, weak transport networks and fragmented domestic markets can make nutritious foods difficult to access, particularly in rural and outer-island communities. As diets increasingly shift towards imported and processed foods, many countries are experiencing a double burden of malnutrition characterised by persistent undernutrition alongside rising risks of obesity and diet-related diseases.

"Many children get sick because our gardens do not produce enough for children to eat a healthy meal."

Food systems in many Small Island Developing States are highly exposed to external shocks[4]. Limited arable land, geographic isolation, dependence on food imports and high transport costs can affect the availability and affordability of nutritious foods. These structural vulnerabilities mean that disruptions caused by climate hazards can have rapid impacts on household food security and nutrition. Many Pacific Island countries rely heavily on imported foods, leaving households vulnerable to fluctuations in global food prices and disruptions to international supply chains, as demonstrated during recent global food and fuel price shocks[5].

Climate change is magnifying each of these challenges. Although Small Island Developing States contribute only a negligible share of global greenhouse gas emissions, they are among the regions most exposed to climate-related risks. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, increasingly severe tropical cyclones, flooding, droughts, sea-level rise and saltwater intrusion are already affecting food production systems, water supplies, infrastructure and livelihoods across the region. These impacts are not isolated environmental events; they directly influence the availability, accessibility and affordability of food, increasing the risk of hunger and malnutrition among vulnerable populations.

[4] Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2023. Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and trends. Bangkok: FAO

[5] Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2022. Pacific island countries: Impact of rising costs of food, feed, fuel, fertilizer and finance – Impact assessment. Rome: FAO.

The consequences of climate change differ across the four countries but are universally significant. In Solomon Islands, sea-level rise, coastal erosion and extreme weather events are damaging coastal communities and threatening food production systems. In Vanuatu, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, frequent cyclones, flooding and rising sea levels regularly destroy crops, infrastructure and livelihoods. In Timor-Leste, changing rainfall patterns, drought and soil erosion are affecting agricultural productivity and increasing water stress in rural communities. In Papua New Guinea, climate change is contributing to declining crop yields, ecosystem degradation, flooding and saltwater intrusion into freshwater systems. Across all four countries, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and pressure on natural resources are reducing the capacity of ecosystems to support livelihoods and buffer communities against climate shocks.

Like many of the countries most affected by climate change, these four countries have contributed little to the problem yet face some of its most severe consequences. The social, economic and environmental costs of climate-related disasters place increasing pressure on governments and communities, diverting scarce resources away from long-term investment in health, education, infrastructure and development. Repeated climate shocks not only create immediate humanitarian needs, but they also slow progress towards food security, nutrition and sustainable development.

Climate change is not the sole driver of hunger and food insecurity in Pacific Island countries. Agricultural productivity is also shaped by factors such as land use, soil quality and farming practices. Many Pacific soils are naturally shallow, highly weathered and vulnerable to nutrient loss through heavy rainfall and erosion. In some areas, soils are also highly free-draining, making it difficult to retain moisture and nutrients necessary for crop production.

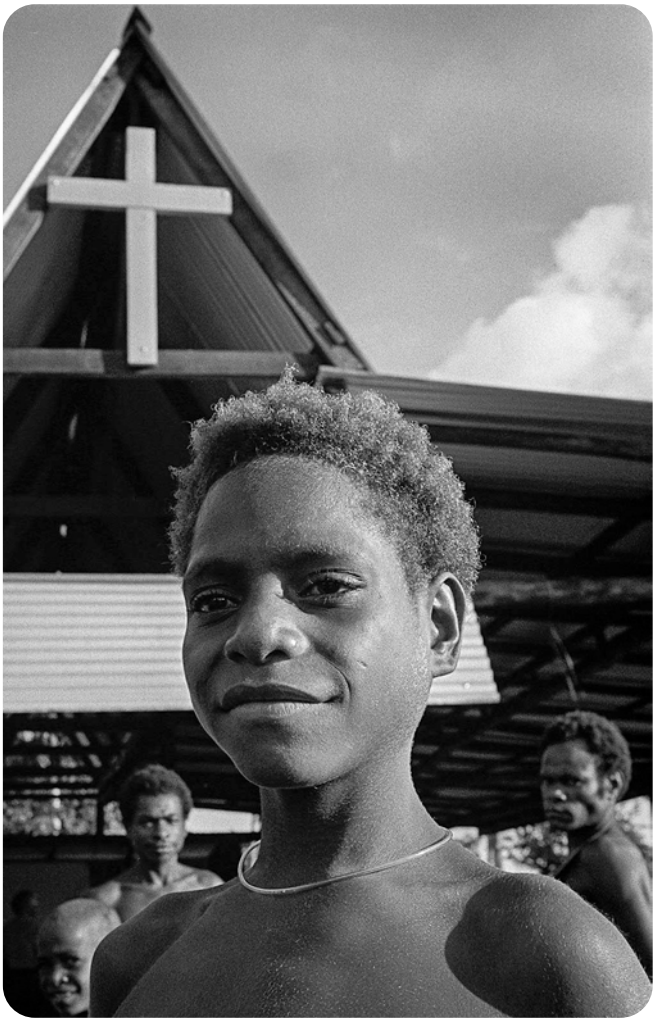
"We see changes such as flooding, sea level rise, and soil erosion."



"There are fewer trees, fewer birds, and you can tell climate change is happening."

Traditional shifting cultivation systems have historically allowed soil fertility to recover through extended fallow periods. However, population growth, pressure on available land, changing land use patterns and the loss of productive land due to sea-level rise and extreme weather events are shortening these recovery cycles. In some locations, fallow periods that traditionally lasted 10 to 15 years have been reduced to less than a year, limiting the ability of soils to regenerate and contributing to declining agricultural productivity.

Evidence from soil assessments conducted by World Vision in Marau Sound and the Guadalcanal Weather Coast in Solomon Islands found widespread nutrient deficiencies, particularly in phosphorus and potassium, while nitrogen availability and organic matter varied considerably between sites. Some sloping and ridge-top gardens were found to be particularly depleted. As a result, many agricultural systems are already under pressure before the impacts of climate change are fully considered.



Climate change compounds these challenges through changing rainfall patterns, droughts, flooding, cyclones, erosion, sea-level rise and salinisation. Together, these pressures are making it increasingly difficult for food-production systems to recover, maintain soil fertility and sustain reliable crop yields.

For countries where livelihoods, food systems and economies remain closely linked to environmental conditions, climate change is becoming a defining development challenge. Addressing hunger, malnutrition and poverty in the SIDS will therefore require not only stronger food systems and social services, but also greater resilience to the growing impacts of climate change.

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1. Climate change is increasing child hunger and food insecurity

Children across the four countries consistently identified climate change as a growing threat to food security and nutrition. They described how droughts, floods, cyclones, rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns are damaging food gardens, reducing harvests and affecting the availability of food within households and communities. For many children, these changes are already limiting access to the nutritious foods needed for healthy growth and development.

Food gardens featured prominently in children's accounts of climate change. Across the region, gardens are not only a source of food but also a foundation of household resilience. Children repeatedly described how flooding, drought and changing weather patterns were destroying crops and reducing yields, leaving families with less food to eat and fewer options during times of hardship.

These experiences are reflected in the survey findings. In Timor-Leste, 42% of children reported reduced access to food as a result of climate change, while almost half reported reduced food availability. In Vanuatu, 67% of children identified gardens as the place most affected by climate change.

For many families, climate change is making it increasingly difficult to produce and access nutritious food. Protecting children's food security will require greater investment in climate-resilient food systems, local agricultural production and community-based adaptation measures that strengthen household resilience.

"The ocean shores are moving more inland and our weather keeps changing."

"I am afraid because if climate change continues, it will destroy our future lives."

"We are sad about the impact of climate change on our communities and the environment."

3.2. Climate change is weakening livelihoods and the natural resources

Children demonstrated a clear understanding of the links between climate change, environmental degradation and community livelihoods. Across the countries, they described declining agricultural productivity, changing marine ecosystems, reduced fish catches, freshwater scarcity and biodiversity loss as challenges affecting both food production and household income.

Children repeatedly highlighted the importance of forests, rivers, fisheries, coastlines and agricultural land in supporting their communities. These natural resources provide food, income, protection from hazards and the foundations of community wellbeing. However, many children observed that these resources are becoming increasingly degraded and less reliable.



> *"I am afraid of the future because if the flooding continues, we will not have enough land for our gardens."*

Many participants recognised that environmental pressures are driven not only by climate change but also by human activities such as logging, pollution and unsustainable resource extraction. Children described how these pressures can worsen flooding, damage ecosystems and undermine the natural systems on which communities depend.

As agriculture, fisheries and natural resources become less productive and less reliable, communities lose both sources of food and sources of income. The degradation of forests, fisheries, soils and freshwater systems also threatens the diversity of foods that children need for healthy growth and development. Strengthening resilience will therefore require greater protection and restoration of the ecosystems and natural resources that underpin livelihoods.

3.3. Climate change is affecting children's health, education and wellbeing

Children consistently described the impacts of climate change on their physical health, nutrition, education and overall wellbeing. Many reported increased illnesses during periods of extreme heat and flooding, worsening nutrition due to food shortages and growing challenges accessing safe water.

Water insecurity emerged as a major concern. Children described rivers and water sources drying up, wells becoming contaminated by saltwater intrusion and communities struggling to access clean drinking water. For example, in Timor-Leste, 56% of children reported climate-related water shortages.

Children also linked climate change to broader health risks, including illness, malnutrition and disease outbreaks. Nearly one-quarter of children surveyed in Timor-Leste reported health impacts associated with climate change, while one-quarter also reported impacts on infrastructure and community services.



Education is increasingly being affected. Children reported that floods and extreme weather can prevent them from attending school, while high temperatures can make it difficult to concentrate and learn. These disruptions can have long-term implications for educational achievement and future opportunities.

Beyond these physical impacts, many children expressed feelings of fear, worry and uncertainty. Concerns about food shortages, disasters and environmental change are affecting children's sense of security and mental wellbeing, highlighting the often-overlooked emotional impacts of climate change.

Climate change affects children through multiple interconnected pathways. Food insecurity, poor health, water shortages, disrupted education and psychological stress frequently occur together, creating compounding risks for children's wellbeing and development. Effective climate adaptation must therefore address children's needs holistically rather than through isolated interventions.

3.4. Climate change is threatening the ecosystems and natural resources on which children's futures depend

Children across the four countries described visible and ongoing changes to their environments, including coastal erosion, sea-level rise, flooding, landslides and changing rainfall patterns. Many observed that productive land is becoming increasingly vulnerable to climate impacts, reducing opportunities for food production and threatening the long-term sustainability of their communities.

A particularly strong concern among children was the future availability of land. Participants frequently expressed fears that future generations would have less land available for growing food, building homes and sustaining livelihoods. In coastal communities, sea-level rise and erosion were often described as direct threats to food security and community survival.

> *"Our future generations might not have enough land for gardening or even for building homes to settle."*

These concerns are reflected in what children in Vanuatu told us, where 53% of children reported observing changes to coastlines during their lifetime. Children also recognised the importance of healthy ecosystems in protecting communities from climate impacts. Forests, mangroves, rivers and marine ecosystems were frequently identified as critical sources of protection, food and livelihood opportunities.

Children's concerns extend beyond current climate impacts. Many worry about whether future generations will have sufficient land, resources and opportunities to sustain their communities and ways of life. Long-term adaptation planning must therefore prioritise resilience, ecosystem protection and the needs of future generations.

3.5. Children are informed actors and important partners in climate action

A consistent finding across all countries was the depth of children's understanding of climate change and their determination to contribute to solutions. Children demonstrated awareness of both the causes and consequences of climate change and frequently linked climate impacts to environmental degradation, deforestation, pollution and unsustainable use of natural resources.

Rather than viewing themselves as passive victims, children described practical actions that could strengthen resilience and reduce risk. These included tree planting, mangrove restoration, environmental protection, climate-smart agriculture, improved waste management, disaster preparedness and stronger environmental regulation.

Children also emphasised the importance of collective action. They frequently discussed the responsibilities of governments, communities, civil society organisations, businesses and international actors in responding to climate change and protecting future generations.

Importantly, children repeatedly stressed that their voices should be heard in decisions that affect their lives and futures. They see themselves not only as those most affected by climate change but also as active contributors to community resilience and climate solutions.

Children's experiences demonstrate that they are not passive recipients of climate impacts. They understand the challenges facing their communities, can identify practical solutions and want to contribute to decisions that affect their futures. Climate policies and adaptation efforts will be stronger, more effective and more sustainable when children's perspectives are meaningfully incorporated into decision-making processes.

"As a student I can help my community in the planting of mangroves to retain our land and prevent the sea from destroying it any further."

"The community should stop burning rubbish, avoid cutting down trees along the riverbanks, and plant more trees to increase oxygen levels and ensure a sustainable future."

"We need to stop deforestation, which occurs through logging activities. Lastly, we should put an end to mining, as it contributes to soil erosion."

4. OUR POLICY ASKS

> *"I believe it's crucial for all governments to work together to create policies that prevent developments that could worsen climate change."*

Children across the region are already experiencing the impacts of climate change through reduced access to food, water insecurity, environmental degradation, disrupted livelihoods, threats to education and growing uncertainty about the future. Based on the experiences and recommendations shared by children and young people across Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea, World Vision calls on governments, regional institutions, civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, development partners, the private sector and the international community to take urgent action.

1. Put children's food security and nutrition at the centre of climate action

No child should go hungry because of a climate crisis they did not create. Governments and development partners must ensure that climate policies, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) explicitly assess and address risks to children's food security and nutrition. This should include increased investment in climate-resilient, nutrition-sensitive food systems, sustainable local food production and community-led adaptation, alongside clear indicators to monitor progress for children and vulnerable households.

2. Invest in locally led adaptation, resilient livelihoods and sustainable food systems

Communities on the frontlines of climate change must have the resources they need to adapt and thrive. Governments, donors and civil society organisations should significantly increase investment in community-led adaptation, climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable fisheries, diversified livelihoods and resilient food systems to reduce vulnerability to climate-related shocks and strengthen food security and nutrition.

3. Protect and restore the ecosystems that sustain children's lives and futures

Healthy forests, mangroves, rivers, reefs and coastal ecosystems provide food, income and protection from climate hazards. Governments and local authorities must strengthen environmental protection, restore degraded ecosystems and address unsustainable practices that undermine community resilience and food security.

4. Guarantee climate-resilient access to water, health and education services

Every child has the right to safe water, a healthy diet, quality healthcare and education. Governments and development partners must strengthen climate-resilient systems, infrastructure and essential services, while integrating preparedness, early warning systems and disaster risk reduction measures to ensure continuity of services before, during and after climate-related shocks. This will help children to continue to learn, grow and thrive despite increasing climate risks.

5. Recognise climate change as a child wellbeing issue

Climate change is affecting not only children's physical health but also their mental wellbeing, development and sense of security. Governments, humanitarian actors, civil society organisations and development partners should integrate child protection, mental health and psychosocial support into climate adaptation, disaster preparedness

and emergency response policies and programmes.

6. Ensure children's voices shape climate decisions

Children understand how climate change is affecting their communities and have valuable solutions to offer. Governments, regional organisations and international institutions should establish and resource meaningful mechanisms that enable children and young people to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of climate, food security and environmental policies and programmes.

7. Safeguard the future of climate-vulnerable island communities

Governments and development partners must increase investment in long-term resilience by protecting productive land, supporting sustainable food systems, strengthening coastal protection and restoring ecosystems in Small Island Developing States. Action taken today will determine whether future generations can continue to live, learn and thrive in their communities.

8. Deliver urgent climate action to keep the 1.5°C goal within reach

Children from SIDS are already experiencing the consequences of a warming world. High-emitting countries must strengthen and fully implement their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), accelerate emissions reductions this decade and take urgent action to keep the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C within reach. Every fraction of a degree avoided will reduce the risks facing children, food systems, livelihoods and communities across Small Island Developing States.

9. Scale up child-responsive climate finance and loss-and-damage support for SIDS

Small Island Developing States cannot be left to bear the costs of a crisis they did little to create. The international community must significantly increase accessible, predictable and child-responsive adaptation and loss-and-damage finance to help communities strengthen resilience, recover from climate impacts and protect children's futures.



5. CONCLUSION

Children across Small Island Developing States are already experiencing the consequences of climate change in their daily lives. Reduced harvests, damaged food gardens, declining fisheries, water shortages and increasing exposure to disasters are undermining children's food security, nutrition, health and wellbeing. For many children, these impacts are not distant future risks but present realities that are shaping what they eat, how they live and how they view their future.

Talking with children across the four countries has confirmed that child hunger in the Small Island Developing States cannot be understood in isolation from the broader climate crisis. Climate change is intensifying existing vulnerabilities, including geographic isolation, environmental degradation, limited access to services and dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods. The result is a growing threat to children's rights to food, health, education, protection and development. Climate change is not experienced by children as an environmental issue alone, but through its impacts on the systems and resources that sustain everyday life.

Despite this, there is also a story of agency, resilience and hope. Children we spoke with have demonstrated a deep understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change and repeatedly proposed practical solutions to strengthen food security, protect ecosystems and build community resilience. They called for stronger environmental stewardship, greater investment in adaptation and more meaningful engagement with decision-makers. Their experiences and perspectives provide valuable insights that should inform climate and food security policy at local, national and international levels.

The findings also highlight a profound climate justice challenge. Children in SIDS, like children everywhere, have contributed little to the climate crisis, yet they are among those bearing its greatest consequences. Their testimonies underscore the urgent need for stronger local action to build resilience, alongside ambitious global efforts to reduce emissions, increase climate finance and address loss and damage. Investing in climate change adaptation is also an investment in children's food security, nutrition and wellbeing. Protecting children's rights and securing their futures will require governments, development partners and the international community to act with far greater urgency and ambition than has been demonstrated to date.

The experiences of children we spoke to are a powerful reminder that climate change is not only an environmental issue, but also a child rights issue. The voices of children throughout this policy brief are clear: they are not asking simply to be protected from climate change, but to be heard, included and supported to help shape the solutions. Strengthening children's food security, wellbeing and resilience requires urgent action at local, national and global levels. Stronger climate action, greater investment in adaptation and resilience, and a genuine commitment to climate justice cannot wait. Meeting this challenge is essential not only for achieving food security and climate resilience, but for securing a more just, sustainable and hopeful future for the next generation.




World Vision