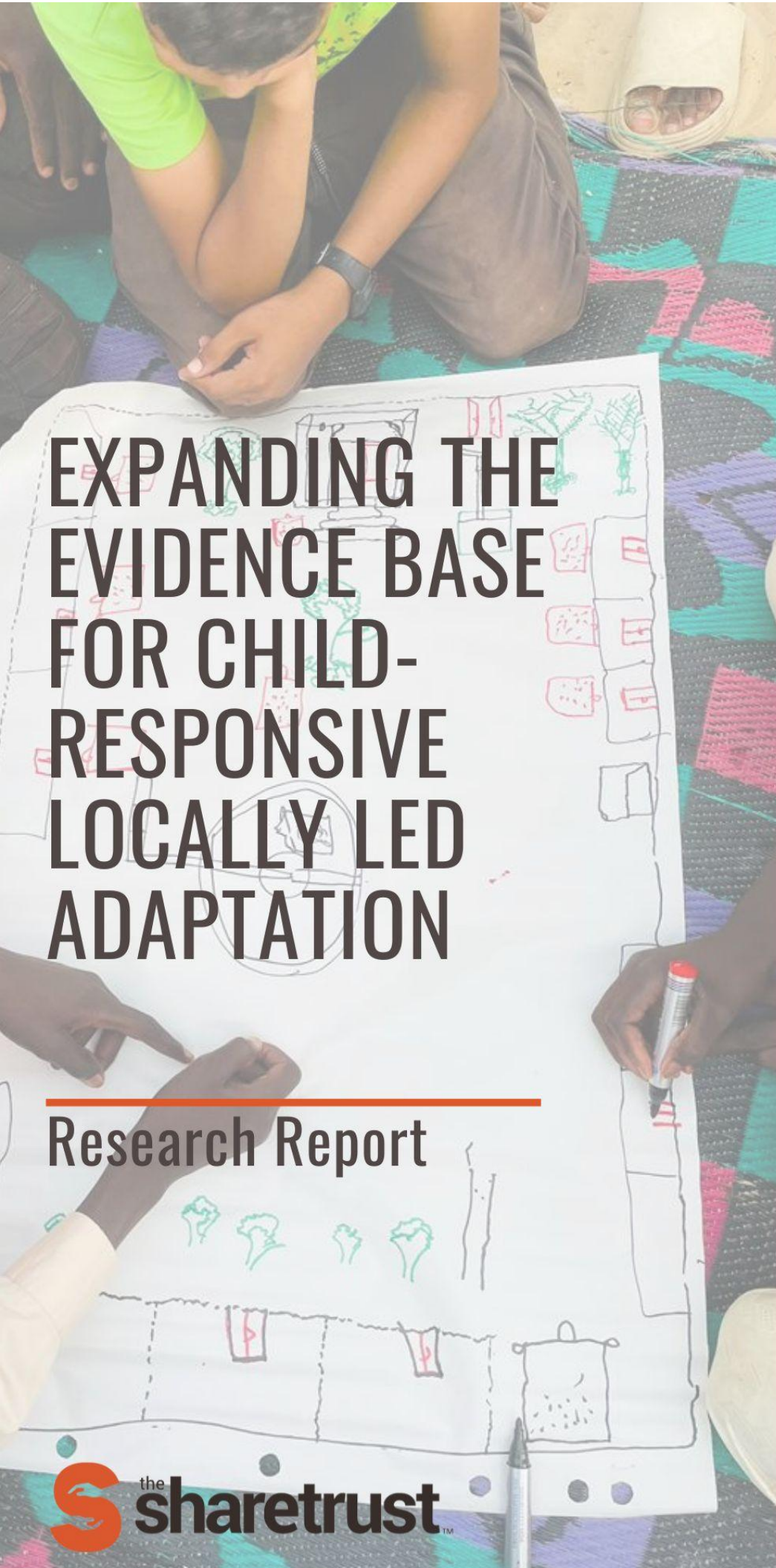


**October
2025**

A group of children are sitting on a colorful patterned rug, drawing a community map on a large sheet of paper. One child is using a red marker to draw a building, while others are pointing at the drawing. The map includes various elements like trees, buildings, and a path.

EXPANDING THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR CHILD- RESPONSIVE LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION

Research Report

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Front Cover Photo Source: Bintou Mahamane, Mapping Adaptation Activities with a School Club established by the “Mon Ecole, Ma Responsabilité” Project in Mali

Executive Summary

Introduction

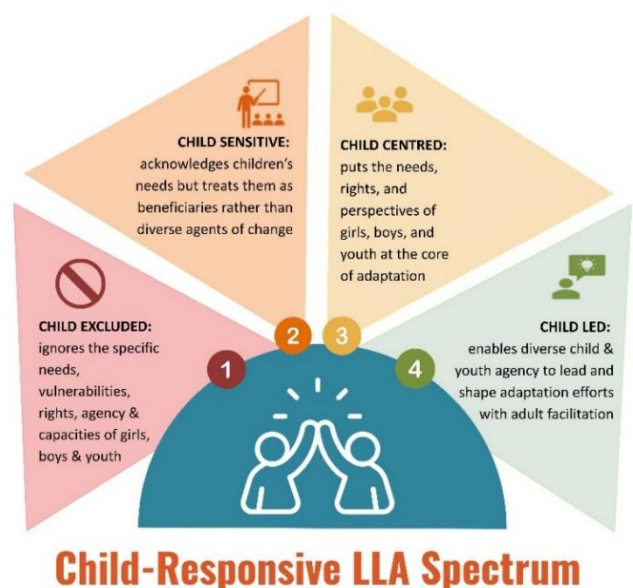
Climate change is amplifying risks for children and youth worldwide, but these risks are neither evenly distributed nor equally experienced. An estimated 1.2 billion children live in areas acutely exposed to climate-related hazards such as floods, prolonged droughts, and recurrent cyclones, compounding threats to their health, education, safety, and future livelihoods. Within these contexts, structural inequalities exacerbate vulnerabilities: women and girls disproportionately bear the brunt of climate impacts due to entrenched gender norms and barriers to resources, while children and youth in conflict-affected settings face heightened risks of exclusion, exploitation, and insecurity. Taken together, these overlapping crises underscore the urgent need for evidence-based strategies that recognise both the scale and the inequalities of climate-related risks facing the next generation.

The adaptation finance needs of countries facing some of the most severe impacts of the climate crisis are significant and the current gap in adaptation funding remains considerable, with very little climate finance reaching the local level where it is needed most. At the same time, global policy and targets have focused on the quantum of finance, sidelining the need to achieve quality funding that responds to local realities and enables local leadership. With very little international climate finance currently addressing child- and family-responsive adaptation, stronger accountability frameworks are needed at the global level to secure dedicated and predictable funding. As the global aid system undergoes significant restructure, the need to advance locally led approaches is greater than ever. Whilst the *Principles for Locally Led Adaptation* provide a common framework, critical gaps remain in understanding how these principles can be operationalised to secure child, youth and gender-responsive, locally led adaptation.¹

This study, commissioned by Save the Children and led by The Share Trust, examined emerging practices for child-responsive Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) globally and with deep dives in Mali and Uganda. It aimed to capture good practices through exploring the evidence, projects, and stakeholders involved in LLA. Current practices, challenges, enablers, and opportunities were identified for responding to the specific needs, rights, priorities, and capacities of children, youth, and women in contexts where systemic barriers undermine their agency and leadership in climate action.

1.1 Approach

The study defined child-responsiveness on a spectrum (*The Child-Responsive LLA Spectrum*) to enable a more granular and operational understanding – from child excluded, through to child sensitive, child centred, and child led. It also reviewed good practices for operationalising the eight LLA Principles and shifting power, funding, policies, and processes to support the agency and leadership of diverse local actors including women, youth, and children.



¹ These were developed by a partnership of peers under the Global Commission on Adaptation to strengthen locally led adaptation.

Impacts of Climate Change

The findings demonstrate that the impacts of climate change on children, youth, and women in high-risk areas are both acute and multidimensional. These impacts extend beyond immediate environmental hazards, fundamentally reshaping childhood experiences and eroding protective social structures. Climate stressors exacerbate entrenched gender and socioeconomic inequalities, increasing exposure to intersecting risks such as poverty, displacement, food insecurity, gender-based violence, and conflict. In parallel, they disrupt essential service delivery for children and youth – most notably health, education, and social protection systems – thereby compounding existing vulnerabilities and undermining long-term climate adaptation and development outcomes.

In Uganda, floods and landslides have led to increased child mortality, damaged schools, and increased risks of disease and malnutrition. Highly populated urban areas like Kampala are particularly impacted by the losses and damages resulting from floods, with children living in informal settlements highly at-risk. In Mali, droughts and floods have compounded conflict and insecurity, displacing families and undermining education. In both contexts, climate events and impacts contribute to girls facing layered risks, including child marriage, sexual violence, and loss of schooling, whilst boys can be pushed into hazardous labour and migration. Women shoulder growing caregiving burdens, face heightened exposure to gender-based violence, and struggle with reduced livelihoods as food insecurity deepens.

Enablers and Barriers to Child-Responsive LLA

Guided by the policy and programming priorities of Save the Children, the research focused on unpacking the enablers and barriers across the following four themes.

1. **Strengthening child and youth agency and decision making.** Children can play a catalytic role in LLA when engaged meaningfully. Evidence from Mali and Uganda shows that child-centred approaches – such as eco-clubs and training and supporting youth and child climate champions – strengthen community awareness and preparedness. While full child-led programming is not always feasible or desirable, enabling children to help identify risks and shape priorities, with adult facilitation, can enable more child-responsive and effective adaptation. Realising this potential requires addressing systemic barriers including limited child and youth involvement in upstream planning, and shifting behaviour including the following:



Source: Action for Young Women in Timbuktu for Environmental Preservation (AJFTPE)

- ✓ **Use participatory practices and create spaces for meaningful participation.** Place child perspectives, priorities, needs, rights, and capacities at the heart of LLA design and delivery, through their participation and leadership by drawing upon child or youth appropriate participatory tools that are systematically connected to decision-making processes (e.g., mapping, games, dance, drama, quizzes, debates, sports) and creating and institutionalising spaces including girls only spaces and girls clubs.
- ✓ **Mobilise champions and capacity sharing.** Mobilise youth climate champions, support peer-to-peer learning structures, and invest in school-based programmes that position children as advocates.
- ✓ **Strengthen climate learning.** Ensure children and youth have a robust understanding of climate risks and combine children's observations with Indigenous knowledge and scientific forecasts in risks assessments to strengthen early warning systems.
- ✓ **Engage with local and national governments.** Support the integration of child and gender-responsive frameworks into national and subnational adaptation policies, plans and programmes, including monitoring,

evaluation and learning (e.g., child-responsive indicators) and support capacity strengthening in local government for child and gender-responsive solutions.

2. **Addressing gender inequalities.** Women-led and women's rights groups and organisations bring adaptation decisions closer to the realities of children and youth while elevating women's leadership. Community collectives and grassroots mechanisms are trusted platforms for mobilising communities and driving solutions, and elected women leaders can strengthen accountability by linking grassroots voices with authorities. In Uganda, elected women leaders promote the leadership and participation of at-risk women, including those living with disabilities, in the implementation of adaptation interventions. Yet despite these contributions, women's leadership remains underfunded and underrepresented, with fragmented, project-based funding undermining long-term, sustainable adaptation planning and the integration of women-led organisations. Addressing this challenge, the study highlighted the role of the following key enablers to shift towards more gender-responsive, equitable LLA.

- ✓ **Leverage informal inclusive mechanisms.** Leverage the capacities of informal women's collectives (e.g., Self Help Groups, inclusive community flood committees) for information dissemination, community mobilisation, and feedback channels, which serve as informal accountability mechanisms and can increase connections with other local actors.
- ✓ **Provide increased, long-term and flexible funding, including via local intermediary structures.** Increase locally accessible and multi-year investment in women/ youth-led organisations to facilitate long-term inclusive local adaptation planning and action.
- ✓ **Use participatory and inclusive tools.** Use gender- and age-responsive assessments and participatory mapping, visioning, games, and drama to identify distinct risks faced by girls, boys, and marginalised groups; embed these practices into programme framing and design and involve women and girls across programming processes (e.g., gender-responsive learning and measurement frameworks) to elevate child and youth perspectives, unpack underlying drivers of insecurity, and address structural inequalities.

3. **Integrating conflict sensitivity.** The distinct vulnerabilities and contributions of children and youth in climate action in fragile and conflict contexts is often overlooked. Strengthening child-responsive LLA in fragile and conflict-affected settings requires a context-sensitive approach that accounts for governance fragility, conflict dynamics, and institutional limitations. It involves rethinking how resources, capacities, and processes are organised. Key shifts include the provision of accessible, flexible funding paired with gender and conflict sensitive participatory planning to ensure timely, inclusive and accountable action. Sustained resilience is strengthened through investing in grassroots organisations, especially those led by women and marginalised groups. Collaborative platforms that integrate adaptation, peacebuilding, and development priorities further strengthen coordination in challenging contexts.

- ✓ **Facilitate collaboration.** Galvanise collaborative action, institutional engagement, and investment across different initiatives and sources of funding to enhance efficiencies and scale; integrate conflict-sensitive approaches into adaptation planning and action; and align short-term crisis response with longer term climate resilience-building to address underlying drivers.
- ✓ **Promote collective accountability.** Empower children and their communities to hold service providers, local authorities and decision-makers accountable by promoting their agency in monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of adaptation initiatives.

4. **Supporting inclusive anticipatory action.** Strengthening the role of anticipatory action strategies in climate adaptation establishes the links between near-term and long-term planning and resilience building. Fragmented approaches to anticipatory action, disaster risk reduction, gender and social inclusion, and adaptation planning can lead to duplication of resources, reduced efficiency, and

missed opportunities. Robust collaboration and strategic partnerships, including those that draw on existing local knowledge and practices, are needed across multiple sectors and actors. Training and supporting child and youth climate champions strengthens local agency and leadership, while participatory assessments of climate risks supports the responsiveness of anticipatory action to the needs and priorities of children and youth. Inclusive community structures (e.g., flood committees), local coalitions of CSOs, or women-led Self Help Groups metabolising micro-grants all show how local leadership, and priorities can drive timely early action. Involving youth climate champions in disseminating climate information through trusted local channels also equips adults to respond in ways that uphold children's rights and needs.

- ✓ **Establish strategic partnerships.** Promote robust collaboration across multiple sectors and local actors including strategic partnerships with regional and local hydrometeorological entities.
- ✓ **Value local knowledge.** Draw upon different forms of knowledge (local, traditional, Indigenous, generational, scientific) through inclusive local mechanisms for adaption decisions; align programme design with cultural practices and local knowledge to build ownership, relevance, and local impact.
- ✓ **Understand age- and gender-specific risks.** Use participatory assessment approaches to develop early warning systems and forecasts adapted and accessible to women and children that are locally appropriate, gender-responsive, and contextualised.
- ✓ **Flexible programming and learning.** Support adaptive management through integration of inclusive feedback mechanisms to respond to changing local priorities and address uncertainty whilst scaling and institutionalising proven models.

Emerging Good Practices

Despite the challenges identified, the research highlights promising practices showcasing the identified enablers of child-responsive LLA. Most are categorised as “child centred” on the Spectrum, with fewer child-led initiatives found.

Child Led 	School- and community-based initiatives such as eco-clubs in Mali and Uganda Red Cross school programmes, which strengthen children's knowledge and agency whilst influencing families and communities.
	Youth and child climate champions and child-led risk mapping , which enable children and youth to analyse hazards, disseminate information, and mobilise local preparedness e.g., Anticipatory Action and ENCORE initiatives in South Sudan and Philippines (Save the Children), the DARAJA project in Uganda, and Mon Ecole, Ma Responsabilité (Mali).
Child Centred 	Child-friendly engagement methods and tools including games, music, dance, drama, sports, quizzes, and skills exhibitions; creating space for children's voices in policy and planning; and leveraging traditional practices for mobilising communities (e.g., “Why Adapt” games-based curriculum led by the Uganda Red Cross).
	Creating dedicated spaces for child and youth voices to elevate their agency in decision making, planning and policy (e.g., Save the Children's “Generation Hope Campaign”) and leveraging traditional practices and existing community systems to support the role of youth in climate action.
	Women-led groups and networks , including Self Help Groups, youth groups, and elected women leaders, which strengthen accountability, disseminate early warnings, and support gender and child-responsive adaptation initiatives.
	Inclusive and participatory planning approaches that engage children, women, and youth to ensure the relevance and timeliness of anticipatory actions (e.g. Save the Children's Anticipatory Action Initiative in South Sudan & LoCAL processes in Mali).
	Anticipatory action approaches , such as Uganda's DARAJA project, which mobilised and trained women and youth champions to disseminate actionable climate information and Save the Children's support to inclusive flood preparedness committees in South Sudan connect near-term early action with long-term resilience, including through microgrants for implementing priority anticipatory actions.

Child Sensitive 	Decentralised climate finance mechanisms , such as UNCDF's LoCAL in Mali and Kenya's County Climate Change Fund, which devolve resources and decision-making closer to communities, supporting child and conflict sensitive investment planning.
	Integrating conflict and gender analysis into adaptation planning to ensure that climate action addresses inequalities and other drivers of insecurity affecting children and youth (e.g. UNCDF's LoCAL in Mali).

Conclusion

Climate adaptation is more likely to be effective when it creates space for local agency, particularly that of children, youth, and women. By facilitating their meaningful participation in decision making and recognising them as agents of change, adaptation becomes more inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the needs, priorities, capacities, and rights of at-risk children and young people. Yet their voices remain largely absent from upstream decision-making, budgeting, and monitoring.

The goal is not universal “child-led” adaptation. For instance, in fragile or conflict-affected contexts, child sensitive or child-centred approaches – where children's needs and perspectives shape outcomes – may be more appropriate than child-led approaches. Where feasible and appropriate, however, it is possible to move progressively along the *Spectrum of Child LLA Responsiveness*, from **child-sensitive** to **child-centred**, and to **child-led**. School eco-clubs and youth climate champions demonstrate how children can influence adaptation meaningfully without assuming full responsibility.

Similarly, women and youth leadership was found to strengthen anticipatory action, with the potential to connect near to longer-term adaptation planning and action. The integration of women and youth champions, leaders, networks, and groups was found to improve access to climate information, by leveraging trusted networks, strengthening household preparedness, and ensuring gendered needs are addressed in early warning systems, benefiting children's health, safety, and dignity.

To scale these gains, promising local practices must be paired with systemic change in how adaptation is financed, governed, and delivered. Priorities include predictable and flexible financing, investment in local capacities and knowledge, better coordination, embedding child- and gender-responsive approaches into national policy, planning and programming systems, and sustained support for schools, clubs and youth networks as vehicles for child leadership. With such reforms, child-responsive locally led adaptation can move from isolated initiatives to institutionalised practice, ensuring adaptation is both effective and equitable for those most affected by the climate crisis.

Recommendations



International Actors:

- **Provide increased, flexible, and multi-year funding to youth- and women-led organisations, as well as local intermediary coalitions that can channel smaller grants to community groups.** The research shows that Self Help Groups/community collectives and representative organisations are trusted and effective entry points but are constrained by a lack of predictable resources.
- **Support decentralised climate finance mechanisms (e.g., the UNCDF Local Climate Adaptive Living (LoCAL) Facility, and the Kenya County Climate Change Fund (CCCCF)) to devolve power and funding to local levels.** Where such mechanisms exist (e.g., LoCAL in Mali), children, youth, and women were directly involved in shaping adaptation priorities through, conflict-sensitive communal planning processes.

- **Integrate child- and gender-responsive indicators and targets into adaptation finance frameworks, funds, and programming.** The upcoming UNFCCC COP 30 is an opportunity to push for the integration of clear gender and child-responsive metrics and markers in global frameworks, including monitoring for the Global Goal on Adaptation and reporting on the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate change.
- **Scale proven models approaches (e.g., school clubs, women's Self Help Groups, eco-clubs) and participatory approaches (e.g., mapping, drama, games) through education, health, and protection systems.** The evidence shows these structures build agency and create safe spaces for children and women to participate in shaping adaptation priorities including girls only spaces and girls clubs.



Local Governments (National and Subnational):

- **Collect sex, age, and disability disaggregated data to strengthen gender- and child-responsive programming.** Where this was done in Kasese (Uganda), local actors were able to tailor responses more effectively to the distinct needs of women and children.
- **Embed-child and gender-responsive adaptation into national adaptation plans, nationally determined contributions, as well as broader national and subnational development plans, budgets, and key sector strategies (e.g. water, environment, infrastructure, education and health).**
- **Establish and/or support inclusive community resilience/climate change committees and groups, ensuring the inclusion of youth, women, and marginalised groups.** Evidence from Uganda shows that women's representation in municipal meetings increased accountability and shifted priorities to address gendered needs.
- **Integrate climate education into school curricula and extracurricular clubs.** School eco-clubs in Mali and Uganda not only improved children's knowledge but also influenced parents and teachers, extending impact beyond the classroom.



Local Non-Governmental Actors (CSOs, Community Groups):

- **Work through Self Help Groups, informal community groups, and youth clubs as trusted channels for adaptation and anticipatory action.** These groups are embedded in communities, already mobilise women and youth, and were shown to strengthen both accountability and resilience.
- **Capture and elevate child and youth experiences through participatory methods (storytelling, theatre, games, digital platforms).** These approaches allowed even the youngest or least literate children in Mali and Uganda to express priorities and influence adaptation design.
- **Build coalitions of youth, women's groups, and CSOs to influence local climate policy agendas.** Coalitions, such as those in Bangladesh and Nigeria, were effective in amplifying community voices through collective advocacy, and supporting collective action.

- **Strengthen accountability by monitoring adaptation spending and supporting communities to track whether funds reach child and gender priorities.** In Uganda, women's groups used feedback loops to shift early warning dissemination to more accessible formats, showing how local monitoring can improve programming in real time.



Source: Self Help Group, Somalia (AU-UN IST)

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Acronyms

AA	Anticipatory Action
AEDD	Agence de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable (<i>Agency for Environment and Sustainable Development</i>)
AJFTPE	Action pour Jeunes Femmes de Timbuktu pour la Préservation de l'Environnement (<i>Action for Young Women in Timbuktu for Environmental Preservation</i>)
ANICT	Agence Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales (<i>National Agency for Investment and Local Collectives</i>)
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CDKN	Climate and Development Knowledge Network
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DARAJA	Developing Risk Awareness through Joint Action
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EWS	Early Warning System
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDEA	Innovation, Development and Entrepreneurship for All
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Nong-Governmental Organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority
MCF	Multilateral Climate Fund
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PBCRG	Performance Based Climate Resilience Grant
SDI	Slum Dwellers International
UNCDF	United National Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UN MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
URCS	Uganda Red Cross Society
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

1. Introduction

1.2 Context

Human-induced climate change has resulted in widespread detrimental effects, losses, and damages to people and the environment. Yet it is the most marginalised people – including women and children – alongside communities in fragile and conflict-affected contexts that are disproportionately affected (IPCC, 2023). The imperative for climate change adaptation grows increasingly more urgent, demanding systemic shifts in how climate-related crises are financed, anticipated, and responded to, whilst adapting to longer-term climatic changes.

Despite growing commitment, climate adaptation funding gaps remain considerable, including at the local level. The adaptation finance needs of countries facing some of the most severe impacts of the climate crisis is significant, estimated by the IMF to exceed one percent of GDP annually in low income and developing countries (IMF, 2022). While the data on financing flows is insufficient, the gap in adaptation funding remains considerable, estimated at US\$137-189 billion per year (UNEP, 2024). Moreover, between 2014 and 2021, fragile states received an average of just USD 10.8 per capita in climate finance, while extremely fragile states received only USD 2.1 per capita compared to USD 161.7 per capita for non-fragile states (UNDP, 2021). Meanwhile, the Share Trust’s studies on the ‘economics of localising aid’ demonstrate that locally led action, funded through local intermediaries, could have significant cost efficiencies², at the same time as paving the way for genuine local leadership (The Share Trust 2022; 2024; 2024). Within an increasingly constrained financial context, following recent aid cuts by major institutional donors, the imperative for cost-efficient, locally led adaptation has never been stronger.

The increasing frequency and intensity of climate and weather extremes has particularly severe impacts on children’s lives, including reduced food and water security. Globally, an estimated 1.2 billion children live on the frontline of the climate crisis, in areas exposed to climate threats such as flooding, severe drought, or recurrent cyclones (Selby *et al.*, 2021). Climate change disproportionately affects children’s health, safety, and wellbeing. For example, children bear 88 percent of the disease burden associated with climate change and are among the most vulnerable to climate-related disasters (Save the Children, 2024d). Yet adaptation interventions are rarely designed with children’s unique vulnerabilities and capacities in mind. For example, just 2.4 percent of climate finance from multilateral climate funds can be classified as supporting projects incorporating child-responsive activities (Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), 2023).

Ensuring children’s right to a safe, healthy, and stable environment is a moral imperative and is enshrined in international legal mechanisms. Article 24 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) establishes the right of every child to the highest attainable standard of health, emphasising the need for clean water, nutritious food, and a safe environment as fundamental to their wellbeing (OHCHR, 2023). The 2019 *Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action* commits to child- and youth-centred climate policies, recognising children as agents of change, whose voices must shape adaptation strategies. It reframes climate change as a “child rights crisis,” reinforcing the need for meaningful child and youth engagement (UNICEF, 2019).

Children, and particularly girls, are rarely given meaningful attention in climate finance structures despite being disproportionately vulnerable. The *Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative*, which includes Save

² The Passing the Buck studies use equitable salary and overhead allocation scales to ensure fair comparisons.

the Children and UNICEF, confirmed this gap, finding that existing funding fails to meet children's unique needs or strengthen child critical social services over extended periods (Children's Environmental Rights Initiative, 2023). The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), established by the 2015 Paris Agreement, does acknowledge children's specific vulnerabilities (health, education, social protection), but there is a danger that easily quantifiable metrics will overshadow more qualitative **child-responsive indicators**. Similarly, while there has been increasing attention given to gender equality in the context of the annual Conference of the Parties (COP), and associated Gender Action Plans, this tends to focus on the role of women in climate action and overlook girls (Save the Children, 2023).

The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance explicitly references children and girls, but the focus on the quantum of global climate finance in global policy risks sidelining a focus on quality. The COP29 NCQG decision, backed by the Baku to Belém Roadmap targeting USD 1.3 trillion annually, is a positive step forward in the push to include children in climate finance. The challenge now is to influence the design and delivery of finance mechanisms to ensure that they deliver the highest possible quality, effectively responding to the needs and priorities of those who need it most. Experts and civil society increasingly argue that the emphasis on total volume in climate finance policy and targets risks sidelining the "quality" of finance and "how effectively" funds are delivered, whether they are accessible, predictable, grant-based, and aligned with the needs and priorities of those most at risk (Cozzi *et al.*, 2022). Delivering quality funding that supports child-responsive, locally led adaptation will require structural and practical reforms in climate finance frameworks, including child-responsive mechanisms that extend beyond raw numbers.

The Principles for Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) were established to guide the design, financing, and delivery of climate adaptation efforts that are grounded in the priorities and agency of local communities. *Principle 2* directly addresses the structural inequalities faced by children and youth, as well as other marginalised and at-risk groups (see *Box 1*). Developed by a partnership of peers under the *Global Commission on Adaptation*, the Principles have been endorsed by over 130 governments, donors, local and international NGOs. These eight principles respond to growing recognition that top-down adaptation efforts often overlook local realities, including the lived experiences of children and youth, and they aim to shift power, resources, and decision making closer to those most affected by climate change (see *Box 1*). By providing a common framework for action, the principles serve as a foundation for more equitable and child-responsive LLA. However, there are gaps in understanding how these principles are being applied to secure child-centred or child-led adaptation and associated good practices.

Box 1: Principles of Locally Led Adaptation

1. **Devolving decision making** to the lowest appropriate level
2. **Addressing structural inequalities** faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities, people who are displaced, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised ethnic groups
3. **Providing patient and predictable funding** that can be accessed more easily
4. **Investing in local capabilities** to leave an institutional legacy
5. **Building a robust understanding** of climate risk and uncertainty
6. **Flexible programming and learning**
7. **Ensuring transparency and accountability**
8. **Collaborative action and investment**

Source: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) – LLA Principles

Compared to community-based adaptation, LLA places a stronger emphasis on local leadership, governance, and decision making. It is inclusive of a broader range of local actors – beyond the community level – and aims to address systematic issues and power imbalances that can hinder local

adaptation (Rahman *et al.*, 2023). LLA recognises that the efficacy of adaptation action and finance are increased when guided and informed by local contexts, local actors at all levels, and their priorities (UNFCCC, 2023; GCA, CKDN, 2023).

Whilst the LLA principles provide a framework for placing local actors at the centre of adaptation strategies, there is limited consensus on how to operationalise LLA, especially for children and youth, and notably girls and young women. Despite a gradual shift towards more meaningful participation and centering of children and youth in adaptation programming, systematic approaches that address structural inequalities and effectively integrate children as change agents remain limited.

1.3 Research Objectives

This collaboration between Save the Children Denmark and the Share Trust aims to strengthen the evidence base for child-responsive LLA through a review of existing LLA projects, both within Save the Children and across other organisations. It proposes that child-responsive LLA accommodates a spectrum of child agency reflecting the degrees to which their capacities, needs, priorities and rights are integrated (see Section 3). Save the Children Denmark (SCD) has recognised climate change as a child rights issue since 2022, building on its solid programming experience over the last 10-15 years in the areas of child-centred climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR). The Share Trust is committed to fostering community-driven collective action, working across ecosystems to shift power, processes, and funding to local actors, including by generating and synthesising cutting-edge research to ensure that good practices are identified and scaled. Recognising the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) as a solid framework through which child-responsive adaptation can be supported, this research aims to expand the evidence based for child responsive LLA and inform SCD and Save the Children International's broader efforts to strengthen locally led adaptation across their programming portfolio. The findings will contribute to a practical action plan to guide internal shifts - from programme design to partnerships and financing - that place children, youth, and communities at the centre of climate adaptation efforts.

Specific research aims are to:

- **Examine current experience with LLA** and unpack the drivers/enablers of success from a local actor perspective, with a specific focus on children and youth.
- **Feed into a new LLA Common Approach** for Save the Children ensuring an evidence-based, standardised approach with technical guidance for scaling LLA in Save the Children programming.
- **Share learning on locally driven, effective climate action** that is *inter alia* more inclusive, sustainable, and responsive, to inform national and regional policy development and climate action.

1.4 Research Questions

The research was framed by the following four research questions, which centred on exploring the evidence, projects, and stakeholders involved in LLA including current practice, challenges, enablers, and opportunities:

1. **What are the good practices and enablers of child-responsive LLA**, including benefits for children and youth (e.g., in programme framing and design, delivery methods and tools, learning, funding mechanisms, and governance);
2. **What are the good practices and enablers of gender-responsive LLA** including benefits for women and girls;

3. **What are some of the key considerations, opportunities and challenges for supporting LLA** and child-centred LLA in conflict affected and fragile contexts; and
4. **What can we learn from locally led anticipatory action** that can be applied in adaptation programming, to more effectively align and integrate short to long-term adaptation planning and impacts at scale?

2. Research Approach

2.1 Overview

This study sought to expand the evidence base for child-responsive LLA through a global desk review, a regional desk review in the Sahel, and two country deep dives in Mali and Uganda. Uganda was selected as it faces diverse climate threats, including extreme heat and flooding, with research covering both large urban centres (the *DARAJA Project* in Kampala) and subnational contexts (Uganda Red Cross in Kasese District). Mali was included because it also faces diverse and accelerating climate impacts, and to provide valuable insights into LLA programming in conflict-affected regions. The desk-based research identified promising practices, trends, lessons and gaps, globally and with a focus on the Sahel, to frame the country case studies. Guided by the policy and programming priorities of Save the Children, the research focused on the following themes: i) **child-responsive LLA**; ii) **gender-responsive LLA**; iii) **LLA in contexts affected by conflict and fragility**; iv) **anticipatory action** as a key component of LLA; and v) **LLA governance models and approaches**. In addition to a review of existing literature, the global desk review integrated key informant interviews with seven Save the Children programme staff, as well as three climate adaptation practitioners in the Sahel.

The research was conducted with three ‘young researchers’ in the Sahel (based in Mali and Burkino Faso), a climate researcher in Uganda, as well as an Advisory Group of experts. The Share Trust mentored the three young researchers in the Sahel region who are in the process of finishing or recently completed their bachelor’s degrees, and who had previously received training through Save the Children and Goree Institute on participatory research. Working with young researchers (both men and women) strengthened the study’s integration of the voices of youth living in contexts affected by climate and conflict related fragility. It also added a component of mentorship and capacity sharing to the project. The Advisory Group comprised both internal Save the Children and external experts in climate adaptation, locally led adaptation and disaster risk reduction, who guided the study from inception through to finalisation.³ A more detailed overview of the research approach is shared in Annex A.

2.2 Primary Research

Primary research in Mali and Uganda focused on climate adaptation projects that either engaged directly with communities, or with specific objectives to localise adaptation. In Uganda, the research explored how locally led approaches are being implemented by Slum Dwellers International-Uganda (SDI-Uganda)/ ACTogether Uganda, as well as the Uganda Red Cross Society in Kampala City and Kasese Municipality. In Mali, the deep dive focused on the intersection of climate impacts with fragility, conflict, and shifting governance dynamics in projects being implemented by UNCDF LoCAL and, local organisation, “*Action pour Jeunes Femmes de Timbuktu pour la Préservation de l’Environnement*” (Action for Young Women in Timbuktu for Environmental Preservation) (see Table 1). Research in both countries examined child- and gender-responsive LLA, with a contextual focus in Mali on conflict dynamics and a focus in Uganda on anticipatory action (see Annex B) for further details of the projects).

³ Please see acknowledgements for the full list of researchers and advisory groups members.

Table 1: Focus Projects for Primary Data Collection

Country	Project Name	Project Funder	Project Lead(s)	Target Group(s)
Uganda	The Developing Risk Awareness through Joint Action (DARAJA) project	UK FCDO and Lloyd Register Foundation	Slum Dwellers International (SDI) – Uganda Chapter ACTogether	Households living in slums and informal settlements in Kampala
Uganda	Emergency Relief Programmes	Mixed – including Government of Uganda and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS)	Households affected by flooding or extreme heat in Kampala and Kasese
Uganda	URCS Schools Program	Mixed – including Government of Uganda and ICRC	Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS)	School-going children in Kampala and Kasese
Mali	Mon Ecole, Ma Responsabilité	UNICEF	Action Pour Jeunes Femmes de Tombouctou pour la Preservation de l'Environnement (AJFTPE)	School-going children in Timbuktu
Mali	UNCDF LoCAL	Belgian Government, Malian Government, UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)	UNCDF - with local municipalities	Local Government and communities in climate affected regions of Mali

The primary research comprised key informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGDs), and participatory methods, including with children. In total, 34 KIIs, eight focus group discussions, and participatory storytelling activities involving 45 participants were carried out across both countries (see Table 2). A purposive sampling method was used to identify research participants. This included programme actors (managers and coordinators) directly engaged in implementing the selected projects, as well as community project participants (women, children, youth) selected with support of the programmes and local government officials. In Uganda, FGDs included those conducted with local councillors in the settlements where the Daraja project was operating in Kampala.

Table 2: Summary of Primary Research

Activity	Uganda	Mali
Key informant interviews (KII)	20 KIIs were conducted with programme actors (from the selected projects), local government (Kampala City & Kasese Municipality) and national government (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development)	15 KIIs were conducted with programme actors (from the selected projects), school staff, and local government
Focus group discussions (FGD)	5 in total, including 1 with local leaders (local council members in Kampala), and 2 with children and youth, and 2 with women and girls	3 in total, including 1 with parents, 1 with mixed gender school children, and 1 with only girls
Participatory story telling	“Before and now” storytelling conducted with 14 participants (5 male local leaders, 7 women – including female local leaders, 2 youth) to examine the impacts of the DARAJA project	Participatory mapping with 31 (16 boys, 15 girls) school children (across three schools) using “before and now” mapping, combined with a drama presentation. Mapping focused on understanding children’s priorities for adaptation in their school environment, and their experience of change as a result of project activities.

2.2.1 Participatory Activities

Participatory activities were an important component of the primary data collection, with the aim of drawing on storytelling to help surface the lived experiences of children, youth, and women. Storytelling has been used elsewhere in climate adaptation programming to ‘bridge the gap’ between grassroots experiences and national adaptation plans. For example, the *Envisioning Resilience Initiative*⁴ amplifies the voices of underrepresented women in climate adaptation planning by equipping them with skills in photography and storytelling. This approach enabled climate affected women in Ghana, Kenya, Jamaica, and Rwanda to document and share their personal experiences with climate change to inform and influence National Adaptation Plans (NAP) (GCA, 2025).

In both Mali and Uganda “before and now” mapping was used as an approach to understanding how the selected projects had impacted the lives of women, children, and youth. The “before and now” participatory mapping exercise invites community members to collaboratively illustrate or describe what their environment, livelihoods, and local climate resilience strategies looked like before specific adaptation efforts, in contrast with how things are now. This helps communities identify and discuss changes in local knowledge, infrastructure, ecosystem health, and preparedness, highlighting both progress and ongoing challenges in adapting to climate impacts (Frontline AIDS, 2006).

In Mali, children mapped out their schools and then went through a process of drawing what their schools looked like before the eco-clubs, and then what the schools looked like after. As part of this process, they talked about what they did not like about their schools before the project was initiated, what activities they did as part of the club, and the impact was of club activities on their day-to-day life at the school. The process was noted by school administrators as being highly appropriate for collecting data with children, and the children were extremely motivated in the process, and spent a lot of time considering what to map.

⁴ “Before and Now” mapping is explained further on the [Envisioning Resilience website](#).

In Uganda, the “before and now” mapping helped build an understanding of how experiences had been changed and shaped by having access to actionable climate data. 14 community members, residing in informal settlements in Kampala, participated in the process.

Figure 1: Mapping in Mali School Eco-Clubs



Source: Bintou Mahamane, Mali Young Researcher

3. Framing Child, Youth and Gender-Responsive, Locally Led Adaptation

3.1 Key Definitions

The following working definitions were used throughout the research (see Box 2).

Box 2: Working Definitions

- **Climate adaptation:** the process of adjusting to actual or expected climate change and its effects.
- **Locally led adaptation (LLA):** refers to adaptation initiatives that prioritise local actors – including communities, local governments, and grassroots organisations – in decision-making, design, implementation, and financing. It emphasises shifting power and resources to the lowest appropriate level, ensuring adaptation strategies are context-specific and driven by local knowledge, rather than externally imposed solutions.
- **Anticipatory action:** actions taken to prevent or reduce the impact of anticipated hazardous events on high-risk populations before they occur. This proactive approach relies on forecasts and risk analysis to implement timely interventions that mitigate potential impacts.
- **Child -responsive spectrum:⁵**
 - **Child-excluded approaches:** adaptation efforts that do not take account of the distinct needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of children and youth. Children and youth are not engaged in adaptation decision-making, and projects are often designed with a “on-size-fits-all” approach that does not reflect differential impacts and/or vulnerabilities. As a result, children’s perspectives and wellbeing may be overlooked, limiting the relevance and effectiveness of adaptation actions.
 - **Child-sensitive approaches:** adaptation that recognises children/youth as a particularly vulnerable group and takes steps to ensure their needs and rights are considered. Children are not necessarily consulted directly in adaptation decision making and have limited or no agency across programming processes. Projects are largely adult driven, with children and/or youth included primarily viewed as beneficiaries, although planners are mindful of their specific vulnerabilities.
 - **Child-centred approaches:** adaptation that puts children's needs, rights, priorities, capacities, and perspectives at the heart of planning and implementation. Children actively and meaningfully participate in adaptation activities, which can equip children with the skills, knowledge, and agency to respond to climate risks

⁵ Whilst “child” is used in the spectrum, our definition also encompasses youth. A **child is defined in this study as anyone below the age of 18** (in accordance with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child) and a **youth is defined as an individual between the age of 15 and 24** (in accordance with the UN General Assembly definition of youth).

throughout their lives. When children actively participate in adaptation efforts, they enhance community preparedness and risk reduction, while also developing leadership, problem-solving, and advocacy skills that contribute to intergenerational resilience. Children's wellbeing is central and to some extent, decision making is devolved to children, but adults still hold primary decision-making power.⁶

- **Child-led approaches:** adaptation is initiated and driven by children or youth, who take the lead in planning and implementing actions. Adults play a facilitative or supportive role, while children are empowered to make decisions and guide initiatives. Their unique insights inform climate resilience efforts, and they are recognised as active agents of change rather than solely as vulnerable groups to be protected. This approach supports more transformative locally led adaptation for children and youth, which tackles the root causes of inequalities.
- **Gender-responsive adaptation** involves practical measures in programming, policy, partnerships, and advocacy that reduce gender vulnerabilities and increase the resilience of girls and their communities from the negative effects of climate change.
- **Gender transformative adaptation:** this approach goes beyond gender-responsive adaptation by working with key stakeholders at multiple levels (e.g. individual, household, community, national, etc.) to identify, address, and positively transform the root causes of gender inequality for girls, boys, women, and men. This includes challenging discriminatory social norms which reinforce gender inequalities; advocating for and fostering legislation and policies that promote gender equality; and working with communities, and stakeholders at all levels, to create lasting changes.

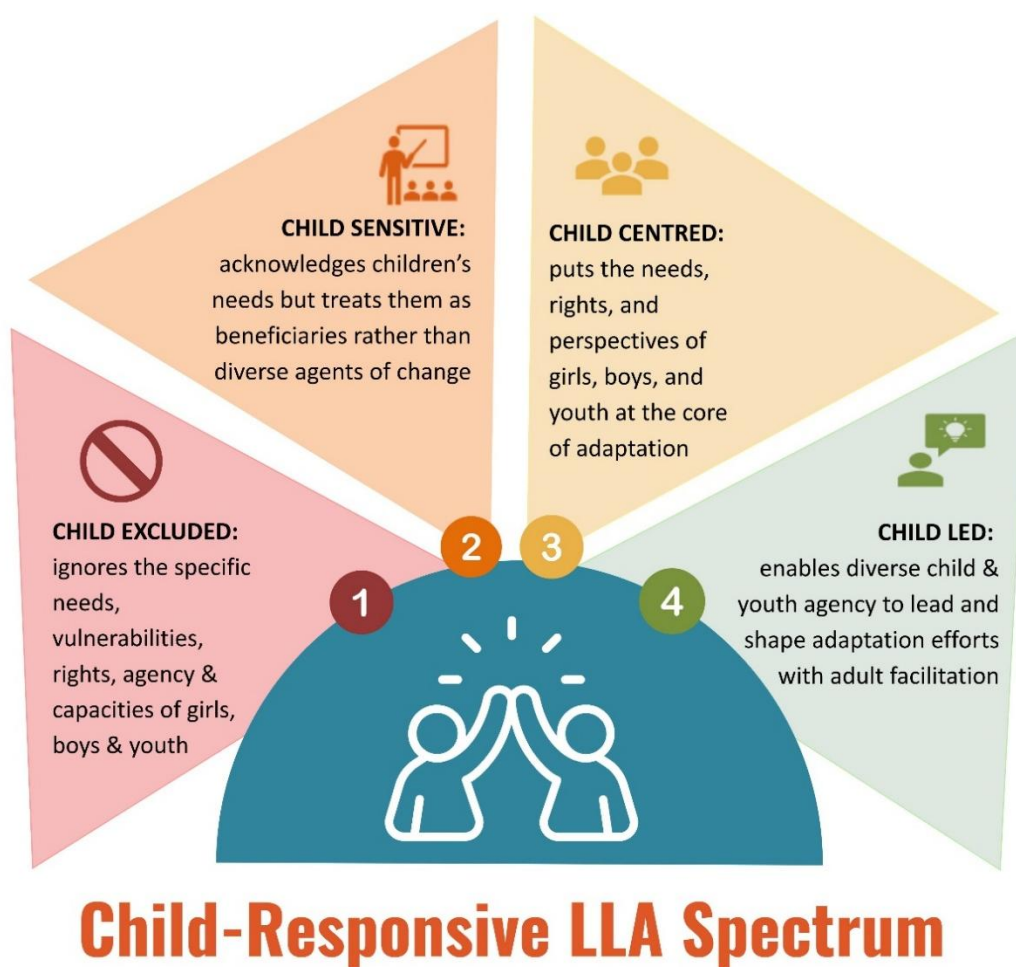
Sources: Save the Children (2024), The Share Trust (2025a), (Mitchell *et al.*, 2009)

⁶ Some entities use the phrase “child-focused” interchangeably with child-centred.

3.2 Framing Child, Youth and Gender-Responsive, Locally Led Adaptation

Child, youth and gender-responsive⁷ adaptation involves practical measures in programming, policy, and advocacy that reduce vulnerabilities and increase the resilience of children and their communities from the negative effects of climate change (Save the Children, 2024a). It involves strategies that integrate and protect children's rights, prioritise their specific vulnerabilities, needs, capacities and perspectives; whilst actively involving children in adaptation processes, including identifying risks, planning, designing solutions, and implementing. Drawing on the definitions in Box 2, child-responsive LLA is defined in this study according to a spectrum, to enable a more granular and operational understanding, which identifies four levels of child responsive LLA: i) child excluded; ii) child sensitive; iii) child centred; and iv) child led (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Child-Responsive LLA Spectrum



Source: The Share Trust (2025)

The *Child-Responsive LLA Spectrum* takes into account the differential levels of child and youth AGENCY in project processes (framing, design, delivery, learning) and the RESPONSIVENESS of projects to child

⁷ Whilst recognising the differences between children and youth, the spectrum can be applied to programming for both groups, although our primary focus in this report is on children.

and youth adaptation needs, priorities, and rights (see Figure 3).⁸ The aim of the spectrum is to support more effective and sustainable locally led adaptation through increasing the meaningful participation and leadership of children and youth in climate action, ensuring their risks, needs, priorities, capacities, and perspectives are centred.

Figure 3: Levels of Child and Youth Agency, Responsiveness, and Key LLA Shifts by Project Category

Framing	Design	Delivery	Learning	Key Shifts	Project Category
Children's views, needs, priorities, rights & capacities are omitted in priority setting & strategy	Children's views, needs, priorities and rights are not considered in project design decisions	Children do not participate in project delivery	Children's views, needs, priorities, and rights are excluded from MEL	No shifts	 Child Excluded
Children are not consulted directly although their needs & rights are considered	Children's views, needs, priorities & rights are integrated but not necessarily systematically	Children are identified as beneficiaries , but have no agency in implementation	Children are consulted in project evaluation, but do not have a role in defining MEL frameworks	Supports flexible programming	 Child Sensitive
Children's diverse voices are sought out & their views, needs & priorities systematically integrated	Children of all genders are involved in design decisions and their views, needs & rights systematically reflected	Children in all their diversity actively & meaningfully participate in key project activities	Children of all genders are engaged to share project feedback and influence MEL frameworks	Devolves decision making; invests in local capacities; builds a robust understanding of risks	 Child Centred
Children of all genders lead project framing with adult facilitation ensuring a focus on their needs, rights & priorities	Children in all their diversity with adult facilitation lead the design and proposal of solutions	Children of all genders are recognised as active agents in delivering key project activities	Diverse children's views, needs, priorities & capacities drive project MEL decisions with child-responsive indicators	Addresses structural inequalities; ensures transparency and accountability	 Child Led

Source: The Share Trust (2025)

Figure 4: Mapping in Mali School Eco-Clubs



⁸ The Share Trust originally developed the “Agency Compass” as part of peer learning on locally led development with the OECD and this was adapted by The Share Trust for this study.

4. Impacts of Climate Change on Children, Youth and Women

4.1 Gendered and Disproportionate Impacts

The climate crisis is profoundly reshaping childhood, intensifying existing inequalities and exposing children to heightened risks of poverty, displacement, and conflict, especially for children in developing countries affected by fragility. Modelling developed by a team of climate researchers, led by the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel*, finds that under Paris Agreement pledges⁹, a child born in 2020 will experience on average twice as many wildfires, 2.8 times the exposure to crop failure, 2.6 times as many drought events, 2.8 times as many river floods, and 6.8 times more heatwaves across their lifetimes, compared to a person born in 1960 (Save the Children, 2021). By 2050, a further 24 million children are projected to suffer from undernourishment as a result of climate change impacts, while by 2040, one in four children could be living in areas facing extreme water shortages. Already, almost 160 million children are exposed to increasingly severe and prolonged droughts, and the education of around 38 million children is disrupted each year by climate-related shocks. These cumulative pressures are also driving migration, with projections suggesting that by 2050, climate change could force 143 million more people – many of them children and families – to move in search of safety and survival (Save the Children, 2024f). Environmental threats, including weather-related disasters, are estimated to disrupt the education of approximately 37.5 million children each year (World Bank, 2022). Climate change also impacts education through multiple pathways: damage to infrastructure, disruption to transport networks, and displacement, which all limit children's physical access to schools. Particularly for girls, this can result in increased household responsibilities, further reducing their time and ability to participate in education. At the same time, the impacts of disasters on children's physical and mental health undermine their ability to learn, affecting their concentration, cognitive development, and overall wellbeing (K4D, 2023).

The impacts of the climate crisis are also deeply gendered. Cascading crises, multiplying conflicts, and accelerating environmental degradation have intensified the unpaid care burden that women shoulder. As public and private systems remain inadequate and underfunded, women and girls are left to absorb these rising care demands, reinforcing existing gender inequalities (UN Women, 2023). Climate change is also driving poverty among women and girls: by 2050, it is projected that up to 158 million more will be pushed into poverty, 16 million more than the number of men and boys (UN Women, 2024). Already, 47.8 million more women experience food insecurity and hunger compared to men (UN Women, April 2025). Further, climate-related economic and social stresses are further fuelling violence against women and girls, including increased risks of child marriage (Save the Children, 2023). A 2025 UN Spotlight brief reports a rise in gender-based violence, including a 28 percent increase in femicide during heatwaves (Spotlight Initiative, 2025). When disasters strike, women are more likely to be injured or killed due to systemic gender inequalities that restrict access to information, mobility, decision-making, resources, and training. In the aftermath, women and girls face greater barriers to relief and recovery assistance, creating a cycle of vulnerability that undermines livelihoods, well-being, and resilience to future shocks. Climate change also threatens maternal and neonatal health, particularly where disasters and conflicts disrupt access to

⁹ Paris Agreement Pledges are voluntary Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which are individual, voluntary national climate action plans submitted by countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change impacts. The agreement requires countries to submit increasingly ambitious NDCs every five years, aiming to hold global warming to well below 2°C and preferably 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

health services. Evidence indicates that extreme heat raises the incidence of stillbirth, while rising global temperatures are contributing to the spread of vector-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and Zika virus (UN Women, April 2025).

Girls and boys experience climate risks differently and gender roles within the household influence how climate-related challenges are perceived and reported. For example, research conducted by Save the Children in Afghanistan (forthcoming) found that boys were more likely than girls to mention increased difficulty in managing livestock and livelihood activities. They were also more likely to highlight drought and associated challenges in growing plants and food than girls. At the same time, girls were found to be more exposed to domestic violence and physical injury resulting from damage to housing, while boys were exposed to risks of child labour, exploitation, and other challenges often tied to trafficking, migration, and displacement (*ibid*). These gendered differences are affected by other intersecting factors including governance, wider norms within society, disability, poverty, displacement status, and rural/urban location. Programmes must therefore recognise the differentiated risks and capacities affecting girls and boys to effectively address the specific climate-related challenges they face. Addressing gendered impacts and intersecting inequalities, requires a more granular understanding the differentiated impacts, vulnerabilities, and capacities at local level, as reflected in the LLA Principles (particularly 1, 2, 4, and 5 – see Box 1) as well as adapting approaches to specific contextual dynamics (e.g., women facilitators, girl only spaces).¹⁰

4.2 Impacts Identified in Mali and Uganda

Both Mali and Uganda are acutely affected by climate risks and vulnerabilities. In Uganda, climate change will significantly increase the country's risk from floods, droughts, and landslides by mid-century, under both moderate and high emissions scenarios. Flood risk is projected to rise especially in central Uganda and the West Nile subregion, while drought will increasingly threaten the northern half and parts of the west, and landslide risk will intensify around Mount Elgon, the Rwenzori Mountains, and parts of the northeast and southwest (UNCDF, 2024). Densely populated urban and peri-urban areas like Kampala are particularly vulnerable to the losses and damages resulting from floods (UNCDF, 2024). In Mali, rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, droughts and floods are compounding already fragile conditions, undermining livelihoods and deepening social tensions, especially between farmers and herders over shrinking land and water resources (NUPRI, SIPRI; 2021). Weak governance institutions and political exclusion leave communities less able to adapt, while climate impacts amplify inequalities affecting women and marginalised youth. Together, these pressures escalate local conflicts and undercut peacebuilding efforts, making climate change a significant driver of insecurity and vulnerability in the country (NUPRI, SIPRI; 2021).

The primary research highlighted that women and children in Mali and Uganda are experiencing some of the most acute and compounding effects of climate-related events. The focus group discussions and interviews confirmed both immediate and long-term consequences of floods and extreme heat on health, safety, well-being, education, and access to shelter, goods, and services. Specific impacts identified by women, children, carers, teachers, and other key informants are outlined in this section.

¹⁰ For example, in conducting the research in Afghanistan, Save the Children used gender-inclusive approaches that created space for girls to speak in a context of extreme gender inequality and marginalisation. This included creating girls-only spaces for focus group discussions and using female facilitators that understood the context.

Climate change has deeply affected children through multiple, interconnected ways. Flooding and landslides have led to child mortality, particularly in urban settlements like Kampala's Bwaise and in Kasese Municipality, where heavy rains triggered deadly landslides. Recurrent floods have damaged homes and belongings such as bedding, books, and furniture, often displacing children, and undermining their sense of safety and stability. Education has been severely disrupted: damaged infrastructure and flooded roads prevent children from attending school, while extreme heat in places like Mali forces afternoon classes to be suspended, delaying learning progress. Beyond access, elevated temperatures also reduce children's ability to concentrate, harming academic performance and motivation. Children face heightened health risks from exposure to contaminated floodwater and poor drainage systems, which spread diarrhoeal diseases, while dust and heat contribute to respiratory illnesses and eye infections. Malnutrition is increasing due to repeated crop failures and food shortages caused by extreme weather, leading families to reduce meals and contributing to the prevalence of stunting in children.¹¹ Additionally, emotional well-being is threatened by family separation and instability, with reports of fathers abandoning households during crises, adding stress and uncertainty to young lives.

”

“For a child living in a household [impacted by floods], they lose shelter, maybe their school [books], so that way it impacts their education...”

“When the floods occur early in the morning, children may not go to school at all...”

FGD, Youth Volunteers, Kampala

“When the season has failed... almost everyone will lose their crops... so there is food scarcity... some families resort to one meal a day. The little ones, of course, will suffer because they need the food more.”

KII, KMC Official, Kasese

Girls often face layered impacts. Recurrent flooding and heat-driven displacement disrupt education; and many girls drop out due to household poverty or relocation during flood seasons. In Uganda, climate shocks such as floods and food insecurity have been linked to families resorting to child marriage as a coping strategy, exchanging short-term financial or in-kind support for daughters' marriage. Displacement can heighten risks of sexual violence and adolescent pregnancy, particularly in overcrowded, temporary shelters with limited privacy and protection. Health and hygiene challenges also intensify during floods; and contaminated water increases the risk of urinary tract infections and other illnesses, especially where access to clean, private sanitation is constrained. Boys, meanwhile, may be more exposed to secondary impacts tied to household livelihoods – such as losses in livestock or agricultural income – which can lead to pressure to engage in hazardous or exploitative work, increased risk of trafficking or recruitment by armed groups in conflict-affected contexts, and elevated anxiety and depression. Similarly, outdoor work by boys, can also increase exposure to extreme heat and poor air quality, with attendant health and protection concerns.

”

“[Families who have lost] their house, crops [and] animals... the only property they see is [their daughter] ... someone is offering them food... UGX 5,000 or 2,000 [USD 0.80 – 1.5] every day... that's where the girls become vulnerable...”

KII, URCS

Official, Kampala

“Before, with 2000 CFA [USD 3.5] we could cook a full meal in Timbuktu, today that is no longer possible due to rising food prices.”

FGD, Women,

Timbuktu

Women carry a disproportionate share of the caregiving and household burdens brought on by climate change. In flood-prone areas like Kampala, they often become sole providers when male partners migrate

¹¹ The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey of 2018 indicated that the Toro sub-region, where Kasese is situated, has the highest rates of stunting among children at 40.6 percent, exceeding the national average of 29 percent (Masereka *et al.*)

or abandon families, managing everything from sourcing food to securing safe shelter and caring for children. Livelihoods are also deeply affected: heavy rainfall floods roads and damages infrastructure, cutting women off from workplaces and causing temporary job losses and income gaps. In Mali, unpredictable rains, combined with poor rainfall in the dry periods makes it difficult for households to grow food, and increases the cost of food during the lean seasons. Similarly, transport can limit access to markets and damage crops during flooding. These effects disproportionately impact marginalised households, and particularly women who often bear the responsibility for feeding families. The repeated loss of valuable household assets such as furniture, bedding, and appliances strains financial security, especially for lower-income women who may rely on these items for small businesses. Exposure to contaminated water and heat stress can also increase women's vulnerability to waterborne diseases and infections during floods, particularly during pregnancy. Yet damaged critical infrastructure – schools, health centres, water, and sanitation facilities – limits women's and families' access to essential services, compounding daily challenges. Finally, the unsafe and crowded conditions in temporary shelters can increase risks of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

”

“On women, there have been cases of domestic violence resulting from [social disruption] by floods...when [affected households are] moved to [temporary] camps, they are often [housed in community halls and school classrooms], where sometimes people come with different characters, with different issues. Some men [abuse] alcohol, and will want to have sex with their wives, [but because of lack of privacy] in these conditions, the women tend to refuse, and then the men will think their wives have rejected them or no longer need them. They end up raping them...”

KII,

KMC Official, Kasese

”

“...when it rains, we do not work. The floods cut off our areas of work and all the access routes. [It creates] ...uncertainty [about] where to sleep ...”

FGD, Women and girls, Bwaise, Kawempe Division,

Kampala

“...the women will not work because of accessibility, transport costs triple, and things like fuel will become expensive increasing the cost of [living]...”

FGD, Local leaders, Bwaise, Kawempe Division,

Kampala

In Mali, climate impacts intersect with ongoing conflict, compounding risks for women and girls. Persistent violence and displacement keep many children, especially girls, from returning to school, while trauma and fear affect their ability to focus and learn. Displaced children often experience deep psychological stress, with respondents reporting depression and fear of loud noises, which further hinders their education and well-being. In flood-prone and heat-stricken areas like Timbuktu, conflict-related displacement exacerbates the impact of climate shocks, leading to higher school dropouts among girls and sustained emotional harm. The combination of insecurity, poverty, and climate change creates a cycle where girls and young women remain highly vulnerable to both immediate and long-term harm. At the same time, climate and conflict affected communities in other countries, including Colombia, Sudan and Nepal, demonstrate that women contribute positively to peace and sustainability in their local communities despite gendered obstacles (Smith *et al.*, 2021).

”

“The most frequent symptoms of trauma in children are depression and fear of noises,”

“The [attainment] level of displaced children at school is very low because they're experiencing psychosocial trauma affecting their learning on all levels.”

School Director, GAO, NRC Schools Project

4

Awa was displaced from her community near the river Niger after heavy rains but has recently returned....

“It was an August morning a year ago. After the dawn prayer, when people were about to leave for the fields, suddenly we saw the cloudy sky. Rarely have I seen such a heavy rain sweeping everything in its path and

sowing desolation, with houses collapsing here and there, animals carried away, submerged wells making the water unsuitable for drinking. There were no deaths or injuries by the grace of God. We owe a lot to our neighbours who urged us to leave the house. [Without them] we were probably going to die because as soon as we got out, the house collapsed. We lost the few pieces of furniture we had when the house collapsed.”

(Awa, 12, Barbé)¹²

“Nowadays in addition to drought, famine and disease, I fear for my studies under these conditions. Every year our parents are worried about the winter period, if they cannot feed us properly, we will have to drop out of school and go elsewhere to look for work to help our parents. Harvest renderings aren't like they used to be. Each year the village either rains or droughts take over as the rains stop early before the harvest is even ready.”

(Mousa, 15, Barbé)

Source: Mali Case Study, Save the Children Research

¹² Names changed to ensure anonymity

5. Good Practices and Barriers for Enabling Child, Youth and Gender Responsive LLA

5.1 Strengthening Child and Youth Agency and Decision Making

5.1.1 Rationale

The COP29 Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate Change highlighted that the role of children as agents of change must be recognised, calling for dedicated climate financing, improved data collection, and inclusive participation mechanisms (Save the Children, 2024e). To achieve effective and sustainable child-led adaptation, the Dialogue concluded that National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) must integrate children's needs, including through child-responsive indicators. It also emphasised that climate financing for child-led or child-centred initiatives must be expanded, ensuring resources reach children and youth as active adaptation leaders. Similarly, the recommendations highlighted the importance of transforming dialogue into tangible actions and integrating child-led adaptation into risk reduction, early warning systems, and climate services, ensuring children's perspectives shape resilience strategies.

Children and youth can play an active role in both designing and implementing climate initiatives. They can contribute by identifying and analysing risks, raising awareness, and mobilising their peers, families, schools, and communities (Cameron and Norrington-Davies, 2010). Children are an integral part of household and community adaptation and are engaged citizens with some research confirming that their identification of adaptation strategies and delivery responsibilities is comparable to adults (Polack, 2010). Efforts that demand parent interaction – such as filling out a questionnaire, for example – also increase the potential for children's voices to influence household levels of risk and resilience (Ronan and Johnston, 2003). Similarly, climate reduction and resilience education programmes start to have an impact at home when children discuss what they have learned in schools with adults. Children can, and do, share knowledge that influences the decisions of their parents. For instance, parents helping children with relevant homework may also lead to greater influence (Izadkhah and Hosseini 2005; Ronan *et al.*, 2015).

There is a strong sense of climate awareness and agency among children. In 2022, Save the Children engaged with over 54,500 children across 41 countries through consultations, interviews, and surveys to understand their experiences of climate change and inequality, as part of their “*Generation Hope*” campaign. The research found that 83 percent of children had observed the effects of climate change or economic inequality in their lives and communities, while 73 percent believed that adults should be doing more to address these issues. Notably, 35 percent of children said they were already campaigning or wanted to begin advocacy on climate issues, underscoring their readiness to act and their desire to be part of the solution (Save the Children, 2022a).

Whilst direct leadership of children in climate adaptation decision making may not always be the most suitable objective, bringing decision making closer to their realities and ensuring their meaningful participation in climate action can strengthen adaptation initiatives. This is categorised as “child centred LLA” in the *Child-Responsive LLA Spectrum* and involves recognising children's capacities and their knowledge of risks and vulnerabilities, not only in relation to themselves as a group but also in connection with the wider systems that shape their lives, such as education, health, household dynamics, and community governance (see *Figure 2*). Anchoring children's meaningful participation and agency across project processes - such as project framing (including risk assessments), design/planning, delivery, and learning/monitoring - ensures that adaptation efforts are more responsive to their priorities and the specific impacts that affect them (see *Figure 3*).

Enabling child and youth agency and decision making in LLA requires several key shifts. Several of these shifts are articulated in the LLA Principles. Notably, *Principle 1: ‘devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level’* underlines the importance of bringing administrative, fiscal, and political decision-making functions closer to those most impacted by climate change to increase participation and improve local governance, thereby strengthening the impact of climate adaptation finance (Omari-Motsumi *et al.*, 2019; Mfitumukiza *et al.*, 2020; Tye & Suarez, 2021; Pinnington *et al.*, 2024). Enabling child and youth agency means placing their perspectives at the heart of design and delivery and seeking their meaningful participation. Enabling child and youth agency also means ensuring children and youth have a robust understanding of climate risks, investing in their capacities to address these (with adult facilitation), and addressing the structural inequalities that exacerbate disproportionate climate risks and impacts for children and youth.

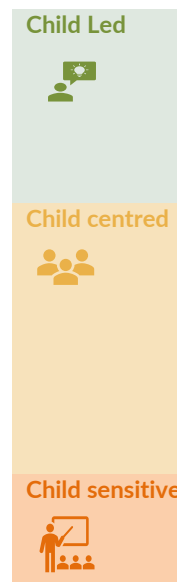
Box 3: Key Principles for Enabling Child and Youth Agency and Decision making in LLA

Child Led  Child centred 	LLA Principles: ✓ Devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level (1) ✓ Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy (4) ✓ Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty (5) ✓ Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children (2)
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5.1.1 Good Practices

The research demonstrated growing recognition of children and youth as key stakeholders in climate change with some locally embedded organisations already effectively integrating them as change agents in their programming. This section presents several good practices and approaches identified in the research that enable child and youth agency to anticipate and prepare for climate-related shocks and stresses, including:

- i) **Supporting school clubs and engagement with educational institutions.** School eco-clubs can provide important entry points for children to function as agents of change, while also strengthening preparedness learning across the family unit as a whole.
- ii) **Supporting child-led risk mapping** to inform child-responsive climate action.
- iii) **Using child-friendly engagement methods and tools.** For example, music, dance, and drama.
- iv) **Creating space for children’s voices** to elevate the meaningful engagement of children and youth in policy and planning.
- v) **Leveraging traditional practices and existing community structures.** Traditional cultural practices are highly effective platforms for mobilising communities and engaging youth in adaptation.
- vi) **Connecting to government services and systems.** Embedding child-responsive adaptation within local governance structures increases the reach, relevance and sustainability of interventions.



i) School Clubs and Engagement with Educational Institutions

School eco-clubs can facilitate the role of children as agents of change and support preparedness learning. In Timbuktu, Mali, a context affected by extreme heat and seasonal flooding, *Action pour Jeunes*

Femmes de Timbuktu pour la Préservation de l'Environnement (Action for Young Women in Timbuktu for Environmental Preservation) (AJFTP) is a community-based organisation. It started collaborating with schools in 2023, acknowledging that children were disproportionately impacted by climate change, and that these impacts were being felt at school, as well as at home. The project was initially implemented by AJFTP with donations from the local community and, in 2025, UNICEF provided additional financial support to scale up the approach. These school clubs are designed to educate children about climate change, whilst actively engaging them in identifying and mapping risks and designing and delivering activities to improve the school environment. For example, they have mobilised children to plant trees, to protect children and school infrastructure from extreme heat and high winds. They have also supported schools to improve waste management practices and engage children in school clean-ups to promote ecological awareness and practices that moderate climate impacts (e.g., clearing litter from draining ditches). AJFTP has also worked with local firefighters to train children on how to respond to extreme weather events like flooding, alongside supporting preparedness learning and agency.

Child-led eco-club activities fostered broader changes in school culture and community awareness and preparedness through the replication of good practices. Through the AJFTP project, children contributed to school governance dialogues via structured engagement in eco-clubs, with school-based committees overseeing the implementation of green school initiatives. Although not formal decision makers, children functioned as catalysts for local coordination, raising awareness, initiating peer-to-peer outreach, and co-leading school clean-ups and tree planting. The clean-ups elevated young people's roles as climate leaders and increased their agency in climate action. Through their advocacy and initiatives, children influenced parents, teachers, and local leaders to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours. In some cases, their actions sparked dialogue between different school levels (e.g., between primary and secondary students) and helped normalise environmental care across the school system. Children also began sharing their experiences at home, extending the reach of climate adaptation messages beyond the school context.

Voluntary youth education programmes and school clubs support increased awareness of how to respond to climate risks and provide capacity strengthening to school children. Organisations such as the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) are supporting the agency of youth in LLA by providing targeted training and skills-strengthening activities to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Child Led Uganda: URCS – Schools Programme



URCS undertakes a four-part youth programme where youth volunteers are trained and equipped with skills in first aid, disaster risk management (handling emergencies, disaster preparedness, and response) and community service (health promotion, disaster response, and social services) to tackle the impacts of flooding and extreme heat.

The programme includes Red Cross school clubs and club days, which create alternative spaces for engaging school children to raise awareness, share knowledge with other children and become agents of change. The URCS Schools Programme also integrates first aid, emergency preparedness, and anticipatory action into the curricula of the schools it works with, equipping children with the knowledge and skills to respond to climate related risks in their communities whilst ensuring other local actors – notably local government – are engaged.

In this programme [led by the Uganda Red Cross], the children and youth are... trained in aspects of protection of life and health. Under there, we have things like first aid...emergency response including for flooding...and community service...."

FGD, URCS Youth Volunteers, Kampala



ii) Supporting Child-led Climate Risk Mapping

Similar approaches have been adopted by Save the Children, including outside of school contexts, to promote the role of children and youth in analysing and promoting an understanding of climate risks. For example, Save the Children uses child-centred *Hazards, Vulnerabilities, and Capacities Assessment* (HVCA)¹³ tools in its programming, as an approach to child-led and child-centred disaster risk reduction, notably in urban settings. In programmes like *Enhancing Resilience of Urban Communities in Disasters and Climate Change* (ENCORE), child-led groups have conducted hazard and risk analysis in their schools and communities, to support resilience and inform climate adaptation strategies.

Child

Philippines: Save the Children - ENCORE



Led

In the aftermath of Typhoons Nesat and Nalgae, communities in Bulacan Province, Philippines, faced recurrent flooding and heightened disaster risk. In response, Save the Children launched the Enhancing Resilience of Urban Communities in Disasters and Climate Change (ENCORE) project. ENCORE was designed to strengthen community resilience through a school- and youth-based approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate adaptation.



Child-Led Groups. At the heart of ENCORE is the mobilisation of children and young people as leaders in resilience-building. The project supported the creation of child- and youth-led groups that:

- Conducted hazard and risk analysis in their schools and communities.
- Disseminated DRR and climate adaptation messaging to peers and households; and
- Participated directly in early warning systems through the School Hydrological Information Network (SHINe), which monitors rainfall and provides real-time flood forecasts.

By positioning children as active contributors rather than passive recipients, ENCORE shifted the narrative of children's role in disaster response and climate adaptation.

Inclusive Participation. ENCORE intentionally expanded participation to ensure that resilience strategies were community-owned and inclusive. Alongside children, the project engaged:

- Out-of-school youth and young people with disabilities;
- Parents and community leaders; and
- Local government officials and education authorities.

This whole-of-community approach reinforced children's leadership while ensuring that their voices were recognised and acted upon by decision-makers.

Partnerships and Institutional Linkages

ENCORE demonstrated the importance of embedding child-led initiatives within broader institutional frameworks. The project established partnerships with:

- The Department of Education, to integrate DRR strategies into school systems;
- Local government bodies, to legitimise child-led risk assessments and planning; and
- National weather services, to provide technical support for forecasting and early warning.

These linkages enhanced the credibility and sustainability of children's contributions, creating an enabling environment where their leadership could directly influence local planning and preparedness.

Photo credit: Santa Lucia high school students Bulacan, Philippines @JC Gallard

Source: Save the Children, 2014

¹³ See: [Child-centred Hazard, Vulnerability, and Capacity Assessment and Planning in Urban Settings](#)



iii) Using Child-friendly Activities

Using creative, child-friendly activities like music, dance, and drama can support organisations to understand and engage the lived experiences of children and youth. These methods and tools have been deployed by the URCS to support children and youth to identify their own priorities and participate in climate adaptation action. The URCS further integrated a range of school-based activities, often in partnership with local government – including sports, quizzes, debates, games, talks, essay competitions and skills exhibitions – to actively engage children and youth in addressing their needs in the context of climate-related events, such as flooding. School-based efforts such as Red Cross school clubs, “Why Adapt” games elevated children’s voices in climate adaptation action. These activities have also been critical in laying the foundations for mobilising children and youth, for instance in the youth volunteer programme.

Child Centred



“We also have clubs. Through some of our clubs and schools, we teach aspects of climate change. It's called Why Adapt. It's a games-based curriculum where we teach children about climate change and its associated impacts and mitigating actions. So we are imparting knowledge...basically we are doing it through games...”

GD, URCS Youth Volunteers,

Kampala

“Sometimes we use music, dance, and drama. Sometimes we use sports. Sometimes we use quizzes. We use quiz competitions, essay writing competitions and skills exhibitions...”

KII, URCS Official,

Kampala

While school based environmental activities promote the role of children in climate adaptation, these efforts are typically focused on implementation rather than more strategic decision making to support resilience building. Children participate in activities like tree planting, drama performances, and quiz competitions, which build awareness and agency. However, they are rarely engaged in upstream planning, budgeting, or monitoring processes for longer term climate resilience and adaptation. In both Uganda and Mali, programme facilitators and local leaders noted that decisions around programme design, resource allocation, and long-term strategy were usually made without child input. In the primary research, this was not due to cultural or normative resistance, but largely that these types of decision-making spaces tend to be dominated by adults with technical positions gained through education and employment. A similar situation is reflected in global data on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), where only 16 percent (25 countries) identify children as drivers of change, and a mere 6 percent (10 countries) make reference to the NDC development or update process being done in a participatory manner with children.¹⁴

Finally, teacher turnover and lack of technical support for teachers can hinder the continuity of positive impacts. In Mali, efforts were often champion-led rather than systematised, posing risks to sustainability. In many schools, teachers are already over-stretched, limiting their ability to institutionalise climate actions. This aligns with calls for institutional legacy structures to embed child-led work over time (UNICEF, 2021).



iv) Creating Space for Children’s and Youth Voices to Influence Policy and Programming

¹⁴ See: [Global Dashboard](#)

Recent global initiatives demonstrate growing recognition of the importance of enabling child and youth meaningful participation in climate decision making across local, national, and global levels. For example, Save the Children's *Generation Hope Campaign*¹⁵ has helped to elevate the voices of 54,500 children in adaptation planning and policy. The campaign highlights the intertwined nature of climate change and inequality; it calls on world leaders to invest in children, tackle climate change, and share power with younger generations. Structured platforms now exist to enable meaningful participation, such as the COP Child and Youth Pavilion established at COP27 in 2022 and co-facilitated by UNICEF and the UNFCCC, which has become a recurrent feature of global COP negotiations. Similar progress is evident in Africa, where the African Children's Climate Summit provides a dedicated space for children to shape regional climate priorities in advance of the African Climate Summit, held every two years. Governments are also increasingly being encouraged to create opportunities for child and youth participation in planning processes, including through tools such as Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA), "mini-COPs," and child-led consultations. For example, at the 2024 National Adaptation Plan Expo in Bangladesh, the Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA), in collaboration with UNFCCC and youth networks, held multi-stakeholder consultations, incorporating youth voice and panel discussions, that directly informed the development of the "*Guide on Youth Engagement with National Adaptation Plans*," aimed at enhancing youth inclusion in NAPs and NDCs (GCA, 2024).



v) Leveraging Traditional Practices and Existing Community Resources

Leveraging traditional practices used to mobilise community action can support the role of youth in climate adaptation action. In the DARAJA project in Uganda, cultural practices have been leveraged as an avenue to engage youth in the uptake and dissemination of weather information used to anticipate climate events like floods. In the informal settlements of Kampala, youth participating in the DARAJA project have engaged in *Bulungi bwansi*, a traditional Buganda cultural practice of social mobilisation to undertake activities that benefit the whole community, initiated by sounding drums, known as *Gwanga mujje*. These community initiatives bring together residents, local leaders, city officials, and volunteers to clear litter and unblock drainage channels. These activities are particularly important to counter the impacts of flooding caused by heavy rains in informal settlements without adequate infrastructure in place. Youth have played a central role in galvanising collective action through the adoption of these traditional cultural practices. In a context of high youth unemployment, these activities create avenues through which disengaged youth can have their voices heard and shape actions to address the impacts of climate change in their communities. Highlighting the importance of collective action, the adoption of these practices demonstrates the power of working through existing social systems to support the role of youth in climate action.



Figure 5: Promotional Flyer for Mon Ecole Ma Responsabilité

Mobilising local resources and informal governance structures, including financial contributions, helps to expand the role of young people in climate action. The DARAJA project established volunteer youth "climate champions" in informal settlements, to disseminate weather data door-to-door, as well as uploading information onto community WhatsApp groups and mobilising households for community meetings, including through *Bulungi bwansi*. In the Uganda Red Cross Schools Programme, headteachers were invited to contribute directly to environmental management, using available school resources to support school-based action. While still largely mediated by adult facilitators, leveraging existing

¹⁵ See: [Generation Hope: 2.4 billion reasons to end the global climate and inequality crisis - Save the Children's Resource Centre](#)

community resources has allowed young people to be more directly involved in the implementation of programmes, whether as climate champions or eco-club members.

Child centred



"Some communities have adopted cleaning campaigns...usually, drainage [channels are blocked] by garbage, polythene bags...these people have come up with ideas of backyard farming [by] recycling plastic bottles, polythene and biodegradable waste ...this is helping them to better manage the solid waste challenge. Others [are engaged] in campaigns like Weyonje, a monthly campaign that is led by KCCA and partners including the URCS..."

FGD, URCS Youth

Volunteers, Kampala

"We create links with school that are located in our branch areas. So, we identify a patron who is going to help us coordinate activities with the school administration and our regional branch. [The patrons work on a] voluntary basis because voluntary service is one of our fundamental principles..."

KII, Uganda Red Cross Official, Kampala

"As a slum dweller, you can't wait for a KCCA official who sleeps in Munyonyo, Muyenga (high end residential areas) ...the responsibility is yours as an individual, to dredge the channels and properly dispose of rubbish. We have learned how to sort rubbish, and recover the recyclable materials for sale, and the generation of organic manure from organic waste ..."

FGD, Women and girls, Bwaise, Kawempe

Division, Kampala



vi) Connecting to Local and National Government Structures and Systems

Integrating child-responsive climate adaptation planning into existing local governance, such as local council committees or youth councils can enhance the reach, relevance, and sustainability of climate adaptation efforts. These bodies already play a trusted role in grassroots coordination and information-sharing, particularly through their regular presence at local events. Embedding adaptation planning within familiar systems ensures that climate actions are locally grounded, widely understood, and more likely to be sustained over time. For example, in Uganda, adaptation priorities were shaped through close collaboration with local government leaders and schools. For example, the Uganda Red Cross Society facilitated collaboration with *Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA)* and *Kasese Municipal Council* to support child-responsive decision-making in joint relief and emergency interventions for climate-related disasters. This facilitated collaborative fundraising efforts focused on both immediate relief and long-term preventive action. Similarly, through the *DARAJA* project in Uganda, *SDI-Uganda* and *ACTogether* have further harnessed opportunities for community members (including women and girls) to engage with local government through community meetings, dialogues, and *barazas*¹⁶ hosted within informal community spaces and formal government spaces. They now have connections to these actors that they continue to draw on in managing climate risks and events.

Child sensitive



"We are able to consult and cooperate with the local leadership and the city government (KCCA), which wasn't the case before especially as far as planning regulations and standards are concerned... [to ensure engagement in key decision making processes]."

FGD, Women and girls, Bwaise, Kawempe

Division, Kampala

"I have invited head teachers of primary schools, of secondary schools, of private schools, to get certain things done within their means, which will support environmental management and encourage the children at school to be involved in environmental management. But also, the local government has some free hours on the radio stations, where I go and speak to the community..."

KII, KMC

Official, Kasese

¹⁶ A *baraza* is a traditional community gathering, common in East Africa, where people come together under local leadership to discuss issues, share knowledge, resolve disputes, and make collective decisions.

“...we are also doing activities for school environment programmes. We engage especially secondary schools in debates, and primary schools in talks, but also encourage each school to have an environment club, encouraging the [school] administrations to engage the children in taking care of the trees at school...”

KII, KMC Official, Kasese

Municipality

While their role is central to locally led adaptation, local governments struggle with insufficient funding, skills, and equipment. In Uganda, local authorities lack a dedicated budget line for climate or disaster management in most cases, restricting their ability to maintain services or scale successful practices. Despite being at the frontline of response, local governments continue to rely heavily on central government funding and decision-making, which is often insufficient to meet the scale and urgency of local needs. This has necessitated increasing reliance on non-state humanitarian actors, such as the Uganda Red Cross Society, to fill gaps in service delivery and emergency response. This dependence exacerbates an existing reliance on informal, non-state systems to meet daily needs, such as in Kampala’s informal settlements where government services are already stretched, or non-existent. These include community-based social support networks like Village Health Teams (VHTs) for healthcare, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), moneylenders for finance, self-help initiatives for community cleanups to dredge blocked drainage channels or rescue teams of volunteers for emergencies during floods, solid waste collectors to dispose of or recycle plastic or organic waste that triggers floods, informal sanitation workers who empty toilets, and portable water vendors to deliver water.

5.2 Addressing Gender Inequalities and Promoting the Leadership of Women and Girls

5.2.1 Rationale

Women and girls are among those most affected by climate-related insecurities, facing heightened exposure to climate risks due to structural inequalities such as unequal access to economic resources, socially prescribed roles, and political marginalisation. These gendered vulnerabilities translate into reduced access to food and income-generating opportunities, increased risk of gender-based violence, early marriage, and a growing burden of unpaid care work (OECD, 2022; Zuzana, 2023; Save the Children, 2023).

Yet, women and girls are not only at risk; they are also critical agents of change. As primary users and managers of household energy, food and water, and as leaders within their communities, they play a pivotal role in shaping locally led adaptation strategies that are child- and gender-responsive, equitable, and sustainable (Tye *et al.*, 2023). However, climate adaptation initiatives and frameworks tend to overlook their role and agency. For example, while 86 percent of National Adaptation Plans recognise women's vulnerability to climate change, only 16 percent explicitly position them as leaders in climate action (Dazé and Hunter, 2025).

The findings show that enabling child-responsive LLA requires a shift towards integrating the gender-inequalities faced by women, girls, youth, and other marginalised groups in climate action. This speaks to *Principle 2* of the LLA principles, which emphasises the importance of addressing structural inequalities in climate adaptation, including gender inequality, through expanding the role of marginalised communities in climate adaptation action and decision-making. Women play a vital role in leading climate action that can promote community resilience through responding to the specific needs and priorities of children and marginalised groups (OECD 2022; GCA, 2023; Tye *et al.*, 2023). Child-responsive LLA therefore necessitates understanding and addressing gendered vulnerabilities and inequalities, as well as promoting the agency of marginalised groups, including women, girls, and gender diverse people, in climate action.

Box 4: Key Principles for Integrating Gender Inequality in Child-Responsive LLA

Child Led 	LLA Principles:
Child centred 	✓ Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children [...] by integrating gender-based economic and political inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability into the core of adaptation action and encouraging vulnerability and encouraging vulnerable and marginalised individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions (2) ✓ Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily (3) ✓ Ensuring transparency and accountability to local stakeholders (7)

5.2.2 Good Practices

The research demonstrated growing recognition of women and children as key stakeholders in climate change with some locally embedded organisations already effectively integrating women and children as change agents in their programming. This section outlines several approaches and good practices identified in the research for addressing gendered structural inequalities as part of LLA, including:

- i) **Engaging women-led and youth-led groups and organisations** helps bring decision-making closer to the realities of children and youth, while promoting the leadership and agency of women most affected by climate events and risks, drawing on and pooling local knowledge and resources.
- ii) **Engaging elected women leaders and promoting the role of local authorities** aligns climate adaptation action with existing local accountability systems, supports women's leadership and strengthens local knowledge for gender- and child-responsive programming.
- iii) **Using gender assessments, analysis and tools** supports initiatives that are rooted in local gendered realities, including those of women, girls, boys, and minority or marginalised groups.

Child centred



i) Engaging Women-led Groups and Organisations

Proactively engaging women-led and women's rights groups and organisations can support local accountability and the leadership of women and girls in adaptation efforts. INGOs like the Uganda Red Cross Society and local councils in Kampala and Kasese have created specific entry points for women-led organisations to co-lead activities, including early warning dissemination, clean-up campaigns, and environmental restoration. In Kasese, women's groups have played a prominent role in coordinating the Uganda Red Cross Society's emergency response to flooding, as well as riverbank restoration and strengthening. These groups engage the wider community through regular church meetings, and community gatherings to share information and collect feedback, strengthening the accountability mechanism of responses. Women led organisations are typically (but not always) registered at the local level and are well positioned to support programme framing, design, and implementation, particularly where targeted outreach and sustained engagement with women and girls are required. Importantly, these CBOs often maintain strong linkages with both elected women leaders and grassroots women's groups (The Share Trust, 2025).

Informal grassroots collectives can mobilise women and girls to participate and contribute meaningfully in efforts to adapt to climate risks. Women's Self Help Groups, saving and credit groups, such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), and Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs) support income generation and financial inclusion but have expanded their role beyond economic functions to become trusted and influential actors within their communities. The Red Cross Society and DARAJA projects in Uganda, recognised and leveraged the capacities of these informal women's collectives for information dissemination, community mobilisation, and feedback collection, serving as informal accountability mechanisms for their climate preparedness and response interventions. Elected women leaders also actively engaged with women's savings groups and conducted informal, door-to-door and one-on-one consultations to gather information on the priorities and needs of women and children within their communities.



Figure 6: Members of the Yenege Tesfa Self Help Collective (Ethiopia) Planning their Joint Action Plan

Identifying women and youth climate champions strengthens the reach and credibility of climate adaptation efforts. In the DARAJA project, community engagement strategies similarly centred women's leadership, with community gatherings, church meetings, and other social events used to convene diverse stakeholders, including young women and girls. The designation of women, and female youth climate

champions helped improve the credibility and reach of these efforts, reinforcing the importance of women as both initiators and drivers of adaptation processes.

Working as a Coalition to support community-centred action can directly engage women and women's groups in climate action. Coalitions of diverse local actors allow communities to deliver a multi-sectoral response, enabling different actors and groups to share capacity and learning, and facilitate fundraising and the pooling of resources. This approach also supports joint advocacy around community priorities, as demonstrated by the experiences of local coalitions in Nigeria and Bangladesh. Similarly, in Maban County, South Sudan, Save the Children's anticipatory action initiative demonstrated how child- and community-led planning structures, such as DRR clubs and flood committees, can act as important community platforms, enabling diverse groups to coordinate preparedness measures and ensure the continuity of education during recurrent floods.

Child
centred



Bangladesh: The Share Trust, Sundarbans Local Coalition Accelerator

In Khazura village in the coastal region of Bangladesh, more intense and frequent flooding of a central canal disrupted daily life, particularly during the rainy season. Without a bridge, residents — especially children — were forced to walk over two kilometres to access essential services such as schools, markets, and health facilities. The lack of connectivity also restricted access to agricultural land, undermining local livelihoods.

A community consultation process, led by the Sundarban Coalition (comprising 14 local CBOs three of which are women-led and three youth-focused) in the Sundarbans region of Bangladesh, engaging women and youth residents, identified the absence of a bridge as a major climate-related barrier. In response, the Coalition led the construction of a locally designed floating wooden bridge. Members of the community were engaged in the construction process. This low-cost, locally led adaptation has significantly reduced travel time, improved access to services, and allowed children to attend school regularly — even during the rainy season.



Photo: The Koyra Floating Bridge in use over the Patharkhali Canal

Following the landfall of Cyclone Remal, the Sundarban Coalition were able to deliver immediate assistance to affected populations. The Coalition provided multipurpose cash transfers to 936 individuals identified as among the most impacted. Community-based organisations worked in direct coordination with affected households to identify priority recipients through door-to-door visits and participatory validation processes. Final recipient lists were

reviewed by the wider community prior to distribution, resulting in 84 percent of the transfers being allocated to women (including 44 recipients identified as persons with disabilities). Community feedback mechanisms were established from the outset, with 90 percent of participants reporting awareness of how to lodge complaints. Overall, 98 percent of recipients expressed satisfaction with the timeliness of the cash transfers.

Source: Sundarban Coalition Lead, 2025 (The Share Trust/Warande Advisory Centre)

Programmes have adopted gender-responsive framing¹⁷ by explicitly targeting women and girls as active participants in community resilience and climate awareness initiatives but can, however, fall short of

¹⁷ The Save the Children Gender Equality Marker (GEM) based on the IASC Gender Marker highlights identifies gender integration as ranging from gender unaware, some elements of gender sensitivity, gender sensitive, to gender

transformative objectives if these groups are not engaged throughout programming. Emerging practices, such as the investment in women-led dissemination of early warnings and the engagement of women in savings groups to drive local action (e.g., the DARAJA project), point to a shift toward more inclusive framing, particularly at the community level (see *Section 5.4*). These trusted women-led networks have played a critical role in ensuring that climate information reaches women in a timely and accessible manner, supporting household decision-making and early preparedness for climate-related floods and extreme heat. More generally, these practices tend to focus on women's vulnerability to climate impacts (e.g., through displacement, health and WASH needs), rather than positioning women as central agents of change and actively involving them as leading in the framing of programmes. This aligns with a broader global trend, where only a small proportion National Adaptation Plans explicitly recognise women as leaders of climate adaptation action, despite the vast majority identifying their vulnerability to climate change (Dazé and Hunter, 2025).

Although women were reported to be regularly consulted by SDI-Uganda and ACTogether during planning sessions, they are not consistently represented in higher-level decision making spaces or budgeting processes. In the DARAJA project, women influence implementation priorities through feedback mechanisms, where they have requested practical adjustments to project activities, including WhatsApp alerts, the inclusion of tree planting and WASH improvements. Bringing information to where women already are – not just assuming access – marks a critical shift toward equity in adaptation processes (CDKN, 2024; Mclvor *et al.*, 2020). Whilst this reflects growing responsiveness, it falls short of enabling leadership and local decision-making. Locally led adaptation involves moving beyond consultation to meaningful participation in priority setting of children, youth or the adults that are closest to their priorities and needs (e.g., parents, care givers, teachers, local government). As Principle 2 underscores, this involves dismantling the structural and normative barriers to women's leadership in climate action.



ii) Engaging Elected Women Leaders and Local Authorities

Within local government structures, elected women leaders play a vital role in advocating for gender equality and supporting the needs of women and children in their constituencies to support gender-responsive local adaptation planning. In Kampala, SDI-Uganda and ACTogether have played a key role in promoting the participation of subnational government women leaders and women's groups in disseminating climate information including to household members and marginalised groups. These leaders are politically connected and hold a formal mandate to represent and lobby for women and children's interests at sub-national and, in some cases, national levels. Their presence provides a valuable entry point for embedding gender-responsive or gender-transformative approaches into local adaptation planning. Moreover, many of these leaders maintain strong relationships with community-based women's groups, enabling a more coordinated and representative approach to adaptation decision-making. The Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) and SDI-Uganda used their convening power to bring women's groups, elected women's representatives, and national government together to address the impacts of flooding and extreme heat on girls and women.

Local authorities are actively responding to some of the gendered impacts of climate change. In Uganda, Kasese Municipal Council has established a set of social safeguarding policies and procedures aimed at protecting women and girls from the adverse effects of climate change-induced events, particularly

transformative (2017) whereas the UN Women Gender-Responsive Framework ranges from gender discriminatory, gender blind, gender sensitive, gender responsive to gender transformative (UN Women, 2020).

flooding. These safeguards include structured mechanisms for identifying, reporting, and responding to incidents of harm, with a focus on mitigating risks of gender-based violence faced by those residing in displacement shelters. Kasese Municipal Council, in collaboration with the URCS, has also contributed to generating critical data and insights on the challenges faced by women and girls in displacement shelters, including risks of sexual and gender-based violence. By improving the availability of sex, age and disability disaggregated data, the Uganda Red Cross reported better targeting of response activities, while generating a nuanced evidence base for gender-responsive adaptation programming.

Child centred 	<i>"We [are] able to consult and cooperate with the local leadership and the city government (KCCA), which wasn't the case before especially as far as planning regulations and standards are concerned..."</i> FGD, Women and girls, Bwaise, Kawempe Division, Kampala <i>"...for us, we do the coordinating role. We coordinate them (the youth groups), they initiate, and for us, we provide the leadership and coordination..."</i> KII, KMC Official, Kasese Municipality
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Local authorities promote the leadership and participation of women, including those living with disabilities, in the implementation of interventions. Local government respondents reported that efforts have been made to foster an enabling environment that encourages and supports the active participation of girls and women in decision-making processes in both Kasese and Kampala. In the DARAJA project, women's visibility and agency in community decision-making was reported to have increased because of mobilisation by women leaders. These women leaders targeted a 30 to 50 percent attendance of women in key meetings with local government or project partners. In Kasese, climate adaptation programmes by the Uganda Red Cross Society have made deliberate efforts to engage women with disabilities in planning and implementation processes. This inclusion was facilitated by local Government working intentionally with a group of women living with disabilities. The group supported tree planting activities to stabilise riverbanks and mobilised other women living with disabilities in these initiatives.

Child centred 	<i>"We use structures of [local] government where we have a representative at every level. At the village level, we have a youth representative, we have a male representative, we have a person with disabilities...So, these people help us in the mobilisation of their communities [and respective groups they represent] to reach them."</i> KII, KMC Official, Kasese Municipality <i>"We have [worked with] community groups mostly led by women and youth. They are the initiators of interventions ...we work through these community-based groups to engage communities to plant [bamboo trees for riverbank protection], or they also plant for the community sometimes. We have worked in this way with organisations like Women Empowerment Initiative (WEI), Gender Environment and Development Action (GEDA) Uganda and Mission For All (MIFA). Those are women-led organisations. We have an organisation of women living with disabilities which also helps us in planting trees and mobilisation of the community..."</i> KII, KMC Official, Kasese Municipality
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While Uganda's locally led adaptation initiatives demonstrate strong community ownership and women's leadership, the funding landscape remains heavily fragmented and unpredictable. Local government actors in Kasese and Kampala consistently highlighted the absence of dedicated budget lines for climate adaptation, and even more so for gender-specific climate initiatives. Local authorities and INGOs reported collaborating to deliver small-scale gender-responsive programming, but this support is rarely institutionalised. Most adaptation efforts led by or inclusive of women, such as savings group initiatives, school-based climate clubs, or Red Cross resilience programmes, rely on short-term project grants and in-kind community contributions (e.g., seedlings, radios, first aid kits). The LLA principles call for '*patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily,*' but the research in Uganda indicates

a lack of stable financing, undermining long-term adaptation planning and limiting the sustainability of gender-responsive interventions. The meaningful agency and leadership of women led groups is challenged by short-term, project-based funding, as well as capacity gaps to manage the large investment thresholds expected by major climate finance facilities (Pinnington *et al*, 2024; Cooper *et al*, 2019; Llulla *et al*, in GCA, 2024)

”

“As local governments, we don't have a budget for disaster management...Our budget, our local revenue is too small compared to the realities we face. As Kasese Municipal Council, we generate about UGX 1.5 billion/430,00USD from local revenue. But when a disaster happens, which [might] need a grader and maybe an excavator, we don't have money to buy such equipment ...”

Key Informant,

KMC Official

Despite inclusive local council structures, decision-making power and financial autonomy was reported to generally remain centralised at the national level in Uganda. This limits the ability of local actors, including women leaders, to plan and budget for gender-responsive climate interventions. Global reviews echo this challenge, noting that without devolved decision-making authority, local women's agency is restricted (OECD, 2022; UN Women, n.d.).

Limited staffing in local government and state-led structures, especially in gender or climate positions, constrains gender-responsive implementation. In Kasese, it was noted that local Government staff were often overstretched, making it difficult to support dedicated gender programming. Similarly, in Kampala, the scale of informal settlements overwhelmed the capacity of existing local Government structures. In Mali, it was noted that a barrier to sustainability was the turnover in teaching staff, who are often overstretched and unable to dedicate much time to climate-issues. These issues reflect broader constraints in government and funder budget allocations, where the integration of gender into climate adaptation initiatives remains under-resourced, despite policy commitments to gender-responsive adaptation (Elwell *et al.*, 2023; Mbabazi and Pinnington, 2024).



iii) Using Gender-Responsive Assessment, Analysis, and Tools

Participatory risk assessment and decision-making tools support gender- and child-responsive programming. In both Kampala and Kasese, programme facilitators reported shifting from top-down assessments to more inclusive and context-sensitive tools that reflected women and girls' distinct needs and constraints. Participatory tools used by URCS and the DARAJA project, such as community mapping, games-based risk assessments, and storytelling, have made it easier for women and girls, including those with low literacy or disabilities, to engage meaningfully in risk identification. The tools have enabled women and girls to articulate climate risks – such as flooding, water contamination, and poor drainage – and propose relevant adaptations. The tools were tailored to women's lived experiences, including WASH needs, care responsibilities, and mobility constraints. These approaches mirror those used in the *LIFE-AR Devolved Climate Finance Guidelines*, which emphasise the use of differentiated tools to capture gendered climate priorities (GCA, 2024; Mclvor *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, Save the Children's gender and power analysis tools use participatory approaches that are designed according to context, capability of participants, age appropriateness, and gender sensitivity (Save the Children, 2022c).



Child Centred

"Community member involvement is from the initial stages. Because before designing a community intervention, you always have to do a community baseline first. To see what their needs are, to capture the needs of the people...because you may come [with climate change interventions] which the communities don't want, they want something else...So there is always that. There is what we call Urban Disaster Risk Reduction...you follow the communities from the grassroots. And know what hazards [they face]. We draw with them (the community) the risk/hazard maps...because they understand their environment better than you...so from that approach, you understand the hazards and risks of climate change from the perspective of the community, and then generate interventions together..."

KII, URCS Official, Kampala

5.3 Integrating Conflict Sensitivity

5.3.1 Rationale

The intersection of climate change with restricted opportunities for adaptation and resilience-building in fragile contexts exacerbates climate risks facing children and youth, reinforcing the need for their role in climate peace and security initiatives. An estimated 698 million youth¹⁸ live in fragile and conflict-affected settings, representing approximately 67 percent of the total population in these contexts (UNDP, 2024). Marginalised youth are particularly vulnerable to recruitment into armed groups in contexts like Mali that are affected by the interactions between climate related food insecurity and resource-based conflicts (NUPRI, SIPRI; 2021). Despite being at the forefront of climate and conflict-related activism, youth are often excluded from leadership roles in both sectors, limiting their ability to shape policy and action. Recognising their critical role, the UN Security Council adopted *Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security* in 2015, after sustained advocacy from over 11,000 young people across 110 countries. This resolution established five key pillars – participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration – urging Member States to create mechanisms that enhance youth participation in peace processes (UNSC, 2015).

The distinct vulnerabilities and contributions of children and youth to climate action in fragile contexts are often overlooked. A 2023 thematic review by the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) on Climate Security and Peacebuilding found that over half of the projects analysed sought to increase youth and women's participation in local natural resource management and climate, peace, and security (CPS) initiatives. However, of the 43 projects examined, only eight had a primary focus on youth, and data limitations hindered deeper analysis of their engagement. The review underscored the need for a stronger understanding of youth motivations, barriers to participation, and sources of vulnerability to maximise their contributions to CPS efforts (PBF, 2023). Moreover, climate resilience programmes are too often sidelined in complex contexts in favour of emergency humanitarian assistance and security interventions. In contexts where *de facto* authorities are not recognised by the international community, for example in Afghanistan and central Sahel, adaptation efforts are further constrained (ICRC, 2023). At the same time, high co-financing requirements for accessing multilateral climate finance create additional barriers, leaving adaptation needs unmet and increasingly costly, while the financial and human toll of loss and damage continues to rise (UNEP, 2023).

Climate change is also putting young environmental defenders at risk, particularly in regions where resource extraction and environmental degradation are contested. In 2022, at least 177 environmental defenders were killed worldwide, with 88 percent of these murders occurring in Latin America and the Caribbean, underscoring the dangers young people face when advocating for climate justice (Global Witness, 2023). Additionally, climate-induced migration is fuelling tensions in many host communities. Jordan, for example, one of the world's most water-poor countries, has absorbed over 600,000 registered Syrian refugees, placing extreme pressure on already scarce resources such as water (UNICEF, 2024). These resource stresses often lead to competition and conflict between host communities and displaced populations, making climate adaptation a key component of peacebuilding efforts (CGIAR, 2024). Similarly, in Nigeria, climate-driven desertification has forced migration patterns that have intensified farmer-herder conflicts, leading to frequent outbreaks of violence (UNDP, 2025).

¹⁸ UNDP define youth as aged between 15 and 32 whereas our study definition defines youth as between 15 and 24 (see Section 3).

Implementing LLA in fragile and conflict-affected settings presents unique challenges, requiring a context-sensitive approach that accounts for governance fragility, conflict dynamics, and institutional limitations. Local organisations in conflict-affected contexts can navigate complex security environments, respond flexibly to evolving crises, provide more timely support, and ensure adaptation strategies are rooted in community needs (The Share Trust, 2025). But there is a need to build a strong understanding of the barriers to the participation and agency of youth in climate, peace and security efforts, leveraging lessons from the inclusion of women and other local actors to build the evidence base for conflict-sensitive LLA.¹⁹

The findings show that enabling child-responsive LLA in conflict affected contexts involves key shifts, several of which are articulated in the LLA Principles. Notably, *Principle 8: ‘collaborative action and investment’* across different initiatives and sources of funding (e.g., humanitarian assistance, development, conflict, climate change) to avoid duplication and enhance efficiencies and good practice. Similarly, ensuring transparency and downward accountability to local stakeholders can promote their role in monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of climate adaptation initiatives. For example, using approaches like Save the Children’s Child-Centred Social Accountability (CCSA) approach can empower children and their communities to hold service providers and decision-makers accountable for the quality and accessibility of essential services, including health, education, child protection, and social welfare. By ensuring that children’s voices shape service delivery, policy decisions, and local governance structures, CCSA can strengthen locally led adaptation efforts and promote equitable access to resources and services in climate-affected and fragile contexts.²⁰

Box 5: Key Principles for Enabling Child-Responsive LLA in Conflict Affected Contexts

Child Led  Child centred 	LLA Principles: ✓ Supporting collaborative action and investment (8) ✓ Ensuring transparency and accountability (7) ✓ Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy (4)
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5.3.2 Good practices

In this section, several good practices for enabling child-sensitive and child-centered LLA in conflict-affected contexts are outlined, including the following:

- i) **Promoting direct and flexible funding.** Channelling decentralised funding directly to and through local authorities, via mechanisms such as performance-based climate



¹⁹ Conflict-sensitive climate adaptation refers to the design and implementation of climate adaptation measures in ways that minimise the risk of exacerbating tensions or triggering new conflicts. Integrating conflict-sensitive adaptation actions can strengthen local resilience whilst fostering trust and cooperation with communities and between citizens and institutions (MDPI, 2022). If not carefully designed, these interventions can unintentionally exacerbate socio-political tensions, particularly in fragile contexts.

²⁰ CCSA follows a structured, participatory process designed to enhance dialogue between children, communities, and local authorities. The process comprises six steps. It begins with identifying the child rights issue that needs to be addressed, ensuring that adaptation strategies respond to the needs and priorities of children within their specific context. This is followed by bringing together children, civil society organisations, and service providers to determine which services and policies should be monitored, fostering a sense of shared responsibility in addressing service gaps. See: [How to do Child-Centred Social Accountability - Save the Children’s Resource Centre](#).

resilience grants, can be highly effective when combined with participatory planning processes and continuous capacity strengthening.

- ii) **Investing in local capacities.** In contexts where access is limited, scaling up investments in the technical and institutional capacities of community groups, particularly those that intentionally engage women and other marginalised groups, can foster robust grassroots organisations that remain resilient amid conflict.
- iii) **Emphasising inclusive planning processes.** Engaging communities, including children, in the planning and design of a continuum of disaster management with a focus on anticipatory action and enhancing climate resilience can significantly improve the timeliness and relevance of interventions, as demonstrated in Save the Children's project in Maban, South Sudan. The meaningful participation of women and youth in LoCAL's planning processes further reinforces the value of inclusive approaches.
- iv) **Supporting collaborative action and institutional engagement.** Coordination is often difficult – particularly in conflict-affected areas – but joint planning platforms, integrated assessments, and inclusive oversight committees can help align adaptation, peacebuilding, and security priorities.

Child centred



Child sensitive



i) Promoting Direct and Flexible Funding

The Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL), developed by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), is a global mechanism that channels climate finance directly to local governments to support locally led adaptation. In Mali, LoCAL is implemented in partnership with the *Agence Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales* (ANICT) and the *Agence de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable* (AEDD) and embedded within national decentralisation systems. The regions of Mopti and Kayes, in Central and Western Mali, have been increasingly impacted by conflict. UNCDF has been working in Mopti since 2014 and expanded to Kayes in 2020. It provided direct funding to local authorities, which implemented climate adaptation measures using the LoCAL performance-based climate resilience grants (PBCRG), which are integrated into Mali's national budgetary framework. These public investments focused on labour-intensive, community-driven interventions such as reforestation, water management, and land restoration, particularly in areas at risk of intercommunal conflict. The respondent from the LoCAL project, however, emphasised the need for improved coordination among technical and financial partners and called for increased resource mobilisation to meet growing local demands and build long-term resilience.

Child sensitive



LoCAL uses performance-based climate resilience grants (PBCRGs) to fund locally identified adaptation priorities such as water infrastructure, climate-resilient agriculture, and conflict mitigation around natural resources. Communes lead participatory planning processes, supported by technical assistance and capacity-building funds. A menu of eligible investments is aligned with national climate priorities and reviewed against minimum criteria, including transparency, inclusion, and responsiveness to women, youth, and marginalised groups.

The mechanism aligns closely with the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation: it shifts decision-making power to local actors, supports institutional strengthening, ensures local participation, and promotes accountability through annual performance assessments. In Mali, LoCAL has reached over 70,000 people with more than 30 adaptation investments.

Source: KII UNCDF & UNCDF

Project Evaluation Report, 2022

Decentralised funding can be effective in supporting locally led adaptation in conflict-sensitive countries or sub-regions. These approaches empower local actors to drive adaptation efforts by integrating participatory decision-making, dedicated local climate finance, and institutional capacity strengthening, for example in Kenya.

Child
sensitive

Kenya: Ministry of Development of Northern Kenya, Kenya County Climate Change Fund



Established in 2010 as part of Kenya's broader devolution reforms, the County Climate Change Fund (CCCF) was developed to enable climate-resilient development in the country's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). Spearheaded by the *Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands* in partnership with the *International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)*, the CCCF mechanism institutionalises climate finance at the county level, directly supporting community-led adaptation activities.

Participating counties commit 1–2 percent of their development budgets to climate change adaptation, which is allocated across ward-level investments (70%), county-level initiatives (20%), and planning and oversight functions (10%). Decision making is devolved to community institutions, through Ward and County Climate Change Planning Committees. Ward Committees are responsible for conducting participatory resilience assessments and prioritising investments, while County Committees oversee technical guidance, procurement, and strategic coordination. A key feature of the mechanism is the integration of scientific data and local knowledge, facilitated by tools such as the Resilience Assessment Toolkit and community-developed indicators. **CCCF-funded investments in Isiolo have included water infrastructure, pasture management, and livestock health services, areas that are deeply linked with conflict sensitivity in the ASAL region.** An evaluation by CGIAR across Isiolo, Kitui, and Wajir found that the participatory planning and dialogue facilitated by CCCF projects contributed to reduced intra and inter communal conflict, improved relationships between pastoralist and farming communities, and reduced tensions around access to water and rangeland resources. The fund has also contributed to addressing non-traditional climate-related conflict risks, including domestic violence and human-wildlife conflict. *Medina et al., Assessing Kenya's CCCF, 2024*

In conflict affected contexts, where international actors have restricted access, channelling grants directly to women and other marginalised groups supports locally led action. For example, in Mali, targeted initiatives were implemented to strengthen women-led green economic activities in selected communes. Women's groups in the agro-pastoral sector were supported to launch climate-smart businesses through a package of interventions that included technical and operational training, simplified business planning, and small grants were delivered via mobile money (UNCDF, 2023).

There is growing recognition that informal, community-driven LLA driven by networks of Mutual Aid/Self Help Groups can play a critical role in crisis contexts. For example, in complex contexts – such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan – community collectives are being supported to help community members adapt to changing conditions and build resilience. These grassroots mechanisms offer potential to support community-led adaptation and recent research highlights the benefits of channelling microgrants direct to these groups (The Share Trust, 2025). If these community collectives partner with local intermediaries, such as Coalitions of local actors (channelling funding and providing capacity sharing), LLA can be scaled and replicated.

Child sensitive



Nigeria: The Share Trust, The Nigeria Local Coalition Accelerator

In north-east Nigeria, the **Nigeria Local Coalition Accelerator (NLCA)** is advancing a multi-sectoral, community-driven response to climate change and conflict-related challenges in Adamawa State. The coalition brings together nine local organisations – all of which focus on youth and two also on gender – and a network of community actors to co-design and implement locally led multisectoral solutions via a Joint Action Plan.

One of the Coalition's key climate interventions focuses on sustainable energy and women's economic empowerment. In collaboration with groups of women and youth, the NLCA is supporting the production of charcoal briquettes from agricultural waste and the fabrication of energy-efficient cookstoves. This initiative provides an alternative to firewood and traditional charcoal, thereby reducing deforestation and indoor air pollution, generating income for producers, and improving household health by lowering smoke exposure.

The Coalition is also establishing waste-collection areas, and training households on waste transformation. These activities are being combined with the creation of women's Self Help groups to maximise income-generating possibilities and locally led climate action.

Nigeria LCA Coordinator, 2025



ii) Investing in Local Capacities

A central tenant of the expansion of the LoCAL project to Kayes, Mali²¹ was to strengthen the capacity of local communities, particularly women, to manage risks associated with environmental degradation and climate change. The focus was to strengthen the capacities of communities – including marginalised groups – local authorities, and other local actors to integrate conflict and peace dynamics related to natural resource exploitation, gender, and climate change adaptation into their local planning and budgeting systems and implementation processes. A key component of the strategy included awareness-raising and training on intercommunal conflict management and capacity strengthening for communities, local authorities, and civil society organisations to support participatory planning processes that are gender-responsive to the environmental drivers of conflict and fragility. This was complimented by the implementation of climate adaptation measures through local short-term employment schemes (cash for work) in conflict-prone areas and the promotion of green economic activities targeting women, with the aim of supporting sustainable income generation and economic resilience. Similarly, Save the Children's work in conflict-affected Somalia highlighted the importance of focusing on community-led initiatives in contexts with limited formal governance systems in place, including locally led anticipatory actions and inclusive, gender responsive decision-making processes

Child centred



Somalia: Save the Children, Locally Led Adaptation in Somalia

Somalia faces significant climate-related challenges, exacerbated by ongoing conflict and fragile governance. The country experiences cycles of extreme drought followed by heavy rains, leading to recurrent drought-flood patterns. Recent years have seen severe droughts, followed by El Niño-induced flooding across most areas. Additionally, Somalia faces oceanic hazards such as cyclones. **Climate shocks have led to widespread displacement. In 2023 the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that 7.7 million people globally were living in internal displacement specifically due to disasters.** Somalia's economy heavily depends on rain-fed livestock farming,

²¹ This was part of a peacebuilding-focused adaptation project with support from the *United Nations Peacebuilding Fund* (PBF)/MINUSMA. The project "Support for Risk Management Related to Environmental Degradation through Adaptation Measures in Areas at Risk of Intercommunal Conflict in Mali" was initiated in 2020, covering four communes — two in the Kayes region and two in the Mopti region, for a duration of eighteen months.

which provides 40 percent of the country's cereal needs. While established supply chains exist, they remain vulnerable to climate shocks and global market disruptions, resulting in chronic food insecurity. Children are among the most affected, with 40% vulnerable to malnutrition and high levels of acute hunger.

A key approach of Save the Children to addressing Somalia's climate challenges is community-driven adaptation. Even before structured adaptation programmes were introduced, community structures played a critical role in its approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR). Due to the absence of effective government-led disaster response mechanisms, local DRR committees have been established to identify risks and develop action plans, supported by civil society organisations.

Effective disaster preparedness in Somalia relies on locally led anticipatory action, using local knowledge to forecast and mitigate risks. While religious beliefs sometimes challenge the concept of climate forecasting, Save the Children has collaborated with communities to develop alternative methods, such as traditional weather observation, to anticipate hazards.

Save the Children Somalia recognises that women play a key role in household decision-making, particularly in matters related to children's health and education. Efforts are being made to increase the participation of women and youth in broader decision-making processes. For example, community-based Disaster Risk Management (DRM) committees and resilience groups aim to ensure that at least three out of nine committee members are women.

Source: KII, Save the Children Somalia, February 2025

Despite these efforts, several barriers to locally led adaptation persist, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings such as Mali. Respondents in schools reported ongoing gaps in understanding and awareness of climate change and its impacts. According to the local NGO (AJFTPE), some community members did not believe that climate change was occurring in their area, and as a result, were less likely to take adaptive or preventative action. This highlights the continued need for investments in climate literacy, especially in contexts where misinformation, competing priorities, or limited access to education constrain proactive adaptation efforts.



iii) Emphasising Inclusive Planning Processes

It is important to secure the meaningful engagement of diverse local actors in project planning and design. However, in contexts where formal governance systems are weak, and societies are marked by high levels of social fragmentation and exclusion, devolving decision making and agency beyond tokenistic consultation can be challenging. Participatory governance in contexts of social fragmentation and marginalisation also risks exacerbating existing conflict dynamics and drivers of fragility, including gender inequalities. The LoCAL programme in Mali responded to this by supporting participatory planning processes that are underpinned by gender and conflict analysis, to inform the identification of climate adaptation priorities in communal development plans. Similar approaches have been taken to gender-inclusive participatory governance of natural resources in Mali by CARE International, where elevating the role of women in community governance structures has led to more inclusive decision-making and attention to women's priority issues.

Child
sensitive



Mali: CARE, GENRE+ project

In Mali, CARE International implements the UK FCDO *Gender-transformative and Equitable Natural Resource Management for Resilience, Social Cohesion and Peace Project Phase II* (GENRE+). The aim of GENRE+ is: **strengthening community resilience to the effects of climate change and natural resources-related conflicts by: i) improving governance in natural resource management (NRM),**

making it more inclusive and collaborative; ii) revitalising traditional conflict prevention and management mechanisms and strengthening community adaptation to reduce vulnerability to climatic and social shocks; and iii) transforming negative social gender norms to ensure the inclusion of women in strategic decision-making spaces linked to NRM and peacebuilding.

The community noted that state and community structures existed to mitigate these tensions (such as the Land Commission and the Village Chief's Councils). However, **prior to the project, decision making often excluded women**. As a result of advocacy, and a deep engagement with these traditional structures, 16 women were appointed to roles in these institutions, with positive outcomes including more sustainable tree-management, awareness raising on the effects of climate change, and access to affordable farmer inputs.

As a result of their engagement with the project, one third of respondents (34%) – including 33 percent of women and 35 percent of men – reported behavioural changes in the past six months regarding women's participation in natural resource management and conflict resolution. These changes were reflected in increased attention to issues such as women's access to land, which was acknowledged by 68 percent of respondents overall (79% of women and 57% of men), as well as greater inclusion of women in decision-making processes.

CARE Genre+ Project Report, 2024

As part of its performance-based grant system, minimum criteria for LoCAL in Mali require communes to engage community members – including children and youth – in planning sessions. These criteria are assessed as part of annual evaluations to ensure that local development plans reflect the voices of all citizens, including the most vulnerable. However, in practice, planning processes often include specific invitations to young people and women to participate in communal discussions. Where gaps in knowledge or technical skill-sets exist, these are addressed through subsequent training and planning cycles. In Simbi, for example, children and women's groups played a central role in shaping the prioritisation of investments, such as the construction of a bridge to ensure access between villages during seasonal flooding.

**Child
sensitive**



"One of LoCAL's key strengths lies in its emphasis on inclusive planning processes."

"Commune leaders are expected to ensure transparency and inclusion, with LoCAL-supported evaluations examining whether key populations have been appropriately represented."

KII, UNCDF Staff, Bamako

In neighbouring Burkina Faso, the government's revised National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for 2024–2028 represents an important effort to institutionalise inclusive and cross-sectoral coordination for climate adaptation. Developed through a participatory process involving national ministries, civil society organisations, and technical partners, the NAP offers a structured roadmap to manage climate risks across key sectors including agriculture, environment, water, and health. It prioritises evidence-based, cost-effective adaptation measures and is underpinned by a combination of domestic financing and support from development partners. The planning process drew on tools such as multicriteria analysis and cost-effectiveness assessments to ensure that selected interventions were technically sound, socially responsive, and financially feasible. Notably, the NAP promotes decentralised, locally led planning by encouraging community-level integration of climate risks into local development frameworks. However, like many NAPs globally, it remains significantly underfunded and lacks the intentional engagement of children and youth in planning and monitoring, which poses a critical barrier to translating these priorities into effective implementation at scale.

However, despite this progress, implementation faces significant challenges. Political instability, persistent insecurity, and weak institutional coordination continue to undermine the effectiveness of adaptation efforts in Burkina Faso, particularly in areas affected by overlapping climate and conflict-

related shocks. Echoing the findings from Mali, these dynamics risk deprioritising long-term resilience in favour of immediate crisis response.



iv) Supporting Collaborative Action and Institutional Engagement

Climate change and conflict are deeply intertwined in fragile settings, yet most adaptation efforts continue to address them in isolation. In many contexts, environmental degradation, shifting resource availability, and extreme weather events intensify existing tensions and contribute to new forms of conflict, particularly where governance systems are weak or contested. At the same time, protracted conflict undermines the foundations of climate resilience by eroding public infrastructure, fragmenting social networks, and restricting humanitarian and development access. Successful adaptation in these settings has focused on strengthening social safety nets during periods of lower-intensity violence (ICRC and ODI, 2024). Additionally, most adaptation programmes fail to integrate conflict-sensitive approaches, treating climate and conflict in silos. Climate resilience programmes are often sidelined in favour of emergency humanitarian assistance and security interventions, which, while critical in the short term, do little to address the underlying drivers of vulnerability and conflict (ICRC and ODI, 2024).

Implementing LLA in fragile and conflict-affected settings requires adaptation strategies that explicitly incorporate resilience-building, addressing not only climate and environmental risks but also the social, economic, and institutional vulnerabilities unique to these contexts, alongside governance gaps and coordination challenges across the nexus. Although the LoCAL project promotes anticipatory and long-term approaches to climate adaptation, UNCDF respondents noted that most community responses remain reactive.



“Recurrent shocks, particularly floods, compounded by conflict, have left communes focused on managing immediate impacts rather than building future resilience...”

KII, UNCDF Staff, Bamako

Cross-sectoral inclusive coordination mechanisms including at the community level and connected to key stakeholders are critical for effective and sustainable LLA. In one LoCAL locality, recurring tensions between farmers and pastoralists around water points led to a community-designed perimeter to reduce conflict and improve safety, particularly for women. The site is now managed by a trained community group, with ongoing technical support. Committees composed of diverse community members, including women and youth, were created to monitor and mitigate future conflict. It is these joint/cross-sectoral and inclusive coordination mechanisms that are critical to successful LLA. A similar community-led model connected with a range of stakeholders in Burkina Faso, highlighting the importance of coordination across levels, sectors, and stakeholders in complex contexts.

**Child
sensitive**



Burkina Faso: Sème l'Avenir, Sèmences de Survie

In Burkina Faso, from 2015 to 2020, the *Semences de la Survie* (SoS) (translated as Seeds of Survival) programme supported over 25,000 people across four regions to build food and seed security, economic resilience, and leadership among women and youth. The project was implemented by APN Sahel and Sème l'Avenir with funding from Global Affairs Canada. The initiative advanced a community-led model grounded in biodiversity-based and agroecological practices. These included community seed banks, participatory plant breeding, intercropping, and use of local organic inputs, approaches that enhanced climate resilience and reduced dependency on external inputs.



CSOs, research institutions, and government extension services, leads to more sustainable outcomes. Projects that created linkages between community structures and agricultural research groups and collective platforms outperformed individual initiatives. By project close, 19 institutions across local, national, and international levels had integrated elements of the SoS model into their practices or policies.

At the core of the initiative were community-led seed banks established in 27 communities, alongside the formation of 36 women-led and two youth-led farmer groups. These groups not only strengthened local food systems but also served as key drivers of agroecological entrepreneurship, local market access, and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. Over 90 percent of participating households adopted at least three SoS practices. Women's leadership in programme groups rose from 30 percent to 80 percent and youth engagement helped reduce youth migration. The project showed that strengthening grassroots structures, when combined with connections to

Sème l'Avenir (2020)

5.4 Supporting Inclusive Anticipatory Action

5.4.1 Rationale

Anticipatory action focuses on enhancing capacities, systems and infrastructure to address or reduce risks, including climate-related risks, before forecasted impacts. As an approach to disaster risk management (DRM), it aims to identify, assess and reduce the impact of hazards by preventing new risks, mitigating existing ones, and effectively managing residual risks. It involves conducting risk assessments (including understanding the vulnerabilities and capacities of communities, systems and individuals), establishing early warning systems, planning for hazard events, and using forecasts to trigger interventions. Established local disaster risk reduction (DRR) mechanisms, such as community or school-based committees, provide foundational support to effectively set up and implement anticipatory action strategies when hazards are predicted. Anticipatory action presents an opportunity to move from reactive to proactive crisis response, saving lives and livelihoods before disasters fully unfold (Save the Children, 2022b).

Strengthening the role of anticipatory action in climate adaptation strategies establishes the links between short and long-term planning and resilience building. While anticipatory action is proactive and focused on “near-term” risks, it is integral to longer-term adaptation strategies to improve systemic resilience to climate change (Anticipation Hub, 2025). Integrating anticipatory action as a proactive component of climate adaptation therefore supports a more robust and systemic response across immediate short-term and longer-term climate risks. Separate or fragmented approaches to anticipatory action, disaster risk reduction, and development planning frequently lead to duplication of resources, reduced efficiency, and missed opportunities for sustainable impact. Integrated programming aligning anticipatory action within broader DRR, humanitarian response, and long-term development frameworks has proven more effective and sustainable (Save the Children, 2022b; Regmi *et al.*, 2019).

Save the Children's child-centred anticipatory action approach emphasises that effective planning involves utilising and supporting existing resources and capacities. Crucially, it acknowledges that communities possess unparalleled knowledge and expertise of local hazards, early warning indicators, and the specific impacts of disasters in their contexts. Local and Indigenous knowledge systems, comprising

both technical knowledge and traditional knowledge passed orally across generations and accumulated through careful observation of local environments, play a critical role in this understanding. To ensure that anticipatory action is genuinely locally led and contextually appropriate, it is essential to identify, acknowledge, and integrate the knowledge available at the local level. Effectively integrating Indigenous knowledge with scientific insights requires the establishment of sustained, meaningful partnerships built on mutual trust and respect for diverse forms of expertise (Save the Children, 2024). This approach has been valuable in contexts like Somalia, where cultural relationships with the weather come into tension with the idea of ‘forecasting’, requiring adjusted approaches that better align with traditional approaches to understanding and relating to weather patterns (see *Section 5.3.2/ii*).

Effective anticipatory action requires robust collaboration across multiple sectors and actors, including governments, local communities, NGOs, research institutions, and private-sector partners. Collaborative networks improve risk analysis accuracy, enhance early warning effectiveness, and support coordinated responses. Strategic partnerships, such as those fostered by Save the Children with national meteorological agencies and research institutions, significantly strengthen overall preparedness and risk mitigation capacities (Save the Children, 2022b).

There is growing awareness of the importance of integrating women and children's needs into anticipatory action frameworks, yet large-scale, systematic implementation remains limited. Save the Children promotes the importance of understanding age- and gender-specific risks for effective anticipatory action, as well as developing early warnings and forecasts adapted and accessible to women and children. Meaningfully consulting children helps to ensure their perceptions, vulnerabilities, rights, capacities, and preferences in relation to hazards are incorporated into programming (Save the Children, 2022b). For example, girls are disproportionately affected by secondary and indirect impacts following disasters, including increased vulnerability to violence, heightened pressure towards child marriage, and disruptions or cessation of educational opportunities (see *Section 4*) (IFRC, 2021). As such, child centred and locally led anticipatory action can help address inequalities and the differentiated risks faced by children, aligning with the focus on addressing structural inequalities in *Principle 2* of the LLA principles.

A critical component of child protection in emergencies is ensuring children's direct access to adequate and reliable protection services. Children themselves frequently report lacking essential information on how and where to seek protection assistance during emergencies. They also express uncertainty about accessing available support services and a lack of confidence in adults’ abilities to deliver competent protection support (IFRC, 2021). Child-responsive anticipatory action provides an opportunity to identify these gaps before a disaster hits, and to strengthen the ability of children to access essential services.

The findings show that enabling child-responsive locally led anticipatory action requires key shifts, several of which are articulated in the LLA Principles. Anticipatory action speaks most directly to *Principle 5* of the LLA principles, with its focus on ‘building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty’ through drawing on different forms of knowledge (local, traditional, Indigenous, generational, and scientific) in adaptation decisions. At the same time, it complements the focus on long-term, predictable funding in *Principle 3*, as well as the focus on building an institutional legacy through strengthening understanding of climate risks in *Principle 4* (see *Box 6*).

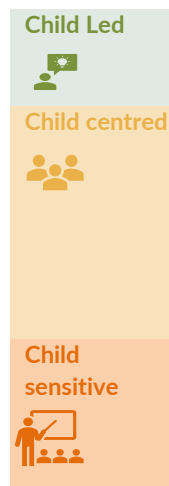
Box 6: Key Principles for Enabling Child-Responsive Locally Led Anticipatory Action

Child Led  Child centred 	LLA Principles: ✓ Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty informing adaptation decisions through a combination of local, traditional, Indigenous, generational, and scientific knowledge (5) ✓ Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily (3) ✓ Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy (4) ✓ Collaborative action and investment across sectors, initiatives and levels (8) ✓ Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children (2) ✓ Flexible programming and learning (6)
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5.4.2 Good Practices

In this section, several good practices and enablers of child responsive and locally led anticipatory action are outlined, including:

- i) **Training youth climate champions** strengthens the agency and leadership of young people in climate action, enabling a youth-led approach;
- ii) **Participatory assessment approaches** ensure the active role of children and young people in identifying climate risks and suitable responses, strengthening a child-centred approach;
- iii) **Supporting inclusive community structures for anticipatory action and channelling microgrants**, supports anticipatory planning by facilitating community grants for those most in need and for implementing identified priorities.
- iv) **Disseminating climate information through locally appropriate and contextualised channels** supports a child responsive approach, enabling the parents, carers, teachers and other important adults in children's lives to access and respond to climate information in ways that respond to children's needs, rights, and priorities.



i) Training Youth Climate Champions

Training youth climate champions in disseminating climate information enabled them to meaningfully engage in anticipatory climate action. Through the DARAJA project, SDI-Uganda worked with local communities to disseminate actionable climate information, targeting marginalised groups and those living in informal settlements. Youth were trained as climate champions to receive and share information, gained from the *Uganda Meteorological Authority*, focusing on dissemination to individuals who did not have access to smart phones to receive weather data through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, radios or TVs. Engaging young people to disseminate this information increased their knowledge of climate change, while also positioning them as active agents of change in their communities.

Child  Led	<i>"We get information from the Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) through the [youth] climate champions. The message shifted from "weather forecast" to "weather preparation." The information is passed on through various WhatsApp groups of the village by Climate Change champions [and] the Local Council leadership, who use the community radio and mobile speaker [system] to ask the residents to prepare for the flood events. Leadership informs the locals to take care of the little children, asks those who were meant to go to work not to, those taking care of the disabled to take them to higher grounds (safe zones) to avoid flooding. The news also targets pregnant women..."</i> FGD, Women and girls, Kawempe Division, Kampala
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ii) Supporting Inclusive Committees for Anticipatory Action and Channelling Microgrants

Community structures or Mutual Aid/Self Help Groups are powerful, low-cost informal mechanisms for anticipatory action and directly channelling resources to implement identified priorities. When supported by local intermediaries²² that can absorb large grants and provide microgrants to community structures in a timely manner, a compelling case is made for scaling group-based microgranting for anticipating hydrometeorological disasters. For example, research in India, Afghanistan, Uganda, and Nigeria (The Share Trust, forthcoming) highlights the potential of women's SHGs to metabolise successive rounds of microgrants to respond to priority needs, initiate small-scale enterprises, and channel support to women and children in the wider community. Similarly, support from Save the Children in South Sudan to form and train inclusive community flood committees, help identify community flood alert triggers, promote anticipatory community and child-led planning, and provide community grants, allowed the implementation of anticipatory actions. Children played a key role in preparedness through DRR clubs, leading awareness campaigns, identifying flood risks around schools and contributing to evacuation plans. The project invested in school infrastructure to ensure continuous education in the case of a flood. This included the creation of temporary classrooms and elevated learning spaces that allowed students to continue learning even when the surrounding area was inaccessible.

Child
Centred



South Sudan, Save the Children, Locally Led Anticipatory Action in Maban

Maban County, in South Sudan's Upper Nile State, is highly vulnerable to seasonal flooding, which has historically disrupted education, displaced families, and threatened livelihoods. In response to recurrent flood risks, Save the Children implemented an anticipatory action initiative in 2023 - 2024, supported by DANIDA, to strengthen community and child-led preparedness, with a particular focus on ensuring continuity of education and protecting and preparing vulnerable households.

The project applied a forecast-based anticipatory action model, activating early interventions approximately 10 days before predicted flood onset. Interventions were informed by rainfall forecasts and river gauging data, as well as community-defined triggers identified through participatory planning processes. Key components of the approach included:

- **Community- and child-led risk assessments** and flood preparedness planning;
- **Establishment and support of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) clubs** in schools;
- **Formation and training of community flood committees (including women, youth, children, people living with disabilities etc.,)** in anticipatory planning and facilitating community grants for implementing identified priorities;
- **Multipurpose cash assistance was provided** to vulnerable households ahead of predicted floods to implement community priorities; and
- **Infrastructure measures to ensure education continuity and reduce risk,** including temporary learning spaces and access roads.

Community and child-led planning significantly improved timeliness and relevance of anticipatory action initiatives. The project improved access to early warnings through radio broadcasts, phone alerts, early warning networks and community megaphones. These efforts ensured messaging reached groups that were potentially marginalised from traditional information sources, echoing the findings from the DARAJA project. The anticipatory action was triggered using community-informed thresholds with meteorological forecasts, successfully merging traditional and scientific knowledge to facilitate appropriate early action. Feedback from community members showed that they are

²² For example, Coalitions of local NGOs, local government, local networks, local pooled funds, see: <https://thesharetrust.org/articles/2025/6/19/shifting-funding-strengthening-systems-where-are-local-intermediariesand-how-do-they-work-2>

currently taking proactive measures to mitigate future floods. These include relocating shelters, pre-positioning supplies and building flood-safe routes to and from important infrastructure. Feedback also highlighted increased confidence among children and adults in their ability to prepare and respond to floods.

Save the Children, *Stepping Back Going Forward and Save the Children, Anticipation in Action in 2024*



iii) Participatory Assessment Approaches

Participatory approaches to identifying risks and vulnerabilities enable children and youth to articulate their priorities and shape adaptation decisions. Structured engagement with communities, including children, were foundational across all stages of climate change programming, from baseline assessments through to design and implementation, in both Kampala and Kasese Municipalities in Uganda. Participatory processes, including community-led hazard mapping and risk analysis led by the Uganda Red Cross Society, enabled young people to articulate their priorities and shape interventions that reflected their lived realities. For example, the Uganda Red Cross integrated community feedback into programme adjustments, such as shifting to WhatsApp alerts and speaker systems after women expressed concerns about access to early warnings. These responsive adjustments are grounded in the lived realities of women, including mobility constraints, safety concerns, and caregiving responsibilities. Similarly, in the DARAJA project, children and women were engaged in key communication decisions, such as the development of context-appropriate icons for interpreting weather data. Similar approaches have been applied by Save the Children using its participatory Hazard, Vulnerability, and Exposure (HVE) tool.

Child
Centred



"The DARAJA project is being implemented by ACTogether/NSDFU. 'DARAJA' is a Swahili word that means bridge. The purpose was to bridge low-income households (slum dwellers) and organisations like Uganda National Meteorological Agency (UNMA) Youth, including girls and boys. [They] were trained as climate champions to receive and [share information] with the rest of the community, especially those without personal phones and radios TVs..."

FGD, Women and girls, Bwaise, Kawempe Division, Kampala

Child
Centred



"...we asked for a mobile community speaker which was [provided]. We also requested for information to be shared through WhatsApp groups. These have made information about climate change impacts more accessible..."

FGD, Women and Girls, Bwaise, Kawempe Division,

Kampala

"...we have also created an alert system where we have a WhatsApp group where we engage vulnerable communities about extreme events. Before the rain comes, we meet several times with slum dwellers and agree on what each one of us is supposed to do. If it is desilting, we say KCCA you are supposed to do this..."

KII, KCCA Official, Kampala

Child
Centred



Solomon Islands: Save the Children, Child Centred Climate Adaptation

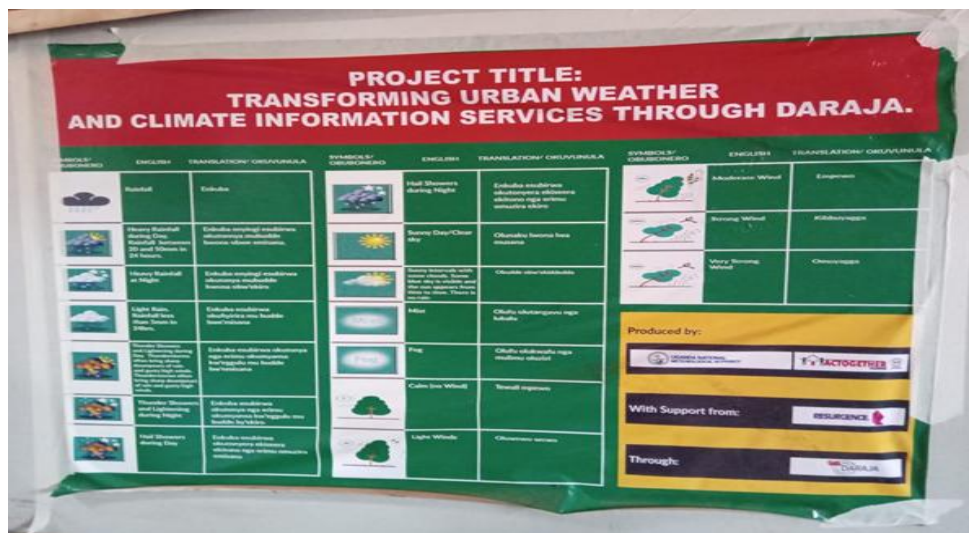
Through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership's Disaster READY initiative, in partnership with Save the Children, children in the Solomon Islands are actively learning to assess their own safety and vulnerability in daily life, particularly in situations affected by disasters or climate change. To build a deeper understanding of preparedness among youth, Save the Children has facilitated participatory Hazard, Vulnerability, and Exposure (HVE) mapping activities involving children aged 13 to 16 in Isabel Province.

Through their active participation in community hazard mapping exercises, children identify and delineate high-risk areas and safe zones within their immediate environment. This participatory

process empowers children and young people to develop and implement practical risk-reduction plans based on their unique insights into local vulnerabilities.

Save the Children, Child-Centred Anticipatory Action Guide, 2024

Figure 7: The DARAJA Project Community Information Sheet (English/Luganda)



iv) Disseminating Climate Information through Locally Appropriate and Contextualised Channels

Embedding climate information services in familiar and contextualised communication channels supports marginalised communities prepare for extreme weather events. For locally led adaptation to be effective, climate and weather information must be communicated in ways that are timely, relevant, and accessible to all including children. The DARAJA project delivered weather information through community radios, timed to coincide with when families were most likely to be at home (early morning or late evening). By sharing messages in local languages, working with community members to disseminate them, and linking messages to actionable recommendations, this approach increased access and improved understanding, especially for women, who were traditionally excluded from conventional information systems. Embedding information services within everyday routines through using community radios helped ensure that early warning systems reached those most affected by climate risks, enabling residents to prepare for incoming floods and reduce harm. The challenge moving forward is to ensure that early warning systems and weather and climate information systems better integrate the needs of children and associated sectors (i.e., education, health, social protection) informing both anticipatory action and longer-term adaptation efforts.

Early warning and anticipatory action initiatives were reported by communities to have had several positive impacts on climate affected children and their communities. Actors involved in the DARAJA and URCS projects in Kampala (programme actors, communities and local government) reported reductions in child mortality during flood events, attributed in part to improved access to early warning information and weather data. The timely dissemination of climate-related information via locally led communication channels has enabled communities to implement preventative measures like evacuation and clearing drains, thereby reducing risks to children's safety, benefitting them indirectly from better household preparedness and timely evacuation in flood-prone settlements. Information on floods and extreme heat have further enabled communities to devise ways of mitigating potential risks and threats to children. For example, in Kasese, anecdotal accounts indicate that enhanced early warning systems and weather

information have supported proactive measures to limit the incidence of flood-related diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, and malaria, as well as avoid heat exhaustion and dehydration in Kampala.

**Child
Sensitive**



"We were taught that on days when the heat is extreme (extremely hot days), we should put on light and white clothes which don't absorb the heat. In addition, if we could, we were requested to stay under the shade and drink as much water as possible..."

FGD, Women and girls, Bwaise, Kawempe Division,

Kampala

Women's engagement in anticipatory action has had secondary benefits in terms of hygiene, safety, and dignity. Women and girls in Kampala reported that they have improved access to weather and climate information, through diverse dissemination channels, including women leaders, climate champions, and WhatsApp groups because of the DARAJA project. Women-led groups and women leaders played a key role in the dissemination of information on how households could prepare accordingly, not just sharing data but how they should respond. These locally trusted actors played a critical role in ensuring that information reaches women in a timely and accessible manner, supporting safer mobility, household decision-making, and early preparedness for climate-related events such as floods and extreme heat. For example, under the DARAJA project, the design of early warning systems now considers WASH and mobility constraints for women in informal settlements. Through the early warning systems, women were better prepared to manage WASH related challenges, for example where to find clean water and sanitation services during periods of heavy rain or extreme heat. Other examples include the *Women Wetem Weta (Women's Weather Watch)* initiative in Vanuatu, which empowers women leaders to disseminate warning information to rural and remote communities. Launched in early 2019, this system uses bulk SMS messaging in local languages to provide timely information, enabling communities to effectively anticipate hydrometeorological hazards. Building on the success of a similar initiative in Fiji, the initiative underscores the critical role of women community leaders and knowledge holders in anticipatory action (UN Women, 2020).

However, the time-bound nature of projects and gaps in the availability of quality and timely early warning information and frameworks at national frameworks can be challenging. For example, the three-year DARAJA initiative poses serious challenges for sustained community engagement, including cultivating community participation and enhancing long-term resilience of high-risk groups such as children and youth. These settlements experience high levels of population inflows and outflows, which requires continuous engagement in designing, planning, adapting, funding and implementing effective child and youth-responsive practices to reduce their vulnerability to floods and extreme heat. Similarly, the need for effective climate downscaling and cross-sectoral integration highlight the importance of system-wide efforts that ensure local applicability. For example, some countries, such as Vanuatu, have developed integrated climate change and DRR policies, which supports coordinated locally led action.



Vanuatu: Government of Vanuatu, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Policy

The Government of Vanuatu adopted the **Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (2016–2030)** as a comprehensive framework to strengthen resilience at both national and local levels. The policy is notable for its emphasis on integrating climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction, as well as its active engagement of community committees. It also aligns with Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan and global frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for DRR (2015–2030) and the Paris Agreement.

The policy was developed through extensive consultations with provincial governments, communities, and traditional leaders. It established provincial and municipal climate and disaster committees, later formalised through the Disaster Risk Management Act (2019). At the provincial level, committees coordinate with local leaders, faith-based institutions, and women's and youth representatives to define adaptation priorities and actions. At the municipal level, committees work even closer to communities, facilitating participatory risk assessments, preparedness drills, and the dissemination of information through local volunteers.

A central focus of the policy is **early warning and preparedness**. Provincial and municipal committees are tasked with monitoring cyclone tracking, flood alerts, and volcanic activity, and relaying this information through trusted local channels such as radio, SMS, church groups, and WhatsApp. They also lead community preparedness planning, including mapping evacuation routes, pre-identifying shelters, and organising simulation exercises that build household and community readiness. Vanuatu's approach stands out for the way it embeds anticipatory action and disaster management within existing community structures. This integration of local knowledge, trusted communication channels, and inclusive representation has strengthened early warning and preparedness in ways that are practical and sustainable.



Figure 9: Vanuatu's Climate Change Policy

Figure 8: AJFTPE Staff and Volunteers During a Sensitisation Activity



6. Summary of Findings: Good Practices and Enablers of Child, Youth and Gender-Responsive LLA

Several good practices and enablers for child responsive LLA have been identified in the research and are summarised in this section. *Table 3* highlights good practices against the *Child-Responsive LLA Spectrum*, from child sensitive to child led. *Table 4* points to the enablers of child-responsive LLA against the eight *Principles for Locally Led Adaptation*, linking them to the good practices identified through the research.

Together the tables provide practical actions for operationalising the LLA principles in support of child and youth responsive climate adaptation that is sensitive and responsive to gender inequalities, from child sensitive, to child centred, and child led approaches.

Table 3: Good Practices across the Child-Responsive LLA Spectrum*

LLA Category	Child Agency	Child & Gender Responsiveness	Good Practice Examples
Child sensitive 	Projects are informed by an understanding of the needs, rights, and perspectives of children and youth, but they are not necessarily consulted and have no (or limited) agency in programming processes	Adaptation initiatives recognise children and youth as a particularly vulnerable group and take steps to ensure their needs and rights are considered. Gender differences are acknowledged but not always addressed proactively.	- Child, youth and gender responsive design based on consultation with local actors that have care giving and other responsibilities towards children and youth (parents, carers, teachers, local authorities), e.g. engaging women-led groups, elected women leaders, local government - Integrating child-responsive indicators as well as sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD) into measuring and learning frameworks
Child centred 	Children and youth of all genders meaningfully participate; they are not just passive recipients and are engaged across programming processes	Adaptation puts the needs, rights, and perspectives of children/youth at the core of climate adaptation initiatives. Initiatives intentionally address gendered needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, and work towards reducing gender inequalities.	- Enabling child and youth agency and active participation in the delivery of key actions and initiatives, e.g., interpreting and disseminating weather data and information, participating in community initiatives to prepare for disasters - Establishment of dedicated and gender-inclusive spaces and frameworks for children and youth to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities, e.g., school-based clubs, engaging educational institutions to develop school curricula - Inclusive community structures e.g., flood committees, youth groups, women's Self Help Groups, enabling gender and child-responsive anticipatory planning and action
Child led 	Children and youth lead decision making across programming processes and are recognised as active agents of change, including the active targeting of girls and young women in all their intersectionality	Adaptation is driven and led by children and youth themselves with adults playing a facilitative/ supportive role. Initiatives aim to fundamentally shift underlying inequalities and promote the leadership of girls and youth.	- Participatory assessments of climate risks and vulnerabilities using child-responsive methodologies where children lead with adult facilitation, e.g., visual mapping, drama and art, school-based clubs - Training and supporting climate champions, including girls and young women, to develop the skills, knowledge and capabilities to advocate on behalf of their own and broader community or environmental priorities, e.g. youth climate champions, inclusive of girls, children with disabilities, other marginalised or minority groups

*Note child-excluded examples are not included

Table 4: Summary of Enablers and Good Practices for Child, Youth and Gender-Responsive LLA

LLA Principle	Enablers	Good Practices	Impacts for Children, Youth, Girls & Young Women
SHIFTING POWER			
 Devolve decision making	Institutionalise the sustained and meaningful participation and leadership of women, children and youth in all adaptation stages Recognise & plan for the unique role of different actors across all programming processes (framing, design, delivery, learning)	▪ Children were engaged via school eco-clubs to plan and implement climate initiatives (e.g., climate-proofing school infrastructure) ▪ Decentralised governance mechanisms were used to promote local decision-making and financial allocation structures (e.g. LoCAL, Kenya County Climate Change Fund) to bring climate finance closer to the realities of children and youth ▪ Women-led organisations and elected women leaders were engaged to promote women's participation in decision-making structures	<i>In Mali, school based clubs increased children's agency to identify and articulate challenges and encourage parents to adopt climate-smart activities</i> <i>In Uganda, women leaders in Uganda advocated for increased agency in Government meetings. They mobilised women with the goal to achieve 30% to 50% participation of women in local Government meetings on climate risks and impacts, resulting in decision making integrating gendered vulnerabilities and impacts</i>
 Address structural inequalities	Use participatory tools (e.g., visioning, mapping, games, drama) to elevate children and youth voices and unpack underlying root causes Integrate conflict, gender and inclusion assessments and analysis into all programme framing, design, delivery and learning Support gender-responsive adaptation policies/programmes – ensuring the involvement of women and girls in framing,	▪ Child-friendly engagement strategies were used to disrupt traditional power dynamics & age-related exclusions (e.g., participatory mapping exercises, drama, art, quizzes) ▪ Gender and conflict analysis underpinned the design of participatory planning models in conflict affected contexts	<i>In both the URCS schools programme and the Mali eco-clubs, participatory methods (drama, storytelling, games, and visioning) enabled even the youngest or less literate children to engage meaningfully</i> <i>In Kasese, Uganda, women's insights into inequalities in household mobility, access to information mobility, school safety, and WASH infrastructure were key in shaping municipal responses.</i>

LLA Principle	Enablers	Good Practices	Impacts for Children, Youth, Girls & Young Women
	including gender-responsive and inclusive indicators	Gender norms and inequalities were identified by engaging marginalised women and girls, including those with disabilities in local climate action planning	<i>In South Sudan, Save the Children helped establish inclusive flood committees to support inclusive planning and action</i>
 Invest in local Capabilities	Mobilise networks of volunteers and local GESI and youth champions to drive local awareness raising Embed peer-to-peer learning structures (e.g., youth clubs, teacher networks, existing women-led structures) to share community-led innovations	Youth champions were supported to raise awareness and disseminate information Existing women-led structures and women's groups were mobilised to disseminate information through traditional practices and channels Women champions were mobilised and trained to drive local awareness and share early warnings	<i>In Kampala, Uganda, the DARAJA project enhanced children's role in anticipatory action by training youth as climate champions increasing their agency at home and in schools</i> <i>In Kasese, Uganda, women's visibility and leadership was supported through targeted skills training and community organising</i> <i>In Kampala, Uganda, the DARAJA project mobilised and trained women champions to disseminate actionable climate information, elevating their role and agency in local climate action and supporting proactive anticipatory initiatives</i>

SHIFTING FUNDING

 Provide patient & predictable funding	Increase investment in informal community structures (e.g., Self Help Groups) particularly in conflict contexts Provide direct, flexible and multi-year funding for youth and women-led organisations and other local actors Leverage climate financing for child-led or child-centred initiatives ensuring resources reach children and youth as active adaptation leaders Leverage climate financing for women's organisations and gender-responsive initiatives	Increased funding was provided to informal women's groups (e.g., SHGs) and women's organisations for adaptation activities, given efficiency and adaptability in challenging contexts Early warning systems were tailored to reflect the needs and priorities of diverse actors Increased funding was delivered to local intermediary structures, who can pass it on to communities and community groups	<i>In Kampala, Uganda, the DARAJA project trained women to co-design early warning messaging that reflected the needs of pregnant women, children, and people with disabilities, with inputs shifting the framing from "weather forecast" to "weather preparation," ensuring greater clarity and relevance</i> <i>In South Sudan, Save the Children facilitated community grants for community flood committees implementing identified priorities and provided multipurpose cash assistance to vulnerable households ahead of predicted floods</i>
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LLA Principle	Enablers	Good Practices	Impacts for Children, Youth, Girls & Young Women
	Channel funding directly to local actors e.g., local governments, women and youth organisations and coalitions Establish pooled funding governed by local bodies to enable grassroots access including microgrants for anticipatory action Support Coalitions of local actors to co-lead multisectoral adaptation interventions grounded in local priorities	▪ Devolving funding decision making to the local/community level	<i>In Bangladesh, a Coalition of 14 CBOs (including women and youth-led) and 4 mentor organisations supported community centred preparedness and response to Cyclone Remal</i> <i>In Mali, the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL), developed by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), is a global mechanism that channels climate finance directly to local governments to support locally led adaptation. In Mali, LoCAL is embedded within national decentralisation systems and has reached over 70,000 people with more than 30 adaptation investments.</i>

SHIFTING POLICIES, PROCESSES & PRACTICE

 Build a robust understanding of climate risk & uncertainty	Align programme design with cultural practices and local knowledge to build ownership, relevance, and local solutions Support capacity strengthening and new posts in local government for gender and child-responsive climate action	▪ Children were engaged as community climate champions ▪ Local authorities and schools were engaged to integrate climate and environmental awareness and skills into school curricula ▪ Local knowledge and understanding was integrated into community based anticipatory action structures, integrating local knowledge with weather data	<i>In both Mali and Uganda, child-centred/led initiatives have contributed meaningfully to building local understanding of climate risk. Children were engaged directly in risk assessments using participatory tools such as drama, drawings, and school-based audits to assess progress.</i> <i>In Somalia, religious beliefs sometimes challenge the concept of climate forecasting; Save the Children worked with communities to develop alternative methods, such as traditional weather observation, to anticipate hazards.</i> <i>In Vanuatu, as part of their 2016 – 2030 Climate Change National Plan, committees are responsible for developing community-based DRM plans, based on climate risk data and tailoring climate change adaptation efforts to local needs</i>
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LLA Principle	Enablers	Good Practices	Impacts for Children, Youth, Girls & Young Women
 Flexible programming & learning	Develop participatory toolkits that use child-friendly and inclusive methods Support adaptive management through integration of inclusive feedback mechanisms to respond to local priorities and address uncertainty Scale and institutionalise proven models (e.g., school clubs, SHGs) through sector systems, including school curricula	▪ Participatory toolkits and approaches were used to engage children in designing, delivering, and monitoring LLA that can be adjusted to changing impacts ▪ Regular engagement with women, youth and children was practiced in climate affected communities during planning sessions	<i>In Uganda, the UCRS used a variety of school-based activities, such as competitions, games, and drama in their “Why Adapt” clubs, making the difficult subject of climate change more engaging for children</i> <i>In Uganda, women influenced implementation priorities through feedback mechanisms in the DARAJA project, where they have requested practical adjustments to project activities, including WhatsApp alerts, the inclusion of tree planting and WASH improvements</i>
 Collaborative action & investment	Harness the power of community collectives by supporting community-collective action and community structures e.g., SHGs, flood/drought committees Support collective community action through established local practices Establish strategic partnerships by promoting robust collaboration across multiple sectors and local actors including strategic partnerships with regional and local hydrometeorological entities.	▪ Youth climate champions were trained in at-risk communities ▪ Women-led community groups/SHGs and local women leaders were involved in diagnosing, designing, and implementing interventions ▪ Traditional practices were leveraged to promote the role of young people in collective action to address climate risks	<i>In Mali and Uganda, school based clubs successfully positioned children to advocate for their specific needs and encouraged them to hold dialogues with teachers and other young people</i> <i>In Uganda, engaging existing community structures and leveraging traditional practices (e.g., “Bulungi Bwansi”) led to the mobilisation of communities in collective anticipatory actions e.g., bamboo planting along riverbanks in Kasese, influencing early warning dissemination strategies, flood prevention actions in Kampala’s informal settlements</i>
 Ensure transparency & accountability	Engage with national and local government to embed child and gender-responsive adaptation into national/sub-national frameworks including monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) Supporting child-responsive adaptation policies/programme – ensuring youth	▪ Approaches have been adopted that meaningfully engage children and youth in monitoring impact ▪ Decentralised climate finance mechanisms were used to promote accountability and participation in	<i>In the Solomon Islands, Save the Children’s Hazard, Vulnerability, and Exposure (HVE) tool provides a structured model through which children and their communities can assess climate risks, and monitor projects, including those affecting education, health, and protection</i>

LLA Principle	Enablers	Good Practices	Impacts for Children, Youth, Girls & Young Women
	involvement in framing, including gender and child-responsive indicators Ensure affected populations – including youth, children, and women have agency and leadership in MEL alongside tailored indicators to measure progress	conflict affected contexts (e.g., Mali, Kenya) ▪ Formal feedback loops created opportunities for ensuring child and gender-responsive flexible programming and local accountability	<i>Save the Children's Child-Centred Social Accountability (CCSA)</i> approach empowers children and their communities to hold service providers and decision-makers accountable for the quality and accessibility of essential services <i>In Uganda</i>, women's feedback has been actively integrated into programme design in Kampala, such as the request for – and subsequent delivery of – WhatsApp-based alerts and community radios for climate information, allowing women's concerns to shape delivery modalities in real time and systematically addressing their constraints

7. Conclusion

In identifying good practices and enablers of child-responsive and gender-responsive LLA, it is evident that initiatives that created space for local agency, including the agency of children, youth and women, were better positioned to support effective child, youth and gender-responsive climate adaptation action. School based initiatives like eco clubs and educational programmes that collaborate with youth volunteers or schools are not just **child-sensitive** but can be **child-led** and **child-centred**. These projects actively involve children and youth in understanding and responding to climate change in their daily lives, **strengthening their knowledge and capacity, as well as their ability to influence** others as climate advocates. Similarly, the DARAJA project in Mali and the Save the Children project in South Sudan engage and support children and youth as climate champions or facilitate inclusive committees, as well as women-led groups. This enables communities to identify, anticipate and respond to climate risks by promoting their agency, resulting in positive adaptation and preparedness outcomes for women and children, **increasing the effectiveness** (i.e., inclusion, reach, responsiveness, sustainability, quality, timeliness) of LLA. Such initiatives leveraged existing traditional practices for community mobilisation and were able to engage whole communities in successful adaptation activities in the face of climate risks. Moreover, through working in collaboration with local authorities, they were able to **strengthen relationships, coordination, and accountability** between at-risk communities and local duty bearers.

But there are also challenges in expanding the space for local agency and leadership, particularly in conflict affected contexts. While gender- and child-responsive approaches were present in locally led adaptation initiatives, they often remain at the level of **ad hoc participation** rather than more transformative, long-term leadership. Promising practices, such as women-led early warning dissemination and leveraging community savings groups, demonstrate the potential of trusted local networks to expand access to climate information and support resilience-building measures. Yet, despite these gains, women and children remain more often framed as “**vulnerable recipients**” of support than as leaders shaping programme design and governance. Moving from **child-sensitive** to **child-led** was particularly challenging in conflict affected contexts like Mali. Here, initiatives like LoCAL were able to support local decision making in climate adaptation planning, but structural constraints had impeded longer term resilience building through the active and sustained role of children and youth. Likewise, while children’s involvement in school-based activities fosters climate awareness and agency, their **voices are largely absent from upstream decision-making, budgeting, and monitoring processes**. While these technical decision spaces may not always be the most appropriate for children, findings indicate that children and youth can play leadership roles within their communities as climate champions and advocates. When brought into direct engagement with local government leaders, as seen in the DARAJA project, an avenue is created for them to influence upstream decision-making.

Locally led anticipatory action is intrinsically linked to effective LLA, supporting child- and gender-responsive interventions that connect near- to long-term adaptation planning and action. The active participation of women and youth in anticipatory action **improved access to climate information** through trusted local networks, strengthening household preparedness, and ensuring early warning systems account for gendered WASH and mobility needs, with significant co-

benefits for children's health, safety, and dignity. However, the short duration of such initiatives highlights a critical challenge: **sustaining community engagement and resilience among high-risk groups**, particularly children and youth, in dynamic informal settlements and linking these anticipatory actions to longer term adaptation planning. The DARAJA project's engagement with local authorities went some way towards addressing this challenge, establishing lasting relationships and connections between at-risk communities and their local leaders. However, to achieve lasting impact, **continuous investment in participatory, gender- and youth-responsive approaches is essential** for reducing long-term vulnerabilities to floods and extreme heat, whilst **connecting short-term proactive anticipatory actions with longer-term resilience building**.

Achieving effective, inclusive, and sustainable LLA requires a deliberate shift in how adaptation is financed, governed, and delivered. This research highlights the need for locally led climate adaptation that moves along the *Child-Responsive LLA Spectrum*, beyond participation (**child sensitive**) to promote the leadership of women, youth, and children as agents of change (**child centred** and **child led**). The **engagement of grassroots inclusive community groups** emerged as a powerful tool for engagement and co-design, as well as delivering programming. Child, youth and gender-responsive LLA also calls for **long-term, flexible financing** that more directly reaches informal and community-based **structures**, especially in fragile contexts. Finally, embedding LLA into national systems and sectoral policies demands **alignment with local knowledge, practices, and priorities**. To enable scale, there is a need for dedicated **child and gender responsive adaptation indicators**, stronger links to national planning frameworks, more **systematic investment** in schools and youth networks as vehicles for adaptation leadership, **and increased coordination** between local formal and informal actors and initiatives. Scaling will also require **decentralised climate governance mechanisms** that allow local diverse actors – including children and youth – to shape and lead context-specific responses.

Figure 9: Women in a Self Help Group in DRC Identify Priority Actions



Source: M. Ethiraj, The Share Trust

8. Recommendations

To implement and scale child and youth-responsive LLA, Save the Children and other international actors, together with diverse local actors, need to reorient power dynamics, policies, funding, and practice. This will empower women, youth, and children as agents of change enabled by strengthened local institutions and system-wide reform. Promoting the active role of children and young people, as well as those closest to their daily lives and realities (parents, care givers, teachers, local authorities) in climate action will enhance the quality of adaptation efforts by responding to local priorities and needs. This section shares key recommendations emerging from the research for supporting these shifts, for international actors followed by recommendations for local actors, both government and non-government. In places the recommendations converge, pointing to the importance of strengthened data, inclusive planning and dedicated spaces for participation across the work of all actors.

8.1 International Actors (Donors, Funders, INGOs)

Shifting Power

- **Institutionalise the sustained and meaningful participation and leadership of women, children, and youth** in all adaptation stages, including in devolved governance structures and mechanisms, across planning, delivery, and learning to better understand the impacts of climate change on women and children; and to generate solutions that address these specific challenges.
- **Use participatory tools (e.g., visioning, mapping, drama, games) to elevate local voices**, especially those of children and marginalised groups.
- **Embed peer-to-peer learning structures** (e.g., teacher networks, youth clubs, learning hubs, existing women-led structures) to share community-led innovations.
- **Support collective action through established practices** (e.g., *Bulungi bwansi*, community meetings) to reinforce local leadership.
- **Recognise and plan for the unique roles of different actors** (e.g., local governments, traditional leaders, youth groups) in programme implementation.
- **Mobilise networks of volunteers, local gender and social inclusion (GESI) organisations, youth champions, and women leaders** to drive local awareness raising.
- **Underpin the design of participatory adaptation planning and priority setting** (e.g. in decentralised climate finance mechanisms) with integrated gender and conflict analysis in contexts of fragility, social fragmentation and marginalisation.
- **Integrate gender assessment and analysis into all programming** to identify structural inequalities driving disproportionate impacts for women and girls and to inform solutions that address these.

Shifting Funding

- **Support decentralised climate finance mechanisms** that devolve decision-making to local actors, including women and youth, in adaptation planning and action.
- **Provide direct, flexible, and multi-year funding** for youth and women's organisations (e.g., women's rights organisations) to enhance stability and planning.
- **Support coalitions of local actors and other local intermediaries** with roots in their communities to co-lead multisectoral interventions grounded in local priorities and to channel microgrants direct to local actors.

- **Establish pooled funding** governed by local bodies to enable grassroots access and collective accountability including through microgrants.
- **Increase investment in Mutual Aid Groups/informal structures** (e.g., women's Self-Help Groups) particularly in contexts where formal structures are weakened by conflict.

Shifting Policies, Processes and Practices

- **Integrate child- and gender-responsive indicators and targets into adaptation finance frameworks, funds, and programming.** The upcoming UNFCCC COP 30 is an opportunity to push for the integration of clear gender and child-responsive metrics and markers in global frameworks, including monitoring for the Global Goal on Adaptation and reporting on the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate change.
- **Engage with local authorities and national governments** to embed-child and gender-responsive adaptation into national adaptation plans, nationally determined contributions, as well as broader national and subnational development plans, budgets, and key sector strategies (e.g. water, environment, infrastructure, education and health).
- **Review projects and initiatives against the *Child -Responsive LLA Spectrum*** to assess progress, identify gaps and develop key indicators for each level of the spectrum.
- **Align programme design with cultural practices and local knowledge** to build ownership, relevance, leverage local knowledge, and integrate local solutions.
- **Harness the power of community collectives** by scaling community-collective action and community structures (e.g., women and youth Self Help Groups) following a mapping of the Mutual Aid ecosystem.
- **Scale and institutionalise proven models** (e.g., school clubs, women's Self Help groups, Coalitions of local actors) through education, health, and disaster management systems.
- **Develop a participatory toolkit** that uses child-friendly and inclusive methods (e.g., sports, music, dance, drama, art, sports, games, debates) to engage communities in Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) and adaptation planning and review, **drawing on existing good practices** (e.g. participatory focus group discussion guides tailored to children and youth)
- **Ensure women, youth, and children** have agency and leadership in monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) with tailored gender and child indicators, providing necessary training and support to MEL leads in good practices and principles (e.g. in feminist approaches).

8.2 Local Government Actors (National/Subnational)

Shifting Power

- **Create inclusive local climate councils and community committees** with quotas for seats for youth, women, and marginalised groups, ensuring decision-making reflects diverse perspectives.
- **Support youth leadership structures** (e.g., climate youth mini-parliaments, school councils and clubs, girl-led movements) that link directly with municipal climate planning.
- **Ensure safe and meaningful participation spaces** for girls and boys, especially from marginalised communities, by addressing barriers such as time, safety, and cultural norms.
- **Mainstream gender equality by requiring that women's organisations and youth networks co-design** local adaptation plans to ensure their needs, priorities, rights, and capacities are fully integrated.

- **Foster equitable partnerships with schools, youth groups, and women's organisations** to co-develop solutions.
- **Promote intergenerational dialogue platforms** so young people, adults, and elders can jointly design climate solutions.

Shifting Funding

- **Institutionalise decentralised climate finance mechanisms** that devolve decision-making to local government.
- **Establish dedicated micro-grant windows for youth- and women-led adaptation initiatives, working** through existing structures for community financial planning (e.g. SHGs, VSLAs, women and youth led groups).
- **Integrate participatory budgeting processes including budget markers** facilitating youth and women to influence and track how local climate funds are spent.
- **Leverage climate finance mechanisms to earmark** a share for gender- and youth-responsive adaptation.
- **Prioritise social protection measures, gender-responsive services and resources** (e.g., gender based violence services, sexual and reproductive health services, childcare) that cushion children and women from climate shocks and respond to the specific risks they face.

Shifting Policies, Processes and Practices

- **Align local child and gender-responsive adaptation plans** with national youth policies, education strategies, and gender action plans.
- **Collect sex and age-disaggregated data collection** in national and local climate monitoring systems.
- **Institutionalise conflict-sensitive participatory child and gender impact assessments** for all adaptation projects, so the risks and benefits for children, youth, and women are systematically considered.
- **Integrate child-responsive and locally led anticipatory action** into longer-term climate adaptation planning and action (e.g., in the context of national government climate policy and DRM frameworks).
- **Mainstream climate education into schools** (curricula, extracurricular clubs, local resilience projects) to empower children as agents of change.
- **Develop child, youth and gender-responsive climate information services** (apps, radio programmes, school clubs) that build understanding of climate risks, raise awareness, and inform local adaptation action.
- **Integrate child health and nutrition priorities** (heat protection, clean water, resilient food systems) into adaptation planning.

8.3 Local Non-Governmental Actors

Shifting Power

- **Champion inclusive governance spaces** by advocating for child, youth, and women's representation in municipal and community climate committees and decision-making forums.

- **Conduct community-led climate audits/mapping** to assess risks faced by children, youth, and women, and use findings to influence local government planning.
- **Facilitate safe participation spaces** where children, youth, and women can voice climate concerns without fear of stigma or exclusion.
- **Promote gender equality in leadership** by training and mentoring young women and girls to lead adaptation initiatives.
- **Invest in climate leadership training** for women and youth to strengthen technical and advocacy skills (e.g., training of 'climate champions').
- **Build coalitions of youth, women's groups, and CSOs** to collectively influence local climate policy agendas.
- **Act as conveners between communities and local governments** to ensure grassroots voices shape adaptation priorities.

Shifting Funding

- **Advocate for direct, flexible, and multi-year funding** for local actors.
- **Mobilise resources for grassroots actors** by setting up small grant programmes for youth groups, girls' clubs, and women's associations working on climate resilience.
- **Establish and/or strengthen local intermediary structures** to absorb and metabolise large grants to then disperse microgrants to local grassroots actors, groups, and initiatives.
- **Help communities access climate finance** by peer-to-peer capacity sharing on proposal writing, reporting, and compliance with donor standards
- **Support community fundraising and cooperatives** that finance child- and women-led adaptation projects (e.g., SHGs, savings groups for climate-smart agriculture).
- **Advocate for earmarked local budgets** for child- and gender-responsive adaptation.
- **Strengthen accountability** by monitoring government adaptation spending and ensuring funds reach child- and gender-focused priorities.

Shifting Policies, Processes, and Practices

- **Use participatory tools** (theatre, storytelling, digital platforms) to capture the climate experiences and innovative solutions of children and youth and collect significant change stories.
- **Support intergenerational learning** programmes that combine Indigenous knowledge with youth-driven innovation.
- **Deliver child- and youth-friendly climate education** through schools, clubs, and community centres, linking knowledge to action projects.
- **Integrate child protection, health, and nutrition priorities** into adaptation programming (e.g., safe shelters, school feeding programs, mental health support, gender-based violence support).
- **Advocate for legal safeguards** protecting children and women from climate risks (e.g., displacement, exploitation in disasters).
- **Push for sex- and age-disaggregated data collection and indicators** in local climate monitoring systems.
- **Support policy campaigns** demanding the integration of child rights and gender equality into local climate action plans.

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Annex A: Research Overview

This Annex shares additional information on the research approach including the targeted country research carried out in Uganda, Mali, and Niger.

Local Research Team

The local research team comprised two deep dive country researchers (one of which was a young researcher) who conducted primary data collection in Mali and Uganda, and two young researchers who conducted secondary research and targeted key informant interviews across the Sahel.

Table A1: Local Research Team

YOUNG RESEARCHERS	COUNTRY
Bintou Mahamane	Timbuktu, Mali
Malika Mohamed	Niamey, Niger
Maharafa Konde	Bamako, Mali
Peter Kasaija*	Kampala, Uganda

*Not classified as a young researcher

Advisory Board Members

Table A2: Advisory Board Members

Advisory Group Member	Title, Location
Rowan Ainslie	Save the Children Common Approaches Global Manager, United Kingdom
Sophy Derrick	PhD student and Researcher, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Jessica Fullwood-Thomas	Climate Change and DRR Global Lead, Save the Children
Nauman Haque	Climate Change Advisory, Save the Children, Bangladesh
Daljeet Kaur	Head of Climate Change, Save the Children, United Kingdom
Tekalign Mengiste	Associate Professor, University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
David Mfitumukiza	Professor, Makerere University College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences
Imelda Phadtare	Lead Advisor Climate change, Save the Children, Australia
Karen Pilgrim	Independent Consultant and Climate Change Researcher, Sweden

Secondary Research

Landscaping report: the initial *Landscaping Report* (unpublished) was based on a desk-based review of the existing knowledge and evidence on Locally Led Adaptation (LLA). This included analysis of scientific research, organisational, and programmatic reports, and grey literature. A mapping of LLA projects was conducted, guided by the Save the Children project team. The Share Trust drew on its own experience with Local Coalitions and Self Help Groups, as well as its networks with key

stakeholders. The review focused on mapping stakeholders, actors, good practices, and lessons learned from LLA initiatives, with analysis structured around the five project's research themes (child-responsive LLA; gender-responsive LLA; LLA in fragile/conflict contexts; anticipatory action; and LLA governance models/approaches).

Scoping: the *Landscaping Report* was translated into French and shared with two additional regional (Sahel) young researchers. They then proposed a list of 8 to 10 potential case studies or articles that would provide additional context to the report. The young researchers then worked closely with the Share Trust team to shortlist the case studies to be included in the primary research and confirmed following discussion with the Advisory Group.

Primary Research

Tools: alongside providing research planning and case study templates, the Share Trust team worked with the two deep dive country researchers to create tools for data collection ensuring alignment with the LLA principles and research questions. In both countries, a portion of the research was participatory, and a portion used more traditional qualitative approaches. The traditional research component involved key informant interview (KII) guides and focus group discussion (FGD) guides, which informed a semi-structured conversation around the key research questions. The tools for participatory data collection used a “before and now” mapping methodology to understand changes including as a result of adaptation activities.

Participatory research: in Uganda and Mali, different participatory methods were selected to collect information on project impacts. In Mali, children drew their schools and highlighted what has changed since the introduction of the eco-clubs. In Uganda, “before and now” participatory mapping was used as a storytelling discussion about the impact of the DARAJA project on ability to cope with floods and extreme heat in Bwaise and Kawempe Municipalities of Kampala.

Data report: a data report was designed to capture information from both the participatory research and the KIIs and FGDs, structured around the key research questions. These data reports were then completed by the country researchers and sent to the Share Trust to be integrated into the final report.

Table A3: Uganda Research Summary

Approach	Tools	Target Group & Number
Key Informant Interviews (KII)	A: Key questions	▪ 5 with Kawempe Division ▪ 2 with KCCA ▪ 3 with Kasese Municipality ▪ 4 with slum-dwellers international SDI-Uganda ▪ 2 with URCS ▪ 1 with the Ministry of Lands, Housing & Urban Development ▪ 1 with Researcher from MUCCRI ▪ 1 with climate change youth champion, Kawempe Division, Kampala ▪ 1 with VHT member, Kawempe Division, Kampala
Focus Group Discussions (FGD)	B: Key questions	• 2 FGDs with women and girls - Kampala & Kasese Municipality • 2 FGDs with children and youth (mixed gender) – Kampala & Kasese Municipality

		1 FGD with local leaders (mixed gender) – Kampala only
Participatory storytelling	C: Key questions/ approach	14 (5 male local leaders, 7 women – including female local leaders, 2 youth) participants were engaged in a before/now storytelling discussion about the impact of the DARAJA project on how they are coping with floods and extreme heat in Bwaise, Kawempe, Kampala

Table A4: Mali Research Summary

Approach	Tools	Target Group & Number
Key Informant Interviews (KII)	A: Key questions	4 with teachers and school administrators 1 with the regional sanitation and pollution control department (DRACPN) 1 with the regional pedagogical department 1 with the water and forests department 1 with the municipality 1 with UNICEF (TBC) 2 with UNCDF Coordinator (Bamako) 1 with UNCDF Project Officer for Mopti 1 with UNCDF Project Officer for Kayes 1 with AEDD (Agency for the Environment) 1 with the Marie in Mopti
Focus Group Discussions (FGD)	B: Key questions	1 with parents, mixed genders, in Timbuktu 1 with young people and children, mixed genders, in Timbuktu 1 with only female children in Timbuktu
Participatory digital storytelling	C: Key questions/ approach	Participatory mapping with 31 students in total (across three schools) of “before and now” carried out with children at the school, combined with a drama presentation to demonstrate their understanding of climate related risks and actions.

Research limitations and challenges

The research process was shaped by several practical constraints. Connectivity challenges in Mali, particularly outside of Bamako, led to complications in scheduling and coordination with research teams. Time was also required for supporting and mentoring Young Researchers (including translating relevant documents), which, while valuable for capacity strengthening, extended the data collection timeline beyond what was anticipated.

Annex B: Case Studies

This Annex shares the case studies prepared for each focus project in the deep dive countries.

Table Key

Child and Youth Agency in Project Processes:

Excluded	Informed	Engaged	Leading
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Child, Youth, and Gender-Responsive LLA:

1= Child excluded 	2= Child sensitive 	3= Child centred 	4= Child Led 
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Case Study 1: DARAJA Project in Kampala

Case Study 1: DARA Project in Kampala

Country:	UGANDA	Level:	COMMUNITY	Context:	Urban
The DARAJA Project – Slum Dwellers International/National Slum Dwellers Federation					
Child-responsive category		Child Centred (3): the project adopted inclusive processes with diverse local actors playing important roles in informing and contributing to design, planning, and implementing program activities alongside higher level actors.			
Actors	Funders: UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) through the Weather and Climate Information Services (WISER) Programme, Lloyd's Register Foundation, German Federal Foreign office (GFFO). Implementing partners: Slum Dwellers International (SDI) Uganda, National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU) and ACTogether; Department of Meteorological Service (formerly Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA)).				
Geographical focus	Kampala, Uganda. Communities affected by impacts of climate change (e.g., floods and extreme heat) and with a lack of access to interpretable and timely weather and climate information.				
Target groups	High-risk groups in flood-prone informal settlements including women, youth, and children.				
Objectives	To improve the climate resilience of vulnerable groups living in informal settlements in Kampala by building partners/links between communities and weather/climate information providers.				
Activities	Mobilising financial resources for building and sustaining collaborative partnerships between vulnerable urban communities and providers of weather and climate information services. Coordinating, and disseminating regular, reliable weather information for vulnerable communities living in informal settlements. Information is disseminated through social media campaigns and community groups using Apps (e.g., WhatsApp), community radios, text messages, phone calls, and word of mouth. Mobilising high-risk communities to customise/localise weather information into formats that are easily understandable, interpretable, and useable to better anticipate and plan response to potential flood and extreme risks. Collecting data and information through project monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) to enable effective assessment of the impact of interventions on target groups.				
Roles of local actors	Local communities: engaging in localising weather information for interpretability and usability in improving preparation for extreme events such as floods and extreme heat. Local leaders: mobilising local communities to localise climate/weather information data/knowledge and use it to plan accordingly (e.g., repair housing, temporary relocation) especially for school-going children				

	and to protect valuable household and livelihood assets (i.e., merchandise/goods) to minimise damage and losses. ▪ Local youth, women, and auxiliaries (i.e. Village Health Teams): mobilising volunteers as climate change champions and outreach actors for disseminating information about climate related flood/heat risk in informal settlements.		
Enablers of child responsive LLA	▪ Mobilising youth as climate change champions to activate communities, disseminate information, and energise the implementation of various project activities for enhancing community resilience and adaptation. ▪ Building and sustaining commitment of local level leadership to engage with weather and climate service providers, to mobilise community groups to participate in localising weather and climate information, and to disseminate weather and climate information through various platforms to build readiness/preparedness for extreme events. ▪ Adoption of technology (i.e. social media platforms which are popular and widely employed by children and youth) as alternative means of disseminating and communicating weather and climate information has enabled child and youth involvement in decision-making for inclusive and effective community resilience building. ▪ Horizontal collaboration across state actors at meso (Kampala Capital City Authority) and macro levels (Office of the Prime Minister and Department of Meteorology) as well as between state and non-state actors (e.g., KCCA and SDI-Uganda) towards more efficient and effective approaches to anticipating climate impacts and ensuring better community preparedness to minimise loss and damage.		
Barriers to child responsive LLA	▪ Under representation of children in project design and planning. ▪ Limited voice and agency of children in project design, planning and implementation. ▪ Low levels of awareness and integration of child rights in project design, planning and implementation. ▪ Capacity deficiencies to effectively integrate child-responsive adaptation in project design, planning, and implementation.		
Level of local agency*	Framing & design	Engaged	▪ Local actors (i.e., youth, women and leaders) were engaged to some extent or played significant roles in the framing and design of programme activities.
	Delivery	Engaged	▪ Local actors (i.e. youth, women and leaders) were trained to access, understand, localise, and disseminate weather data/information , in addition to supporting the implementation of early warning information services for building community resilience.
	Learning	Engaged	▪ The DARAJA project engaged in structured consultations with communities to understand how best to disseminate information in informal communities
Implementation of the LLA Principles			
Structural inequalities (2) 	The initiative has started to address the age- and gender-based inequalities that contribute to the vulnerability of groups such as women and youth by integrating them into partnerships for linking weather and climate information service providers and communities to ensure the latter can access such information. The project also engaged women and youth in building early warning information systems to enable communities to better anticipate and take preventive action against potentially disruptive events such as floods and extreme heat.		
Local Capabilities (4) 	The initiative has improved the capabilities of local institutions, actors (state and non-state) such as local level leadership (LC1), VHTs, and youth climate change champions to appreciate, understand, and utilise weather and climate information to enable communities to better anticipate and minimise loss and damage from potential climate risks and uncertainties.		
Understanding of climate risk (5) 	The initiative has helped to inform local adaptation decisions that draw on hybrid knowledge sources including local, indigenous (i.e., culturally-rooted initiatives including “<i>Bulungi bwansi</i>” and “<i>Gwanga mujje</i>”) and scientific knowledge to enable more holistic understanding of resilience and the implications for the future in the context of accelerated risk and uncertainty.		

Collaborative Action (8) 	The initiative also drew on and created bridges between multiple meso- and macro-scalar sector state actors such as the city government KCCA (local governance), Office of the Prime Minister, and Department of Meteorology (central government) to ensure better coordinated, efficient and effective approaches to enabling community access to weather and climate information and subsequently, strengthening capacities for anticipating climate-related risks and impacts.
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Case Study 2: Emergency Relief Programme and Schools Programme

Country:	UGANDA	Level:	COMMUNITY	Context:	Urban
Emergency Relief and Schools Programme – Uganda Red Cross Society, Kasese and Kampala Municipality					
Child-responsive category		Child Centred (3): The project adopted an inclusive approach that positioned children and youth as active participants rather than passive beneficiaries. Through school-based Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) clubs and child-led groups, children contributed to risk assessments, disseminated early warning messages, and advocated for household and community preparedness			
Actors	▪ Funders: Government of Uganda (OPM), other government line ministries, partnerships with multiple international agencies including the United Nations, Red Cross National Societies, Civil Society organisations and private corporate entities (both local and international) such as telecommunication firms, commercial banks, and academic/research institutions. ▪ Implementing partners: Uganda Red Cross Society (UCRS)				
Geographical focus	▪ Kasese and Kampala Municipality, Uganda - communities affected by disasters e.g., floods.				
Target groups	▪ Vulnerable groups in flood-prone informal settlements (including women, youth, and children).				
Objectives	▪ To provide humanitarian support through schools during climate emergencies and save lives, build resilient communities, and promote human dignity.				
Activities	▪ Mobilising financial and non-financial support for disaster risk management in schools, or with out-of-school children and youth. ▪ Coordinating, delivering, and distributing humanitarian support to schools and communities affected by disasters. ▪ Collecting data and information from schools and households to inform emergency programme design, planning, and implementation				
Roles of local actors	▪ Local auxiliaries (including Village Health Teams, para-social workers, and Village Disaster Preparedness Teams): acting as frontline workers in supporting children and schools during emergencies, providing assistance to victims before official relief efforts are rolled out, and supporting subsequent interventions. ▪ Local communities: engaging in relief and emergency activities, with a focus on protecting school-aged children and strengthening resilience around schools. ▪ Local leaders: mobilising communities to support and engage in relief, emergency, and resilience-building activities that prioritise children’s safety and access to education. ▪ Local youth: volunteering to support school-based relief and emergency activities in informal settlements. ▪ Local schools (primary and secondary) and children: serving as nodes (schools) and change agents (children) to enhance household and community understanding of climate risks, undertaking advocacy, and supporting resilience-building within and beyond the school environment.				
Enablers of child responsive LLA	▪ Involvement of youth to mobilise schools and communities, disseminate information, and energise relief, emergency, and resilience-building activities at household, neighbourhood, and school levels. ▪ Sustained commitment of local leadership to mobilise schools, community groups, and parents, guiding interventions that safeguard children and sustain access to education. ▪ Generation and dissemination of school-level and household data (e.g., on education, health, livelihoods)				

	to strengthen local government and community understanding of climate risks, particularly those affecting children and youth, enabling evidence-based and inclusive decision-making.		
Barriers to child responsive LLA	▪ Under-representation of school-aged children in project design and planning. ▪ Limited voice and agency of children in shaping school and community adaptation priorities. ▪ Low levels of awareness and integration of child rights in project design, planning, and implementation. ▪ Capacity gaps in skills and expertise to integrate child-responsive adaptation within school systems. ▪ Prevailing socio-cultural norms that undervalue the contributions of children and youth, particularly in relation to school and education-focused programming.		
Level of local agency*	Framing & design	Engaged	▪ Local actors (i.e. youth, women and leaders) were engaged to some extent or played significant roles in the framing and design of programme activities.
	Delivery	Engaged	▪ Local actors (i.e. youth, women and leaders) were trained to access, understand, localise, and disseminate weather data/information , in addition to support the implementation of early warning information services for building community resilience.
	Learning	Informed	▪ URCS worked closely with local Government and local community structures to disseminate project learning and embed child-sensitive approaches to climate risks within existing response structures.
Implementation of the LLA Principles			
Structural inequalities (2) 	The intervention has started to tackle the age- and gender-based inequalities that contribute to the vulnerability of groups such as children, women and youth by mobilising these groups to identify priorities and needs and ensuring their meaningfully participate including in the implementation of interventions.		
Local Capabilities (4) 	The intervention has improved the capabilities of local institutions and actors (state and non-state) , such as local leadership (LC1), VHTs, and youth volunteers, to better understand climate risks and uncertainties, generate local solutions, and facilitate adaptation initiatives. These efforts build on local assets including ideas, innovations, experiential knowledge, skills, and labour to strengthen long-term resilience.		
Understanding of climate risk (5) 	The intervention has helped to inform local adaptation decisions by drawing on hybrid knowledge sources , including local, Indigenous, and scientific knowledge, to promote a more holistic understanding of resilience and its implications for the future in a context of accelerated risk and uncertainty.		
Collaborative Action (8) 	The intervention has also drawn on input from state actors , such as Kasese Municipal Council (local governance) and the Office of the Prime Minister (central government), as well as primary and secondary schools, the private sector (e.g., commercial banks), local leaders, and support personnel including para-social workers and Village Disaster Preparedness Teams (VDPTs). This coordination has ensured a more efficient and effective approach to addressing climate-related risks.		

Case Study 3: Mon Ecole, Ma Responsabilité

Country:	Mali	Level:	COMMUNITY	Context:	Rural
Mon Ecole, Ma Responsabilité, Timbuktu, Mali - AJFTPE					
Child-responsive category		Child Led (4): This project is child-led, in that it engages children from the design phase, and works in partnership with students and teachers through the implementation of activities. Eco-clubs form the backbone of the feedback mechanism, ensuring that children and teachers are engaged in finding solutions to climate change issues.			
Actors	▪ Funders: UNICEF ▪ Implementing partners: Led by Action Pour Jeunes Femmes de Tombouctou pour la Preservation de L/Environnement (AJFTPE), with support from local authorities, and primary schools				
Geographical focus	▪ Primary schools within Timbuktu with a focus on those most exposed to climate change				
Target groups	▪ Children and youth of primary school age				
Objectives	▪ Promote eco-responsible and green schools in Timbuktu by instilling sustainable environmental practices among students. ▪ Raise awareness among children (7–14 years old) on climate change, waste management, and environmental protection. ▪ Strengthen child participation and agency by creating eco-clubs and appointing child ambassadors in schools and communities. ▪ Improve school environments through collective sanitation, reforestation, and the reduction of unmanaged waste. ▪ Encourage long-term behavioural change in schools, households, and communities to build a culture of environmental responsibility.				
Activities	▪ Holding mass awareness campaigns. Focused on environmental protection, hygiene, waste reduction, and climate awareness. ▪ Holding sanitation and reforestation days. Cleaning school compounds and surroundings. Planting trees to improve shade, air quality, and to build resilience against desertification. ▪ Creating Eco-Clubs. Establishment of student-led clubs in each school. Selection of child ambassadors to advocate for environmental responsibility at school, home, and in the community. Training sessions for students on eco-friendly practices. ▪ Supporting continuous monitoring and engagement. Follow-up visits to assess the commitment of schools and eco-clubs. Documentation of children’s participation (drawings, mapping, feedback).				
Roles of local actors	▪ AJFTPE (Lead implementer): designs and coordinates the project, mobilises resources, and facilitates child participation. ▪ Schools (teachers, directors): provide the learning environment, supports eco-clubs, and integrates environmental themes into daily routines. ▪ Students: enables students as agents of change through eco-clubs, drawings, and child-led advocacy. ▪ Parents and community members: reinforce school-based messages at household level and participate in clean-up/reforestation activities. ▪ Local authorities: ensure alignment with local environmental priorities, provide technical oversight, and legitimise the initiative.				
Enablers of child responsive LLA	▪ Child-centred methodologies (drawings, games) made participation meaningful, fun, and inclusive. ▪ Eco-clubs as institutional legacy ensured continuity beyond the project period. ▪ Peer-to-peer approach (child ambassadors) increased ownership and extended the impact to families and neighbourhoods. ▪ Partnership with schools and teachers facilitated integration of environmental themes into daily				

	education.		
Barriers to child responsive LLA	▪ Limited resources and infrastructure in school. Includes a lack of basic equipment such as waste bins, fencing, or adequate water points. ▪ Climate shocks (floods, heat, dust storms) sometimes undermined environmental improvements. ▪ Short project timeframe limited deeper behavioural change and structural improvements. ▪ Sustainability risks if eco-clubs are not continuously supported by teachers/authorities.		
Level of local agency*	Framing & design	Co-Lead	▪ Children are engaged through participatory approaches to understand their experience of climate change within the schools, and to highlight key priorities for the environmental activities.
	Delivery	Co-Lead	▪ Children and teachers are actively engaged to deliver the project activities, through mass awareness sessions and coordinated activities such as clean-ups and tree-planting.
	Learning	Engaged	▪ AJFTPE leads the learning and assessments but engages children through participatory M & E (e.g., mapping) and provides feedback loops through the eco-clubs to ensure student engagement in results.
Implementation of the LLA Principles			
Structural inequalities (2) 	This intervention placed children at the heart of designing solutions to problems that they face within the school environment, creating the opportunity for them to tackle concrete issues stemming from structural inequalities at school. The engagement of children in both the designing and monitoring of the impacts of these initiatives allows for them to provide concrete inputs on how to improve and adjust project design to effectively mitigate structural inequalities.		
Local Capabilities (4) 	The project invested in building the capacity key local stakeholders (such as parents, teachers and firefighters) to undertake adaptation activities, both within the schools and outside of them. The engagement of children from a young age in thinking about adaptation and it's implications for the school also positions them as agents of change within their own households and the wider community.		
Understanding of climate risk (5) 	The project focussed on ensuring that children and their families possess a robust understanding of climate risks, as well as potential measures to mitigate these risks. Through sustained engagements with the schools, the children and the parents, the project seeks to create change by shifting mindsets and approaches to climate adaptation at the local level.		
Collaborative Action (8) 	The project worked in close collaboration with school administrators, teachers, children and parents to create a unified understanding of climate risks, and the adaptation opportunities available to the community to mitigate these risks.		

Case Study 4: UNCDF LoCAL in Mali

Country:	Mali	Level:	COMMUNITY	Context:	Mixed
LoCAL - UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Kayes and Mopti regions, Mali					
Child-responsive category		Child Sensitive (2): The LoCAL project is community-led, although does not systematically or explicitly include children and youth. While children and youth are included in community priority setting, the components of years assessment cycles, they are positioned as one among many groups of beneficiaries, although these is intentional targeting of women.			
Actors	▪ Funders: Government of Mali, UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Malia (MINUSMA) Peacebuilding Fund, and funds allocated to the Global LoCAL mechanism primarily by the EU. ▪ Implementing partners: UNCDF provides technical support and oversight, working with local Government entities (including the Ministry for the Environment, and local Commune structures) in the targeted locations. Local Authorities National Investment Agency (ANICT, Agence Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales) manages transfers to communes.				
Geographical focus	▪ Piloted in two communes in the Kayes region: Sandaré and Simby. ▪ Expanded to include additional communes, two in Kayes and two in Mopti.				
Target groups	▪ Local commune authorities (elected leaders and municipal bodies). ▪ Local communities, with significant focus on women, particularly for climate-resilient agriculture and livelihood projects.				
Objectives	▪ Strengthen technical and institutional capacities of pilot communes for effective climate governance. ▪ Enable communes to develop climate-resilient infrastructure and local services through targeted support and funding. ▪ Raise awareness among commune councillors and communities on climate change and reinforce the local approach to adaptation and resilience. ▪ Support Mali's National Climate Change Policy and strengthen the performance based climate resilience grant (PBCRG) mechanism nationally.				
Activities	▪ Provides financial support through performance-based climate resilience grants directed at local governments via ANICT. ▪ Supports local planning and project identification process, centring on Local Government and community groups to identify high-impact projects. ▪ Finances and evaluates adaptation projects, including, for example: ○ Market gardening plots for women's groups with pools, fencing, solar-powered pumps, resilient seeds, and capacity strengthening; ○ A fish farm project in Sandaré, with ponds, a well, and solar pump, managed by a women's group; and ○ Forest rehabilitation in Simby; irrigation systems and solar water-pumping wells in Sandaré. ▪ Capacity-strengthening and awareness training for elected leaders, beneficiaries, and decentralised state services on climate change and adaptation planning.				
Roles of local actors	▪ Commune Authorities (Local Governments). Elected commune authorities play a central role in managing and implementing LoCAL-funded activities, ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with local development priorities. ▪ Grassroots Planning Committees. Grassroots planning committees, composed of village chiefs, women, and youth, are instrumental in analysing and communicating community needs to the commune level. ▪ Women's Groups and Beneficiaries. Women's groups receive technical training, inputs, and infrastructural support (e.g., solar pumps, fencing, irrigation systems) and play an active role in managing and sustaining the adaptive initiatives. ▪ Decentralised State Services and Technical Support Units. Local Government agencies (such as AEDD and ANICT) receive capacity-strengthening and technical training to support adaptation planning and implementation. They help integrate projects into planning guidelines and environmental/technical standards.				

Enablers of child responsive LLA	▪ Strong national stewardship and local leadership. AEDD acts as the lead national authority; while commune councils undertake bottom-up planning and prioritisation. Clear roles across national structures and, commune committees create a governance structure that prioritises local advocacy. ▪ Participatory and gender-responsive processes by design. LoCAL requires participatory planning and explicitly promotes gender-responsive approaches; village/grassroots committees surface community priorities. ▪ Capacity strengthened in decentralised state services. Extension agents and environmental officers receive training and provide technical backstopping so communes can integrate adaptation standards into works and services.		
Barriers to child responsive LLA	▪ Under-representation of children in local planning forums. LoCAL planning and PBCRG performance cycles are channelled through commune institutions where formal child-specific participation mechanisms are limited, and audits/performance assessments already face capacity constraints, leaving little room to systematically integrate children's views. ▪ Limited voice/agency of girls and boys due to insecurity and access constraints. In central/northern areas (e.g., Mopti), insecurity restricts meetings, outreach, and safe participation, especially for girls, reducing opportunities to include children's priorities into commune plans. ▪ Competing priorities. UNCDF staff noted that the high level of needs in Mali can make it difficult to prioritise children and youth in planning processes. Communes are often trying to respond to immediate impacts of climate change, rather than nuanced impacts of different groups.		
Level of local agency*	Framing & design	Sensitive	▪ Community groups are engaged to prioritise the most pressing climate change activities. Engagement of children in this process is dependent on the Commune leadership.
	Delivery	Engaged	▪ Community groups are engaged during the implementation of activities. These may include children and youth.
	Learning	Sensitive	▪ UNCDF carries out yearly assessment and evaluations, which include assessments of the degree of community engagement and ownership. The assessment also seeks to understand the impact on children and youth. These assessments are centralised in UNCDF and inform capacity strengthening planning.
Implementation of the LLA Principles			
Devolving decision-making (1) 	The programme has helped address the gender-based inequalities that contribute to the vulnerability of groups such as children, women and youth. These groups are mobilised by the communes to identify impacts of climate change and propose solutions. They are also directly engaged during the assessment and evaluation of project activities.		
Patient and predictable funding (3) 	LoCAL delivers reliable, multiyear financing through ANICT and Mali's fiscal transfer system, embedding funds in routine governance rather than stand-alone projects. This predictability enables communes to make long-term adaptation investments (e.g., irrigation, market gardens) instead of short-term fixes, lowering barriers for local governments to access adaptation finance		
Local Capabilities (4) 	The programme strengthens the capacity of commune leaders and decentralised state services (extension agents, environmental officers) and institutionalises governance through technical committees at commune and circle levels. Training in climate risk assessments, financial management, and participatory planning ensures skills and systems remain beyond project cycles.		
Transparency & accountability (7) 	The programme has helped to inform local adaptation decisions that draw on hybrid knowledge sources including local, indigenous and scientific knowledge to enable more holistic understanding of resilience and the implications for the future in the context of accelerated risk and uncertainty.		

Collaborative Action (8) 	The programme fosters multi-level collaboration between UNCDF, AEDD, ANICT, commune councils, decentralised services, and local communities. In Mopti, peacebuilding-linked adaptation shows how finance can integrate across sectors. Engagement with women's groups and grassroots committees further ensures investments are grounded in local realities and inclusive of community voices.