unicef
for every child

Changing
THE WAY WE
care

Building climate change into care reform in Eastern and Southern Africa

Acknowledgements

Contents

Acronyms

COP	Conference of the Parties
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
IDP	Internally displaced person
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Actions

Introduction

Climate change involves rising global temperatures as a result of greenhouse gas emissions, primarily caused by the burning of fossil fuels.[1] Evidence shows that climate change is influencing weather patterns across the world, including in Eastern and Southern Africa,[2] negatively affecting household livelihoods and exposing families to climate-related emergencies, such as floods, droughts and heatwaves.[3] As access to key resources diminishes, climate change is also exacerbating conflict and tensions.[4] This situation will deteriorate further in the years and decades to come,[5] with a fundamental impact on all aspects of child wellbeing, including children's protection and care.[6]

Care reform refers to efforts to improve national care systems, which includes the legal and policy framework, structures and resources that determine and deliver alternative care for children, prevent family separation and support families to care for children.[7] Care reform

is vital for ensuring that children can grow up safe and protected within families and not in harmful institutional care.[8] Care reform is a thematic priority in UNICEF's global child protection strategy.[9]

This paper argues that climate change is the greatest current and future threat to children's care in the Eastern and Southern Africa region. Responding to this threat requires urgent coordinated action related to care reform policies and interventions and climate change responses. The paper begins with a description of climate change in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, followed by an analysis of its impacts on families, children's care and the care system. It then suggests how the risks to children's care associated with climate change can be mitigated through changes to the care system and to climate change adaptation plans. A glossary of key terms is included as an annexe.

Climate change in Eastern and Southern Africa

It is widely agreed that the poorer nations of the global south have contributed the least to climate change yet are likely to be impacted the most.[10] Countries in Eastern and Southern Africa are recognised as amongst the worst affected now and into the future.[11] Key features of climate change in the region are listed below, with subsequent sections exploring specific impacts on care.

- **Heatwaves:** In the coming years, heatwaves will become increasingly frequent and lethal in Eastern and Southern Africa, affecting health, and food and agricultural productivity.[12] Children have been shown to be more affected by heatwaves than adults as heat is especially damaging to children's health and affects their education and future prospects.[13] By 2050, it is estimated that nearly half of all children on the African continent will have faced extreme high temperatures.[14]

- **Cyclones:** Evidence indicates that climate change will increase the severity of cyclones.[15] Tropical cyclone Idai was one of the worse to ever affect the region. It hit Southern Africa in March 2019, killing over 1,000 people[16] and leaving 1.5 million children in need of humanitarian assistance.[17]

- **Droughts and floods:** Weather patterns vary across the region, but both droughts and floods are increasingly common and are expected to intensify further.[18] For example, in parts of East Africa, the frequency of droughts has doubled since 2005 from once every six to once every three years.[19] Countries in the Horn of Africa are now facing their fourth consecutive below average annual rainfall, with 20 million people in need of food and water and 1.8 million children suffering from acute malnutrition.[20]

- **Loss of biodiversity:** Biodiversity refers to diversity in animals, plants, fungi and micro-organisms, as well as the eco-systems that form the habitats in which they live. Biodiversity loss is threatening livelihoods across Africa, and climate change is one driver of this loss.[21] Loss of biodiversity has been shown to reduce children's access to food, and clean water, and increase exposure to deadly diseases.[22]

- **Conflict:** Climate change can lead to conflict due to competition over increasingly scarce resources, such as water or fertile land.[23] There is also a proven relationship between heat and aggression.[24] Cyclones have exacerbated conflict in the Cabo Delgado region of Mozambique.[25] Concerns have been raised about conflict related to water resources depleted by climate change in Uganda.[26] Climate change-related drought is thought to have contributed to conflict in Northern Ethiopia and Somalia.[27] In Northern Ethiopia alone, in 2022 three million people were displaced by conflict and 11.2 million were in need of humanitarian assistance.[28]

- **Food and water shortages:** Climate change has contributed to at least 33 million people in the region, or 10 per cent of the population, being food insecure.[29] The emergencies outlined above, combined with more gradual changes to weather patterns, are reducing crop yields.[30] For instance, the 2020 locust infestation in East Africa, which decimated crops across the region, has been linked to climate change.[31] In mid-2022, three consecutive years of drought had left 1.4 million children facing acute malnutrition in Somalia.[32] Climate change will lead to shortages of fresh water around the world.[33]

- **Inundation of coastal areas:** Sea level rises will flood coastal areas, leading to a loss of agricultural land, damage to housing, migration, and threats to the tourism and fishing industries.[34]

- **Spread of disease:** Climate change is already leading to the spread of disease in Africa with this trend set to worsen in the coming years. Analysis by the World Health Organization shows that over half the 2,121 public health events in Africa between 2001 and 2021 were related to climate change.[35] Shortages of safe drinking water affect waterborne diseases, and rising temperatures will lead to an increase in vector-borne diseases such as malaria.[36]

This evidence shows that climate change is not just something to worry about in the future; it is happening now, with devastating consequences for children and families in Eastern and Southern Africa. Scientists propose various scenarios regarding the severity of further impacts of climate change; these are in part dependent on the extent to which governments join forces to prevent greater rises in global temperatures.[37]

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates that countries are not on track to reduce greenhouse gases to the extent needed to avoid worsening the impacts of climate change.[38] The richer nations largely responsible for the climate crisis are also not stepping up to support lower income countries in climate change adaptation.[39]

In vulnerable regions such as Eastern and Southern Africa, repeated exposure to climate-related emergencies is already diminishing household resiliency and capacity to adapt.[40] Families have less time to recover between these disasters and are therefore less well prepared for the next event.[41] Climate change does not have an equal effect on all countries or all segments of the population. Poorer nations with inadequate infrastructure are often worst hit by climate-related emergencies and least able to cope with their impacts.[42] Already disadvantaged groups such as women and girls, elderly people and those with disabilities, experience greater risks and harms.[43]

The impacts of climate change on children's care in Eastern and Southern Africa

Climate change is enhancing the drivers of inadequate care

Climate change is already affecting or will affect many of the drivers of family separation and violence against children by caregivers.

Poverty

Children are often pushed apart from families by poverty, which is a key reason for entry into residential care or for children to leave their families for work or marriage.[44] The World Bank estimates that across sub-Saharan Africa, an additional 39.7 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty by climate change by 2030.[45] Climate change is already increasing poverty in drought-affected areas in the Horn of Africa.[46] Many children in the region are cared for by elderly grandparents who are often already poor and likely to be further adversely affected by climate change.[47] Households affected by disability are also likely to see poverty levels disproportionately increase as a result of climate change.[48] This could lead to children either being poorly cared for in these homes or being pushed into residential care.

Education

Lack of access to quality schooling is another reason for children entering residential care or going to live with relatives or friends of the family (kinship care).[49] Whilst most children in kinship care are well looked after, some of those who travel to more distant relatives to be closer to school are discriminated against and exploited.[50]

Climate change has multiple impacts on education. For example, climate-related disasters damage school infrastructure.[51] Children who experience heatwaves and otherwise intense temperature events are also less likely to attend or do well in school.[52] In drought-affected countries in the Horn of Africa, there are currently 15 million out of school children, and an additional 3.3 million are at risk of dropping out because of the ongoing drought.[53] Many of those displaced by climate-related conflict in Northern Ethiopia are unable to access school.[54] Children who have to stop attending for short periods during climate-related emergencies often fall behind or never find their way back to school.[55] As noted above, locust swarms have been linked to climate change, and have been shown to push children back in school by an entire grade.[56]

Gender inequality means that climate change may have a particularly devastating impact on girls' education.[57] For example, where water resources are scarce, girls may have to drop out of school to travel long distances to collect water. Increases in poverty due to climate change may push girls out of school and into marriage.[58] There is evidence that families affected by the drought in Somalia are prioritising boys' education over girls'.[59] Children with disabilities already often struggle to access school, a problem exacerbated by climate change.[60]

© UNICEF/UN0770369/PRINSLOO

Mental health and stress

Climate change has been shown to have a profound effect on emotional wellbeing amongst adults in Africa.[61] Stressed caregivers or those with poor mental health may be unable to care for children well, and this situation can result in violence against children.[62] Deeply traumatised parents displaced by climate-related disasters often struggle to deal with their emotions, which may result in violent behaviours.[63] Parents may also be too overwhelmed or preoccupied with survival to offer children care and support.[64]

Climate change is also affecting children's emotional wellbeing. After cyclone Idai, adolescents were deeply affected by the sudden loss of control over their lives, the necessity of unexpectedly having to rely on others for their basic needs, and witnessing their parents' distress.[65] Many boys and girls feel anxious about the impacts of climate change and the frequent disasters affecting their communities.[66] Children suffering from mental health problems often exhibit challenging behaviours, which can lead to violence against them or placement into alternative care.[67]

Migration and displacement

Sudden-onset climate change-related emergencies, such as floods, result in chaotic, rapid and unforeseen displacement.[68] Slower onset emergencies, such as repeated droughts, lead to more planned population movement.[69] Both scenarios can push children apart from families, either in the chaos of the emergency or as a survival strategy which sees children migrating for work, marrying or being trafficked.[70] Parents may also leave children behind with relatives if they migrate in search of employment,[71] for example as farming is no longer viable because of climate change.

In some cases, children move with parents. These groups may still experience inadequate care as migrant families are more vulnerable to other drivers of separation and violence, such as poverty and lack of access to education.[72]

The World Bank predicts that by 2030 there will be 86 million climate migrants in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in Somaliland, over a million people have been displaced from rural areas, including 450,000 children,

with much of this movement the result of drought.[73] In Somalia during 2021, 245,000 people were displaced by drought and 62,000 by floods.[74] Cyclone Idai led to 240,000 people being displaced.[75] Ironically, children who leave families to work often enter sectors with high carbon emissions, such as mining, that are causing climate change.[76] Patterns of climate change-related movement vary by gender and age, with, for example, adolescent boys more likely to migrate longer distances alone than girls.[77] Children with disabilities are especially vulnerable when displaced by climate change.[78]

Parental and other caregiver deaths

Both climate change-related disasters and an increase in the spread of deadly diseases because of climate change are likely to see more children orphaned. Those cared for by vulnerable elderly relatives in kinship care arrangements are especially vulnerable to losing caregivers to climate change.

Violence against women

There is a strong correlation between violence against women and violence against children in the home.[79] Several climate change-related factors can increase domestic violence, including fear and frustration about recurrent crop failures and resource scarcity, a crisis of masculinity linked to men no longer being able to provide for families, and the stress of living in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs).[80] Research found that locust swarms in Eastern Africa reduced women's financial independence from farming, forcing women to remain in abusive relationships in order to sustain themselves and their children.[81] Evidence from the 2016–17 drought in the Horn of Africa also shows increased rates of violence against women.[82]

Climate change is already leading to inadequate care

Climate change is already leading to children being separated from their families.[83] As noted above, climate change is increasing the severity of cyclones and is associated with more extreme weather events such as cyclone Idai. Two months after Idai hit Mozambique in 2019, 400 children in the worst affected province remained separated from their parents, with most living with relatives or neighbours.[84] An evaluation of the Idai response raised concerns about children becoming separated during search and rescue operations.[85] One mother described the horror of her daughter being

rescued by a helicopter and then realising she herself was not going to be collected:

"When I gave Tereza to the helicopter, I thought they were coming back to pick me up too, but they never came back. I started to think, 'What have I done?'"[86]

It took this mother a month to save sufficient money to search for her daughter. The two were eventually reunited.[87]

In Somalia, 16 per cent of 6,000 surveyed individuals affected by climate change-related drought highlighted family separation as a key risk. Children's risk of separation from parents in such circumstances is exacerbated by increases in family poverty.[88]

In Northern Ethiopia, conflict partially caused by climate change has led to the separation of over 9,000 children from their parents.[89] In this context, some parents and other family members caring for children reported paying less attention to children's needs because of the stresses they experienced during the conflict.[90]

Girls and boys are both at risk of separation due to climate change, though patterns of separation vary. For example, poverty in areas affected by drought has been shown to increase child marriage amongst girls.[91] In the Horn of Africa, there are more lone boy migrants living on the streets or attempting to get to Europe than girls, with this migration caused by a range of factors including drought.[92]

Services to support children's care are not matching needs in the context of climate change

Responses to risks to children's care as a result of climate change are severely hindered by already inadequate care and protection services. In these circumstances, many cases of child abuse go unreported or are not responded to.[93] For example, in the aftermath of Idai, humanitarian agencies found it hard to follow up on reports of violence against children in families due to the limited coverage of child protection services in both Mozambique and Malawi.[94]

In Northern Ethiopia, 846,000 children living in IDP camps due to climate change-related conflict lack access to comprehensive child protection services.[95] Limited family-based alternative care services and huge social worker caseloads mean children separated

from parents are being placed in residential care.[96] Social workers lack the fuel, time, and communication networks to monitor children reintegrated with families to ensure they are safe.[97]

It is likely that these care and protection services will decline further as governments prioritise spending on meeting immediate survival needs after climate-related emergencies.[98] Governments in the region have had to constantly "firefight" in the face of a never-ending stream of disasters, undermining longer-term investments in children's services.[99]

This problem is severely exacerbated by the unwillingness of higher income countries to pay reparations for climate change, a problem largely caused by them. The current drought in the Horn of Africa has been described as the one of the worst climate-induced emergencies in the last 40 years, compounded by insufficient funding from the global community.[100]

Mitigating the negative impacts of climate change on care

Principles in efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change on care

The primacy of family-based care

It is vital that all strategies and interventions related to children's care in the context of climate change recognise the importance of keeping children within families. This means that maximum efforts must be made to prevent separation from parents, place separated children in kinship care, and support safe and effective family reintegration. Where children can't be in their families, they need a range of temporary alternative care choices. These options may include foster care, care in small-scale family-like residential care or supervised independent living arrangements. In line with global guidance, large-scale institutions should be avoided where possible.[101] The use of adoption is also problematic during climate change-related emergencies. This care option should be reserved for calmer periods when proper efforts can be made to determine if children can go back to their families.[102]

Experience from previous crisis periods in the region, such as the HIV pandemic, shows that kinship care is an effective and appropriate response to care needs at times of crisis.[103] Caregivers, particularly grandmothers, often take over when parents can no longer care for children due to death, illness, or migration.[104] It is vital that priority is given to supporting these often vulnerable caregivers.

Principles in responding to climate change-related emergencies

Experience of meeting children's care needs during past emergencies suggests the following principles of good practice.

- **Balance investments between preparation and response.** A balance must be maintained between:
  - preparing for climate change and building the resilience of communities, families, and children,
  - immediate response to climate-related emergencies, and
  - long-term re-building of care systems after these emergencies occur.[105]

- **Recognise the cost effectiveness of building resilience.** Building the resilience of households to care for children during climate change-related emergencies is more cost-effective than frequent and protracted humanitarian aid provision.[106]

- **Take a 'no-regrets' approach.** This means that actions to prevent or mitigate climate-related risk can be justified whether or not these shocks actually happen because they build family and community resilience.[107] For example, building new partnerships, workforce skills or infrastructure that benefit the care system during emergencies can also support care systems in non-emergency periods.

- **Build back better.** Use emergency responses to improve care infrastructure, systems and services.[108]

- **Avoid creating parallel systems.** Ensure that responses to climate change-related emergencies reflect and improve national care systems.[109] It is vital that emergency responses reflect and build on existing mechanisms rather than creating parallel systems.[110] It is also important that the long-term ramifications for emergency interventions are considered. In many countries, a sudden increase in separated children during emergencies has led to the rapid construction of residential care facilities, leaving a legacy that lasts for decades.[111]

- **Do no harm.** Ensure that responses do not unintentionally make the situation worse, by, for example, entrenching existing inequalities, including gender inequalities, by favouring already advantaged groups.[112]

- **Be context specific and flexible.** Each impact of climate-related emergencies has unique ramifications for care and care systems.[113] It is vital to base responses on an understanding of specific contexts. Flexibility is essential as climate change leads to rapid and often unpredictable changes.[114]

- **Build community responses.** It is important to strengthen the role of communities and community-based organisations, who are often the first responders in climate-related emergencies.[115]

Promoting child and community engagement

Children must participate in developing and delivering appropriate responses to climate change, including in relation to children's care.[116] This is important as children are most impacted by climate change and have deep insights into how they and their communities are affected.[117] Children are often more resilient and adaptive than adults and can help families and communities to adjust to new realities.[118] Participation can also help build skills and the confidence needed for children to meet the challenges climate change brings.

Like children, wider communities have important insights into the impacts of climate change on children's care. For example, communities were able to identify the risk of violence as an impact of locust swarms – an effect not immediately obvious to those who were responding to this emergency.[119]

© UNICEF/UN0627340/AYENE

Most responses to inadequate care take place within families and communities, with no engagement of the state or civil society.[120] As well as caring for children through kinship or foster care, communities often try to deal with violence against children in families, and make decisions about who should care for children.[121]

The role of communities is likely to increase as formal services are put under pressure as a result of climate change. In the aftermath of cyclone Idai, adolescents largely relied on peers and neighbours to cope with their distress.[122] After Idai, and during the droughts in the Horn of Africa, and the conflict in Northern Ethiopia, community-based child protection mechanisms have been crucial for addressing violence against children.[123] Community members have also volunteered to take care of children separated from parents.[124] Building community resilience in the face of climate change should be prioritised so that communities can support vulnerable children and families.

In engaging both children and families in responses to climate change, it is vital to recognise that experiences vary by factors such as age, gender and disability. Efforts need to ensure that the most vulnerable are included.[125]

Research and monitor the impacts of climate change on care

A review of the literature carried out for this paper suggests that evidence on the impacts of climate change on care in the region is scant. As elsewhere in the world, there is a pressing need for research on this relationship.[126] Evaluations are also needed to identify successful strategies to mitigate the negative effects of climate change on care.[127] Research on these topics should cover the following.

- Map the impacts of climate change on the entire care system, including the workforce, policies and legislation, services, financing of reforms, community responses, and coordination mechanisms.[128] Examining the impacts of climate change on care systems requires stepping outside of the care sector to examine interventions in other fields that impact on care, such as social protection, health and education.

- Examine how climate change is impacting children's

care now. Regularly update understandings of climate change risks, and their impacts on care.[129] Consider how risks that may begin as threats to survival or health quickly evolve to affect children's care and protection, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.[130]

- Seek the perspectives of children and their caregivers.[131]

- Understand how different groups of children and caregivers may be affected by climate change and how the relationships between them may be impacted. Identify especially vulnerable groups.[132] This includes a consideration of gender and disability.

- Explore existing coping strategies, both in terms of the formalised response from government, non-governmental organisations and UN agencies, and less formal but equally important actions of children, caregivers, families and communities.[133]

Include reference to climate change in all care reform strategies and policies

As arguably the biggest current threat to children's care, it is vital that that all care reform strategies and policies are based on an understanding of the current and likely future impacts of climate change on care. Policies and strategies should outline how the care system will adapt in response to the risks posed by climate change.[134] This includes ensuring that care systems are built to respond to climate-related emergencies.[135] For example, that services to promote family-based care can be rapidly expanded in times of need, or that family strengthening services build resilience to cope with climate change without resorting to family separation.

Include reference to care in climate change adaptation strategies and disaster preparedness plans

In 2010, the global Conference of the Parties (COP) 16 on climate change recommended that all countries develop National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) to identify medium and long-term climate change impacts, and list concrete, budgeted actions to mitigate potential

harms.[136] At COP 7 in 2001, less developed countries were encouraged to develop a National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) to respond to the immediate, urgent and adverse effects of climate change.[137] NAPs have been developed in four countries in Eastern and Southern Africa: Kenya, Ethiopia, Madagascar, and South Africa.[138] Other countries in the region have started the process for developing these plans.[139] Fifteen countries in Eastern and Southern Africa have developed NAPAs.[140]

A review of these strategies suggests that they do not yet routinely include reference to children's care and protection.[141] However, plans do often acknowledge the importance of addressing the needs of especially vulnerable groups, including children, and in some cases orphans, and of ensuring that all sectors adapt to climate change.[142] Those working on care reform should advocate for care to be incorporated into NAPA and NAP development and implementation.

Alongside these broad strategies, disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans are used at the regional, national, and sub-national levels to help mitigate the risks of specific climate change-related emergencies. Again, evidence suggests that ensuring that children are well cared for during emergencies is not always part of DRR.[143] Incorporating care into these strategies enables rapid responses that can prevent family separation and violence against children before they become widespread.[144]

Ensure that the social workforce is ready for climate change

Kenya's NAP on climate change states that: "Public sector employees must have the tools and knowledge to recognise and pursue priority actions, integrating sectors and stakeholder interests as they work towards climate-compatible development."[145]

Experience from climate-related emergencies such as the Idai cyclone shows the importance of having sufficient social work capacity to meet protection and care needs.[146] As well as having enough social workers, it is vital to prepare social workers to support children's care in the context of climate change in the following ways.[147]

- Ensure social workers understand climate change,

its impact on the communities where they work, and effective risk mitigation strategies. Give social workers access to information on climate change impacts and available response services. Encourage social workers to share this knowledge with – and seek the insights and experience of – children, families and communities.

- Use training to build social worker awareness of climate change and their knowledge around how to respond to care and protection needs in relation to climate-related emergencies. For example, in relation to how to support communities in DRR, minimise family separation during disasters, and carry out family tracing.

- Engage social workers in monitoring the impacts of climate change on children and communities, and in campaigns on climate justice. Enable social workers to contribute their unique insights on the impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable to strengthen messages around the need for further supports.

- Give social workers the confidence and autonomy to adapt practices to the rapidly changing contexts of climate-related emergencies. This means removing constraints such as excessive paperwork or regulations that may prevent social workers from meeting changing needs.

- Ensure that social workers have the authority, resources, and infrastructure to undertake their work in the midst of climate change by, for example, establishing working environments that are safe and comfortable during heatwaves, or effective means of transport during floods. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for social workers to be defined as essential workers so that they can be supported to continue working throughout emergencies.[148]

- Provide additional mental health supports for social workers as they deal with the uncertainty, stress, and potential trauma related to climate change.

- Incorporate procedures for responding to climate change in case management guidance.[149]

- Ensure that there are strong referral pathways in place so that those in need of care and protection can be rapidly referred to social workers.[150]

© UNICEF/UN0792867/ANDRIANANDRA

Improve coordination

As noted above, inadequate care in the context of climate change is often linked to factors outside the control of those working on care, such as poverty, lack of access to education, or mental health issues. Cross-sectoral coordination is vital,[151] including with those working directly on climate change and DRR.[152] Immediate responses to climate change often come from the community or national organisations. Working with these actors helps to ensure both the effectiveness and the relevance of interventions.[153]

Build climate change-responsive services

As demonstrated above, climate change is leading to an increased risk of children being separated from parents. Greater investment is needed in services that address the root causes of this separation. These services will vary by context but may include the following.

- Expanding cash assistance during climate-related emergencies,[154] and diversifying and strengthening family livelihoods to build resilience.[155] A 'cash-plus' approach in which complementary services and referrals are provided to those receiving social protection has proven to be a particularly valuable means of supporting families to care for children well.[156] Any efforts to build livelihoods should focus on industries that will survive climate change and that do not contribute to it.

- Building shock-resistant schools that can withstand floods or cyclones and responding to school drop out after climate-related emergencies.[157] Schools should also educate children about climate change to help them prepare and adapt, and become more effective advocates for change. For schools to effectively operate during climate change it is vital that all groups of children are able to attend. As demonstrated above, special measures may need to be put in place to keep girls in school as climate change progresses.

- Developing physical and mental health services that recognise the impacts of climate change on emotional wellbeing and the spread of disease.[158]

In some cases, separation happens because of the actions of humanitarian actors, for example, via failure to investigate if a child who appears to be alone has community members nearby who could help reunite them with parents.[159] UNICEF and other agencies are working to avoid such unnecessary separation through awareness raising and training.[160]

For children already separated from families by climate change, as with separations caused by other factors, extensive efforts must be made to:

- trace parents or other family members,

- assess whether reintegration is viable,

- prepare children and families for return,

- reunite children with their family, and

- provide follow-up support to ensure reintegration is sustainable.[161]

There should be a range of alternative care options available for children whilst they are separated from parents. It is likely that these services will have to be expanded due to growing climate change-related demand. As noted above, support to kinship carers is a priority and investments may also need to be made in foster care, supervised independent living and small group residential care homes.

Large-scale institutional care facilities should be re-purposed to help support families to manage the impacts of climate change. This could include, for example, providing temporary shelter during cyclones or floods, or feeding programmes during droughts.

Ensure caregivers can help children navigate the impacts of climate change

As noted above, children often have understandably high levels of anxiety around climate change that caregivers need to understand and help address. Caregivers also have a role to play in helping children cope with a world altered by climate change. Children need greater resilience and the ability to adapt in the face of adversity, the leadership skills and social awareness needed to hold governments to account, and a strong sense of community and

shared responsibility for the wellbeing of societies.[162] All caregivers should be able to help children navigate the impacts of climate change and this topic should be built into parenting programmes and the training of foster carers and residential care home staff.

Contributing to campaigns to limit climate change

Although it now seems inevitable that climate change will wreak havoc in Eastern and Southern Africa, harm will be diminished if global temperature rises are limited.[163] These reductions can be achieved through persuading the nations of the world to reduce their carbon emissions.[164] Those working on care reform have a role to play in such campaigns through:

- documenting and sharing evidence on the impacts of climate change,

- speaking with authority about how the most vulnerable are being affected,

- building awareness of climate change in the communities where they work, and

- giving children and their caregivers a voice, by building confidence, supporting them in grassroots actions to address climate change, and enabling access to relevant policy debates.

Whilst it may be tempting to view climate change as the responsibility of climate specialists, it is already having and will continue to have such a fundamental impact on care that those working in this field can no longer ignore it. Contributing to efforts to address climate change is an essential part of the duty to ensure that children are protected and well cared for.[165]

Conclusion

Climate change is arguably the greatest current threat to children's care. In Eastern and Southern Africa, increases in global temperatures are leading or contributing to droughts, storms, floods, locust swarms, food insecurity and water shortages, and conflict. Climate change is also damaging household livelihoods, reducing access to schooling and other services, and increasing poverty and vulnerability. The situation is likely to deteriorate further in the years to come. Climate change has the potential to, and in some cases is already resulting in, increased family separation and a decline in the quality of care that children receive. To successfully respond to the needs of children and families, care reform processes must take climate change into account with the following strategies.

- Research into and careful monitoring of the impacts of climate change on care, listening to the perspectives of the children and caregivers most affected. Here it is important to examine identified vulnerabilities against the existing care system to identify gaps in provision.

- Continuous promotion of the primacy of family-based care, even in the context of enormous pressure on families caused by climate change.

- Incorporating climate change into all policies and strategies on care.

- Ensuring that the social workforce has the knowledge, skills, resources and motivation to respond to the impacts of climate change.

- Improving coordination between sectors, and between care and protection and climate change actors.

- Building climate change-responsive care services that address the climate change-related causes of inadequate care, build family capacity to care for children, including during emergencies, support family reintegration, and expand alternative care provision in the face of increased demand.

- Ensuring parents, kinship and foster carers and residential care home staff can help children navigate the impacts of climate change.

- Providing opportunities for children and caregivers to engage in climate change debates and responses.

In incorporating climate change into care reform, a strong focus on building community preparedness and resilience is vital. Negative coping strategies in response to climate change can both diminish children's care and contribute to climate change. Poorly cared for children are also likely to lack the resilience and skills needed to adapt to and campaign on climate change. In this way, inadequate care and climate change are mutually reinforcing.

Those working on care reform must step outside their comfort zones and contribute evidence on the impacts of climate change on care to campaigns to limit climate change. They must work to ensure that care is referenced in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans. Responding to climate change can no longer be seen as the exclusive realm of climate specialists; it is a primary responsibility of all of those working to promote children's wellbeing.

Glossary

Term	Definitions
Care reform and care systems	Care reform can be defined as: "Changes to the systems and mechanisms that promote and strengthen the capacity of families and communities to care for their children, address the care and protection needs of vulnerable or at-risk children to prevent separation from their families, decrease reliance on residential care and promote reintegration of children and ensure appropriate family-based alternative care options are available."[166] Care reform is designed to lead to improvements in the care system, which can be defined as the legal and policy framework, structures and resources that determine and deliver alternative care, prevent family separation, and support families to care for children well.[167]
Alternative care	The formal and informal care of children outside of parental care. Children outside of parental care are children not in the overnight care of at least one of their parents, as parents are unwilling or unable to care for children.[168] The Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children outline several different forms of formal and informal alternative care including family-based such as kinship care and foster care, and residential care.[169]
Residential care	Care provided in any non-family-based group setting.[170] A distinction is often made between different forms of residential care. For example: • **Institutional care.** Large-scale facilities where children are cared for in large groups, usually involving shift-systems, a common set of rules, children sleeping in dormitories, and isolation from wider communities. • **Small group homes.** Children cared for in small groups, usually with one or two carers, in specially designed and designated facilities.[171]
Family-based care	Care in a family environment. Family-based care includes kinship and foster care (see below for definitions) and care by the child's biological or adoptive parents.
Kinship care	Family-based care within the child's own extended family or with close friends of the family known to the child.[172]
Foster care	Foster care is a formal arrangement whereby a competent authority places children in the domestic environment of a family other than the child's own that has been selected, qualified, and approved for providing such care.[173]
Supervised independent living	Children and young people living alone or in groups in the community but supervised by social workers, caregivers and/or community volunteers.
Case management	Case management is a key means of ensuring that vulnerable children and families get the services they need. Case management uses standardised guidance to support social workers in identifying needs, making referrals to appropriate services, monitoring children and families, and keeping effective records.[174]
Climate change	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change defines climate change as a "change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to climate variability observed over comparable time periods."[175]

Endnotes

1 https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/key-findings#physical-science

2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2022a) Climate change 2022: *Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability – Summary for policymakers*. Geneva: IPCC.

3 Ibid.

4 Barnfonden (2021) *Exploring the links between climate change and violence against children*. Sweden: Barnfonden; Hussona, J. (2021) *How is climate change driving conflict in Africa?* https://reliefweb.int/report/world/how-climate-change-driving-conflict-africa; Global Protection Cluster (2021) *Development of guidance for the field protection clusters and areas of responsibility on preparedness for protection in the context of climate change and disasters*. Report on regional consultations. Geneva: Global Protection Cluster.

5 Ibid.

6 UNICEF (2021a) *The climate crisis is a child rights crisis: Introducing the children's climate risk index*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

7 Adapted from: https://bettercarenetwork.org/toolkit/glossary-of-key-terms#C

8 Delap, E. (2021) *Caring systems. Maximising synergies between care reform and child protection system strengthening in Eastern and Southern Africa*. Nairobi: UNICEF; Van IJzendoorn, M.H., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M.J., Duschinsky, R., Fox, N.A., Goldman, P.S., Gunnar, M.R., Johnson, D.E, Nelson, C.A., Reijman, S., Skinner, G.C.M., Zeanah, C.H. and Sonuga-Barke, E.J.S. (2020) Institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation of children 1: a systematic and integrative review of evidence regarding effects on development. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 7(8), pp.703–720.

9 UNICEF (2021b) *Child protection strategy 2021–2030*. New York: UNICEF.

10 Myers, W. and Bourdillon, M. (undated) Declaration: *Climate destruction is child abuse*; UNICEF 2021a; Barnfonden 2021; Save the Children (2021) *Born into the climate crisis. Why we must act now to secure children's rights*. UK: Save the Children; Godfrey, S. and Tunhuma, F.A. (2020) *The climate crisis: Climate change impacts, trends and vulnerabilities of children in Sub Saharan Africa*. Nairobi: UNICEF.

11 UNICEF (2017) *No place to call home. Protecting children's rights when the changing climate forces them to flee*. UK: UNICEF; UNICEF 2021a; Save the Children (2019a) *Climate shocks claim more than 1200 lives across East and Southern Africa*. UK: Save the Children.

12 IPCC (2022b) *Climate change 2022: Impacts adaptation and vulnerability – Chapter 9: Africa*. Geneva: IPCC.

13 UNICEF (2022a) *The coldest year of the rest of their lives: Protecting children from the escalating impacts of heatwaves*. New York: UNICEF.

14 UNICEF 2022a.

15 IPCC 2022b; Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020.

16 UNICEF (2019a) *Independent real time evaluation of UNICEF's response to cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe*. New York: UNICEF.

17 Ibid.

18 IPCC 2022b.

19 IPCC 2022b.

20 UNICEF (2022b) *Regional call to action – Horn of Africa drought crisis: Climate change is here now*. New York: UNICEF.

21 Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (2022) 'African biodiversity loss raises risk to human security.' Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 7 December, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-biodiversity-loss-risk-human-security/

22 UNICEF (2020) 'Why biodiversity is important for children.' 12 November, https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/stories/why-biodiversity-important-children

23 Barnfonden 2021; Hussona 2021; Global Protection Cluster 2021.

24 Hussona 2021.

25 UNICEF 2019a.

26 Ruettinger, L., Taenzler, D., Musana, P. and Narcisio, B. (2011) *Water, crisis and climate change in Uganda: A policy brief*. Adelphi.

27 Hussona 2021.

28 Ethiopia Protection Cluster (2022) *Protection analysis update – Northern Ethiopia. Ethiopia*: Global Protection Cluster/Ethiopia Protection Cluster.

29 Save the Children 2019a.

30 Barnfonden 2021; Pereznieto, P., Rivett, J., Le Masson, V., George, R. and Marcus, R. (2020) *Ending violence against children while addressing the global climate crisis*. UK: Overseas Development Institute and World Vision.

31 Barnfonden 2021; Global Protection Cluster 2021.

32 Ferguson, S. (2022) 'UNICEF treating malnourished children in drought-stricken Somalia.' UNICEF, 6 June.

33 IPCC 2022a.

34 Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020; Republic of Kenya (2015) *Kenya National Adaptation Plan 2015–2030. Enhanced climate resilience towards the attainment of vision 2030 and beyond*. Kenya: Government of Kenya.

35 WHO Africa (2022) 'Africa faces rising climate-linked health emergencies.' 6 April, https://www.afro.who.int/news/africa-faces-rising-climate-linked-health-emergencies

36 Ibid.

37 IPCC 2022a.

38 Ibid.

39 Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (2021) *Nairobi Declaration on accelerating the path to achieving the goals and targets of the Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*. Kenya: Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

40 UNICEF 2021a.

41 Global Protection Cluster (2022) *Guidance for the field protection cluster and AORS on preparedness for protection in the context of climate change and disasters*. Geneva: Global Protection Cluster.

42 https://climate-diplomacy.org/exhibition/southern-africa

43 UN Women, International Federation of the Red Cross, UNICEF, and African Risk Capacity (2022) *Working with women and girls to centre gender equality in climate resilience – an advocacy brief of the 66th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)*. Kenya: UNICEF; United National General Assembly (UN GA) (2020) *Analytical study on the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change – report of the office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights*. Geneva: UN.

44 Delap 2021.

45 Cited in: Office of the special representative of violence against children (2022) *The climate crisis and violence against children*.

New York: United Nations. Links between climate change and growing poverty in Africa also highlighted in Barnfonden 2021 and IPCC 2022a.

46 UNICEF 2022b; Somalia Protection Cluster (2022) *Protection analysis update*. Somalia: Global Protection Cluster/Somalia Protection Cluster.

47 Mann, G. and Delap, E. (2020) *Kinship care in Sub-Saharan Africa: An asset worth supporting*. UK: Family for Every Child; HelpAge International (2015) *Climate change in an aging world*. UK: HelpAge International.

48 UN GA 2020.

49 Delap 2021.

50 Delap, E. and Mann, G. (2019) *The paradox of kinship care*. London: Family for Every Child.

51 Global Child Protection Cluster 2022; Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020.

52 UNICEF 2022a.

53 UNICEF 2022b.

54 Ethiopia Protection Cluster 2022.

55 Barnfonden 2021.

56 Friedman, J. (2012) 'The long-run impact of locust swarms.' World Bank, 31 December, https://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/the-long-run-impact-of-locust-swarms

57 Kwauk, C. and Steer, L. (2023) *Four ways that climate change impacts girls' education in Africa*. The Netherlands: Global Centre on Adaptation.

58 Ibid.

59 Plan International (2022) *A gendered impact of the hunger and drought crisis in the Horn of Africa*. UK: Plan International.

60 UN GA 2020.

61 Atwoli, L., Muhia, J. and Merali, Z. (2022) *Mental health and climate change in Africa*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

62 African Partnership to End Violence Against Children and African Child Policy Forum (2021) *Violence against children in Africa: A report on progress and challenges*. Ethiopia: African Child Policy Forum.

63 End Violence Against Children (2022) *How the climate crisis is driving violence against children – and what we can do about it*. New York: End Violence Against Children; UNICEF (2017) *No place to call home. Protecting children's rights when the changing climate forces them to flee*. UK: UNICEF; Save the Children 2021; Barnfonden 2021; Pereznieto et al. 2020.

64 Sifelani, I, Matsikure, M, Songo, S and Kudejira, D (2022) *Cyclone Idai relted losses and the coping strategies of adolescent survivors in Odzi community of Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe* in South African Journal of Pscyhology, Vol. 52, Issue ; Pereznieto et al. 2020.

65 Sifelaini et al. 2022.

66 Myers and Bourdillon (undated); IPCC 2022a; Barnfonden 2021.

67 Better Care Network (2021) 'Readjusting to parenthood: Peer support groups for grandparents assuming care for orphaned children (Upendo Village, Kenya)' – video. New York: Better Care Network; Hunt, J. (2020) *Two decades of UK research on kinship care: an overview*. UK: Family Rights; Delap, E. (2022a) *Care and protection in crisis in Lebanon*. Lebanon: UNICEF.

68 Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020.

69 Ibid.

70 UNICEF 2017; Barnfonden 2021.

71 Mann and Delap 2020.

72 UNICEF (2022c) *Education, children on the move and inclusion in education*. New York: UNICEF.

73 Barnfonden 2021.

74 Somalia Protection Cluster 2022.

75 UNICEF 2019a.

76 Pereznieto et al. 2020.

77 UNICEF (2021c) *Uncertain pathways. How gender shapes the experiences of children on the move*. UNICEF: New York.

78 UN GA 2020.

79 Barnfonden 2021.

80 Pereznieto et al. 2020; Barnfonden 2021.

81 Gender-based violence AOR – Global Protection Cluster (2020) *How to mitigate the risks of gender-based violence for women and girls in the desert locust response*. Geneva: Gender-based violence AOR – Global Protection Cluster.

82 UNICEF 2022b; Plan International 2022.

83 UNICEF 2021a; Barnfonden 2021; Save the Children 2021.

84 Save the Children (2019b) 'At least 400 children still separated from parents in Mozambique amidst major funding shortfall', Save the Children, 22 May.

85 UNICEF 2019a.

86 Save the Children 2019b.

87 Ibid.

88 Somalia Protection Cluster 2022.

89 Ethiopia Protection Cluster 2022.

90 Ibid.

91 Plan International 2022.

92 UNICEF (2019b) *No mother wants her child to migrate. Vulnerability of children on the move in the Horn of Africa*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti.

93 UNICEF 2022b

94 UNICEF 2019a.

95 Ethiopia Protection Cluster 2022.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Global Protection Cluster 2022; Save the Children 2021; Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020.

99 Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020.

100 UNICEF 2022b.

101 United Nations General Assembly (2010) *Guidelines for the alternative care of children*. GA Res 142, UNGAOR, 64th session, supplement number 49, Vol.1 (A/64/49 2010). New York: United Nations.

102 UNICEF (undated) *Guiding principles for children on the move in the context of climate change*. New York: UNICEF.

103 Delap and Mann 2019.

104 Ibid.

105 UNICEF 2019a; Global Protection Cluster 2021.

106 UNICEF and Save the Children (2017) *Adaptation and response for children affected by droughts and disasters. How national social protection systems are responding to El Nino in Eastern and Southern Africa with a particular focus on Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*. Nairobi: UNICEF.

107 Global Protection Cluster 2022.

108 UNICEF 2019a.

109 UNICEF 2022b.

110 Save the Children 2021.

111 Doyle, J. (2010) *Misguided kindness. Making the right decisions for children in emergencies*. London: Save the Children;

112 UNICEF 2022b; Global Protection Cluster 2022; IPCC 2022a.

113 Global Protection Cluster 2021, 2022.

114 IPCC 2022a

115 Aboniyo, J. and Mourad, K. (2017) Role of community based organizations in transferring climate change information in Rwanda. *Research Journal of Environmental Sciences* 11, pp.156–169.

116 Myers and Bourdillon (undated); UNICEF 2019a; Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020.

117 UNICEF 2021a; End Violence Against Children 2022; Pereznieto et al. 2020

118 Pereznieto et al. 2020.

119 GBV AOR 2020.

120 Delap and Mann 2019.

121 Ibid.

122 Sifelani et al. 2022

123 Child Protection Sub-cluster for the Idai response (2019) *Cyclone Idai Mozambique Child Protection Sub-cluster overview (Sofala province)*. Mozambique: Child Protection Sub-cluster for the Idai response; UNICEF 2022b.

124 Ethiopia Protection Cluster 2022.

125 Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020; Global Protection Cluster 2021

126 End Violence Against Children 2022.

127 Ibid.

128 Global Protection Cluster 2022.

129 Global Protection Cluster 2021.

130 Save the Children 2021.

131 Global Protection Cluster 2021.

132 Global Protection Cluster 2022; GBV AOR 2020.

133 Global Protection Cluster 2022.

134 The latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change calls for clear adaption strategies across sectors (IPCC 2022a). Kenya's national climate change adaptation strategy argues that climate change should be included in all sectoral strategies, with staff allocated to support implementation (Republic of Kenya 2015).

135 UNICEF 2022b.

136 https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/national-adaptation-plans

137 https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/the-big-picture/introduction#National-adaptation-programmes-of-action-NAPAs

138 https://napcentral.org/submitted-naps

139 https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/national-adaptation-plans

140 Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020.

141 NAPAs can be found here: https://unfccc.int/topics/resilience/workstreams/national-adaptation-programmes-of-action/napas-received; NAPs can be found here: https://napcentral.org/submitted-naps

142 Ibid.

143 Pereznieto et al. 2020; Global Protection Cluster 2021.

144 Save the Children 2021.

145 Republic of Kenya 2017, p.37.

146 Child Protection Sub-cluster for the Idai response 2019.

147 Taken from: Dominelli, L. (2011) Climate change: Social workers role and contributions to policy debates and interventions. *International Journal of Social Welfare* 20; Shokane, A. (2019) Social work assessment of climate change: Case of disasters in greater Tzaneen municipality. *Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 11(3); Nhapi, T.G. (2021) Robust responses to the impact of climate change in Zimbabwe: Social work's contribution. Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development 33(1); Mpambela, M. and Mabvurira, V. (2017) *Effects of climate change and their indelible impact on social work profession in Zimbabwe*. African Journal of Social Work 7(2).

148 Delap, E. (2022b) *Nine lessons on care reform from the COVID-19 pandemic in Eastern and Southern Africa*. Nairobi: UNICEF.

149 UNICEF 2022b.

150 Global Protection Cluster 2022.

151 Global Protection Cluster 2022; UNICEF 2022b. The importance of inter-sectoral coordination is also noted in the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2022a).

152 UN Women et al. 2022.

153 Global Protection Cluster 2021.

154 UNICEF 2019a?; UNICEF 2021a

155 Pereznieto et al. 2020; UNICEF 2022b; UNICEF and Save the Children 2017.

156 Delap, E. (2022b) *Creating synergies between social protection and care reform in Eastern and Southern Africa*. Nairobi: UNICEF

157 UNICEF 2022b; UNICEF 2021a

158 UNICEF 2022b.

159 UNICEF (undated) *Guiding principles for children on the move in the context of climate change*. UNICEF: New York.

160 Ibid.

161 The Inter-agency Group on Children's Reintegration (2016) *Global guidance on children's reintegration*. London: Family for Every Child.

162 UNICEF 2022b; UNICEF 2022a; Godfrey and Tunhuma 2020.

163 IPCC 2022a

164 UNICEF 2021a

165 Ibid., p.12.

166 Better Care Network and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (2015) *The role of social service workforce development in care reform*. BCN: New York, p.47.

167 Adapted from: https://bettercarenetwork.org/toolkit/glossary-of-key-terms#C

168 UN GA 2010.

169 Ibid.

170 Ibid.

171 Family for Every Child (2012) *Towards a family for every child. Conceptual Framework*. London: Family for Every Child.

172 UN GA 2010.

173 Ibid.

174 UNICEF and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (2019) *Guidelines to strengthen the social service workforce for child protection*. New York: UNICEF.

175 Cited in Global Child Protection Cluster 2022.

April 2023

for every child

unicef