

# CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN CLIMATE ACTION



*"We are the least responsible for climate change, but we are the most affected by its impacts. This is not fair. Governments of all countries need to take bolder decisions and act quickly and decisively, and they need to do it NOW."*

Shania, 15 years old, Tanzania

At World Vision, we believe that children and young people can play a significant role as agents of transformation. When young people learn to communicate opinions, take responsibility and make decisions, they develop a sense of belonging, justice, and solidarity.

In preparation for the 27<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP27) of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC),

in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, World Vision partnered with other child-focused organisations to advocate for increased child participation at COP27. World Vision's commitment to meaningful child participation included forming an adolescent climate action group, culminating in including Shania, a 15-year-old environmental advocate from Tanzania, in the World Vision COP27 delegation.

This briefing paper will answer key questions in our journey to amplify voices of children in the climate crisis: How did adolescents from around the world come together to raise their collective voice and support each other to take action for climate justice? What are the next steps we can take to increase meaningful child participation in global climate action?

## The Global Adolescent Group on Climate Action

*"We are working to reduce waste in the world - how about you?" — Torgom, 17 years old, Armenia*

In the lead up to COP27, World Vision **convened adolescent representatives from eight countries** to increase our own understanding of children's perspectives on climate change, and to amplify their voices at COP27. 25 boys and girls aged 15 to 18 years from Armenia, Brazil, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Eswatini,

Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia joined four virtual meetings in September and October 2022 to **share their groups' actions on climate justice and their opinions to contribute to key messages on climate action** at COP27 events.

The adolescents shared a variety of community projects their clubs and groups contributed to, including tree planting, rubbish clean-up, water maintenance, upcycled fashion, bee keeping, and conservation education and advocacy. Some of the group's key messages included:

- Children have to be able to participate in decision-making at all levels, including the highest-level meetings
- Children are already taking many actions to conserve nature and politicians need to take notice and support those actions
- Leaders need to take note of ecological problems young people identify and listen to young people's solutions
- High income countries have to support lower income countries to adapt to climate change

## Carlos at UN Geneva



***“We, young leaders, stand firm in this fight, because we are talking about a single planet with life, a single chance, and consequently talking about life or death.”*** – Carlos, 18 years old, Brazil

World Vision advocated to the Permanent Mission of Egypt, through the Child Rights Connect Working Group on Child Rights and the Environment, for meaningful participation of children in COP27. This resulted in the organisation of an event **“The Voices of Children for COP27 and beyond”** held on September 15th, 2022, on the margins of the Human Rights Council 51st session at the UN in Geneva. This event, hosted by the Permanent Mission of Egypt, brought children together to share their demands on

climate change and on the importance of improving spaces for children in climate decision-making. The Youth envoy of Egypt took note of their main recommendations to bring them to the COP27 negotiations, and they were heard by 12 Permanent Missions present in the room and more than 100 participants online, composed of government representatives, civil society practitioners, child rights experts, and children and adolescents.

**World Vision’s global adolescent climate action group** selected

Carlos from Brazil to represent them at this event and provided him with their main recommendations, in coordination with World Vision staff. Carlos shared the concerns of his peers and the following main recommendations:

- Promote environmental education on the largest possible scale so that people become aware of practical actions and everyday solutions such as: saving water, correctly disposing of garbage, using public transport, etc.
- Support the poorest countries that suffer the most from climate change, while being the least responsible for it.
- Include children in decision-making processes on issues related to climate change, because it is our future and we want to actively participate in the solution.

## Shania at COP27 in Egypt

***“We have to do something now and write a new history for the future generation of tomorrow.”*** – Shania, 15 years old, Tanzania

Shania participates in World Vision’s SAUTI stands for Sustainable Accountability Uniting Tanzanian and Irish Youth. It’s an EU-funded project which empowers children and young people to advocate for climate justice at local level – holding local government to account for ambitious and youth-focused climate action. Sauti is also the Swahili word for “voice.”

[Shania was a powerful voice for young people at COP27.](#) She spoke not only for children from her village, district and country, but for children from across the world, especially on behalf of her peers in World Vision’s adolescent climate action group.



Shania briefed Tobias Mwesiga of the Tanzania National Environment Council on the SAUTI- Youth project and all the work ongoing in Tanga.



Minister of Natural Resource and Climate Change, Malawi Eisenhower Nduwa Mkaka, and Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Mikiko Otani listen intently as Shania delivers her messages - greater ambition and greater child participation.





Shania with the Minister of Youth and Sports Ashraf Sobhi from Egypt.



Shania with the Human Rights Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Ian Fry.

COPs can be intimidating, they are held in huge venues with a mindboggling number of events, discussions, and stands. It's confusing even before you try to figure out the formal negotiation process. Shania took it all in her stride, speaking confidently to Ministers, UN agencies, journalists, donors, and her peers. At every opportunity she called for greater participation of children and young people in climate action.

Shania wasn't afraid to ask the hard questions either: "My community is feeling the impacts of climate change. We all know this is not fair. How much more damage has to be done before global leaders take serious action?" she asked a panel of leaders on Youth and Future Generations Day at COP27. She had been invited to speak in the intergenerational dialogue as part of the COP27 President's initiative. Shania's closing ask was not

just for greater participation, but for greater ambition.

"It is my hope," she said, "that we will use all possible means within our power to address the effects of climate change. **We have to do something now and write a new history for the future generation of tomorrow.**"

## Recommendations

While World Vision was pleased that, for the first time, there were official spaces and meetings dedicated for children and youth at COP 27, children are still not the focus of national and global climate plans. We welcome the decision to set up a loss and damage fund to help countries worst affected by the climate crisis. But children and young people cannot wait years for countries to start contributing and investing in those funds. In all our work around the world, World Vision is seeing the damage climate disasters are having every day and with increasing frequency and ferocity. Children are disproportionately affected by climate change and thus should be at the very centre of the national and global response.

Alongside other international child-focused NGOs, World Vision recommends the following to national delegations and wider COP member state participants to ensure

children's participation in preparation for the COP processes:

- Begin planning for the next COP (with children), taking into account children's recommendations and experiences.
- Start exploring with children what will be negotiated at the next COP and provide space for children to give feedback to the national delegation.
- Ensure that the ideas shared by children during the previous COP will be implemented and taken forward.
- Include children in the planning team.
- Strengthen established mechanisms that support ongoing dialogue between children and decision-makers (e.g., child reference groups, online forums, feedback mechanisms) and seek to strengthen their sustainability and influence.



World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities to reach their full potential by tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

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