



Students participating in the planting campaign. These plants will be irrigated by the installed grey water system in the school. © World Vision

WORLD VISION MIDDLE EAST & EASTERN EUROPE REGION (MEER) POLICY BRIEF

## CLIMATE CHANGE DAY 2023

# REDUCING THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL WARMING ON FAMILIES & CHILDREN IN AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, JORDAN & LEBANON THROUGH “CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS” INTERVENTIONS

May 2023

### The growing threat of climate change on already vulnerable populations, women and children

Refugees, internally displaced families and children continue to be at the frontlines of the climate change emergency in developing countries. Many of them are located in what is known as “climate hotspots” where very limited resources are available to help them adapt to increasingly harsh environments and living conditions.<sup>1</sup> According to UNHCR, the ten-year period between 2008 and 2019 saw 21.5 million new displacements being triggered by weather-related events on average each year, which is more than twice as many displacements compared to those caused by conflict.<sup>2</sup> In 2022, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) recorded 31.8 million weather-related internal displacements globally, the majority of which were triggered by floods (19 m), storms (9m) and droughts (2 m) among other environmental hazards.<sup>3</sup>

Women, girls and boys are finding themselves at the centre of the climate change crisis. The 2019 Global Environmental outlook (GEO 6) established that environmental degradation and climate change effects have a greater impact on people in disadvantaged social situations, with women and children in developing countries being most at risk.<sup>4</sup> According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)’s latest report, the years 2015 to 2022 were the warmest 8 years on record since 1850.<sup>5</sup> Carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide also reached record highs in 2021.<sup>6</sup> Rising temperatures have resulted in water shortages and drought, stunting agricultural outputs in under-resourced or developing countries. More than 2.3 billion people, representing 29.5% of the global population, are facing food insecurity globally.<sup>7</sup> Children’s unique metabolism and development needs mean they are especially vulnerable to climate change impacts.<sup>8</sup>

In the Middle East, close to 39% of internal displacements were triggered by disasters as opposed to conflict in 2022.<sup>9</sup> The majority of these displacements took place in Yemen, Iraq, Iran and Syria.<sup>10</sup> In this particular region, climate change is exacerbating water scarcity, reducing agricultural productivity, and increasing the frequency and severity of heatwaves, while also driving drought, dust storms and desertification. These impacts have economic, social, and political implications.<sup>11</sup> Children in the Middle East region are at increasing risk, with at least 103 million children and 53.5 million adolescents expected to become greatly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change by 2050.<sup>12,13</sup>

Although landmark decisions were ushered in during the 27<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Conference (COP 27) held in Egypt in November 2022 – the most prominent of which was the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund to aid countries facing the most severe repercussions of climate change – much still needs to be done to tackle the root causes of global warming, and reduce the emissions that continue to fuel it.<sup>14</sup> The international community has yet to get back on track to limit climate change and meet the Paris Climate Agreement targets to hold global average temperature to “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”<sup>15</sup>

**On this Climate Change Day 2023, World Vision is highlighting some of the most pressing threats of climate change in Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, and their impact on the most vulnerable population groups such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, women and children. In addition, this policy brief provides practical examples of climate-smart interventions currently being implemented by World Vision in close collaboration with affected communities in these four countries, learnings from the region, as well as useful recommendations to tackle climate change in the region.**

**Through its “climate-conscious” interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, World Vision hopes to continue working with those most affected by global warming – including local communities, faith leaders, women, youth and children – and help them ensure a greener, more hopeful future, despite the environmental hurdles that are yet to come.**

World Vision has been working in the [Middle East and Eastern Europe region \(MEER\)](#) for more than 45 years. We currently have long-term programmes in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Jerusalem - West Bank - Gaza (JWG) and Lebanon. World Vision also has emergency programmes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Moldova, Syria, Türkiye, Ukraine and Yemen. The top four largest UN humanitarian appeals and operations in the world also fall under WV MEER’s area of operations and include Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Yemen. Serving the most vulnerable girls and boys in the toughest of places, World Vision is leading the way in contexts of high fragility and gender disparity. MEER hosts 1 in 3 of the world’s refugee population and at least one third of children in the region live in horrific situations of war, conflict and violence. We are committed to supporting children on the move and those affected by conflict in a region beset by climate change and the global hunger crises.

## AFGHANISTAN

### Drought, flash floods and climate change induced displacements impacting already vulnerable families, women and children

Afghanistan has experienced a wide range of effects from climate change in recent decades, including the loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, escalating tensions, and protracted conflict fuelled by diminishing resources.<sup>16</sup> Floods are the most common natural hazard in the landlocked country where temperatures are rising year after year.<sup>17</sup> Climate change is impacting millions of lives in Afghanistan and the country is home to the majority of people displaced by climate disasters worldwide since the end of 2019.<sup>18</sup> Drought is also common, with the most serious drought in climatic history having been recorded in Afghanistan from 1998 to 2006.<sup>19</sup>

Due to continuous instability, the country has now found itself on the brink of economic collapse, with more than 19.9 million people facing acute food insecurity according to the World Food Programme (WFP).<sup>20</sup> Around 85% of Afghans rely on agricultural activities for their primary source of income, and communities who depend heavily on small-scale agriculture are among those most at risk of losing revenue due to climate



Abdul Azim works on his vegetable land. © World Vision

change.<sup>21</sup> The turning point occurs when families – or even entire communities – are forced to leave their uninhabitable lands and homes to relocate to new areas unprepared, without adequate resources or the necessary skills to start anew.<sup>22</sup>

As a result, Afghanistan's poorest and most vulnerable population groups such as women, girls and boys are being disproportionately impacted by the consequences of climate change, and often forced to absorb its shocks.<sup>23</sup> Decreased income is also pushing vulnerable households to resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as pulling their children out of school, subjecting them to child labour or early child marriage.<sup>24</sup> According to UNICEF, 94% of out of school girls between the ages of 15 and 17 have already been married.<sup>25</sup>

Families impacted by climate change will also reduce their caloric intake when crop yields are decreased.<sup>26</sup> In Afghanistan, more than 800,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women were found to be acutely malnourished in 2022, up from around 500,000 in 2020.<sup>27</sup> UNICEF estimates that only 26% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have diets meeting the minimum dietary diversity, particularly in rural areas and poorer households.<sup>28</sup> Recent instability in the country has only made matters worse particularly for young girls as the nationwide program to reach adolescent girls in schools with weekly iron and folic acid supplements was forced to close in August 2021 when girls were barred from attending school.<sup>29</sup>

World Vision has been working in [Afghanistan](#) since 2001, when emergency response operations began due to renewed conflict and displacement. Within a few years, the organisation moved toward rehabilitation, and later to long-term development programming, which includes interventions aimed at preventing and alleviating the impacts of climate change. World Vision strives to ensure that all children in Afghanistan can experience good health, education and protection. From [October 2021 to September 2022 \(FY22\)](#), more than 1.3 million people, including over 660,000 children, were reached through interventions in 4 provinces, 35 districts and more than 5,000 villages.

### World Vision making water go further to reduce hunger in Afghanistan

As Afghanistan continues to face one of the world's worst food crises driven in part by drought and arid conditions, World Vision has been working with farmers using earthworks at scale and drip irrigation to better conserve water, reduce erosion and maximise agricultural productivity. World Vision Afghanistan implemented the Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme (AACRS) from September 2018 to June 2021 in the western Bahgis province with the support of close to US\$3.4 million raised by World Vision Australia. Through this

partnership, we have targeted 33,328 households by improving water resources management and promoting climate-smart agriculture to enhance food security.

Activities under the AACRS project include:

- The construction of extensive systems of swales and terraces which give time for water to infiltrate the groundwater thus replenishing depleted water resources and recharging groundwater reserves.
- The facilitation of various trainings for farmers and community members on construction and agricultural techniques that conserve seasonal water on their lands locally. Bare and especially sloped land was also planted with vegetation to prevent the erosion of nutrient-rich soils and increase infiltration rates.
- The introduction of drip irrigation through the construction of remediated irrigation systems in areas where natural resources were most at risk.
- The introduction of drought-resistant crops and awareness on agricultural practices that can improve the management of pasture lands and natural resources in water-scarce environments.
- The establishment of local committees trained in natural resources preservation with the aim of maintaining and transmitting this knowledge within the community for long-term water preservation.

The project has been a remarkable success! Groundwater levels are recovering, arresting years of continued losses. Springs are coming back to life with stronger water flows and lasting longer into the dry season. Through enhanced irrigation practices, more agricultural land has been cultivated, using less

water per hectare and preventing soil erosion. More importantly, as a direct result of this project, more than 30,000 households have benefited from increased agricultural production and improved food security. This can also mitigate the protection risks faced by women, girls and boys in particular, such as gender-based violence, child labour or early marriage. World Vision hopes to expand this program in the coming year and continue to reduce food insecurity in Afghanistan, while improving the natural environment for its inhabitants and future generations.

## IRAQ

### Drought, sandstorms and economic challenges intensify displacements and protection risks for farmers, female-headed households and children

Iraq is the fifth-most vulnerable country to climate change due to its soaring temperatures, diminishing rainfall, droughts and water scarcity, in addition to its frequent sand and dust storms.<sup>30</sup> A [2021 study led by World Vision, Save the Children and Oxfam in Iraq](#) found that farmers were cultivating less land due to the compounding challenges associated with climate change and water scarcity.<sup>31</sup> This has resulted in lower crop yields and a subsequent rise in food and fodder prices, making small and medium scale agricultural activities almost impossible to sustain.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the combined pressures of water scarcity and loss of livelihoods, coupled with soaring costs of living, have fuelled the migration of farmers, their families and communities, from rural to urban areas.<sup>33</sup> As incomes and yield reduce, the perceptions of Iraqi farmers are changing, with 44% of farmers saying they would not want their children following in their footsteps and working the land.<sup>34</sup>

Internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and migrant workers are particularly susceptible as they often reside in areas vulnerable to climate change, or engage in precarious jobs, while very limited support and resources are available to support them.<sup>35</sup> The wide majority (91%) of internally displaced families reside in areas where informal work is the primary source of income and where daily labour may expose them to extreme weather conditions.<sup>36</sup> Sand or dust storms can also have a negative effect on displaced families who reside in poor or makeshift settlements, exposing them to respiratory illnesses.<sup>37</sup> Last year, 3.8 million people were estimated to be marginally food insecure and 0.5 million moderately food insecure in the country.<sup>38</sup> During the past 6 years, Iraq has been included as one of 39 countries in “food crisis” every year, with 4 years being characterised as “major crisis.”<sup>39</sup>



Khahwar shows an onion and the result of lessons she learned from agricultural lessons to increase her cultivations and have income for her family. © World Vision



In Iraq, exposure to heat stress is becoming increasingly common and is likely to continue to rise in the future as heat waves become more frequent.<sup>40</sup> Drought and flooding will raise the risk of waterborne diseases and malnutrition, while sand and dust storms will increase the likelihood of respiratory illnesses.<sup>41</sup> The country's health infrastructure as it stands today is unable to absorb patients impacted by climate change. In fact, 28% of internally displaced families reside in areas without a functioning private or public hospital within a 10 kilometre radius, hampering timely access to treatment for some of the most vulnerable families and children.<sup>42</sup>

Children make up the largest population group that is at risk of poverty in Iraq, and one in two children (48.8%) currently face significant barriers when it comes to education, health, living conditions, and overall financial security.<sup>43</sup> Households that are struggling financially are more likely to adopt negative coping mechanisms, which has resulted in a rise in child labour in recent years.<sup>44</sup> According to UNICEF's annual report for 2022, 7% of children and adolescents (aged 5 to 17 years) are currently engaged in child labour, with figures expected to rise in 2023.<sup>45</sup>

Female-headed households are also vulnerable to environmental change due to the patriarchal social norms and barriers that women face when attempting to access services or negotiate resources.<sup>46</sup> Women in Iraq are most impacted by drought and face its consequences when working in the fields, and while caring for loved ones at home.<sup>47</sup> Even though they often take on the bulk of the manual labour when it comes to working the fields and growing crops, female farmers are rarely consulted when it comes to decisions that are relevant to their family or community's agricultural activities.<sup>48</sup>

World Vision has been responding in Iraq since 2014 and works with Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), host communities and returnees. World Vision Iraq has reached more than 500,000 people in FY 2021 mainly in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Duhok, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Ninewa. Today, we continue to geographically expand and grow our presence to respond to the evolving needs of vulnerable girls, boys, families and communities. Most of our programmes focus on medium to long-term recovery and development, while we also continue to provide short-term emergency relief to the most vulnerable populations. We hope to alleviate their suffering and enable them to rebuild their lives after years of conflict, instability and displacement, while empowering them to address the devastating impacts of climate change in Iraq.

### World Vision working together with displaced Iraqis and host communities to promote climate-smart agriculture

Residents of the Ninewa Governorate of Northern Iraq are facing rising temperatures, drought, limited employment opportunities and increasing poverty rates, which among other factors, have resulted in farmers losing their livelihoods and abandoning their fields. As a response, World Vision's Safe Return Project is supporting returnees, internally displaced people, and host communities with sustainable livelihoods that are climate resilient, while also fostering social cohesion.

Supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the US\$4 million project has been running since 2020 and aims to continue until 2025. The project's main objective is to help families re-green their communities and create an abundance of crops, food and income from their land, while also preserving social cohesion. Our activities have included:

- The creation of 36 farmer field school groups that receive best practices on climate-smart agriculture. These include organic compost production, seed trays, natural pest and disease management, fodder concentration and feed fortification.
- The training of 615 project farmers in Nature-Based Solutions such as agroforestry, water-efficient irrigation, and drought management and 19 government employees working as gardeners in schools and government directories.



Farmer Field School Training for group of men in Salamiya village. © World Vision

- The distribution of 7,670 drought-resistant trees to be planted in the community and sites identified by municipalities in order to increase vegetative cover, improve soil fertility, create crop-windbreaks, provide shade, and prevent erosion. This will also help increase animal fodder and provide improved habitat and diversity for fauna and flora.
- The establishment of agro-processing units through the supply of fodder grinder machines, and seed purifier machines.
- The provision of psychosocial support and gender-sensitive transformative workshops for 1,440 households and decision-makers.
- The facilitation of various conflict resolution trainings with 50 teachers, 100 clergy members and community leaders.
- The creation of 160 new micro-enterprises and founding of 150 Saving Groups to increase access to savings and loans contributing to social security, and enabling new businesses to invest and grow.
- The capacity building of local actors on Advocacy and Mitigating Climate Change Effects.

As a result of this World Vision Iraq project, communities and families in Ninewa have become more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Families experiencing decreasing yields due to drought driven by climate change have drought-resilient crops and drip irrigation systems that use water more efficiently and alleviate food stress. Our activities in livelihood development and seeding of microbusinesses and loans will diversify income streams and further increase communities' resilience to the negative consequences of climate change. World Vision Iraq is proud to have played a part in helping communities in Iraq thrive

despite the challenges they face. With the Safe Return Project, the people of Iraq can look forward to a greener and more resilient future.

## JORDAN

### Water scarcity and rising temperatures affecting the livelihoods of vulnerable host and refugee communities, while also placing school attendance at risk for children

Jordan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world making it particularly vulnerable to climate change.<sup>49</sup> The country is expected to experience more heatwaves as temperatures are predicted to rise by 4.5°C within the next 50 years, while water availability will likely decline by 75%.<sup>50</sup> This intensified water stress, coupled with irregular precipitations, have had a direct impact on agricultural production, increasing the risk of food shortages.<sup>51</sup> Another notable impact is the rising occurrence of flash floods and landslides due to sudden and excessive rainfall events.<sup>52</sup> Lands along rivers, valleys and flood plains are most at risk, particularly in rural areas where families and communities depend on agriculture to survive.<sup>53</sup>

Jordan currently hosts the second-highest share of refugees per capita in the world, the wide majority of whom (83%) reside in urban areas.<sup>54</sup> Vulnerable communities in Jordan are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change as floods have contributed to chronic and protracted displacements with IDPs and refugees being particularly vulnerable to natural hazards.<sup>55</sup> According to UNHCR, 55% of Syrian refugees in Jordan lived in sub-standard shelters,

without protection from wind and rain in 2021.<sup>56</sup> As the effects of climate change intensify, tensions over water resources are expected to rise, compounding migration pressures due to water insecurity and increased socio-economic vulnerability.<sup>57</sup>

Girls and boys from the host and refugee communities in Jordan will inevitably be impacted by climate change and water scarcity. According to UNICEF, food insecurity, under and malnourishment are key contributors to “suboptimal health outcomes” particularly among children growing up in vulnerable families.<sup>58</sup> Today, 53% of Jordanians and 88% of the refugee population are categorised as food-insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity.<sup>59</sup> In addition, more than 20% of the refugee and host population in Jordan are lacking access to safe drinking water, and more than 80% of the rural population do not have access to sewage-treated sanitation.<sup>60</sup> Limited access to water services can affect children’s health in addition to their school attendance, with girls being particularly impacted due to hygiene requirements during menstruation.<sup>61</sup>

In 2021, 3.6% of Syrian and 2.1% of non-Syrian refugee children in Jordan’s host community were believed to be engaged in some form of child labour, with figures doubling for Syrian refugee children in particular over a five year period.<sup>62</sup> Child marriage was also mentioned as a primary reason for not attending school by 13% of girls aged between 16 and 17.<sup>63</sup> These negative coping mechanisms are expected to become more prevalent as climate change and water shortages continue to impact children’s socio-economic conditions, health, school attendance and overall protection.

World Vision has been present in [Jordan](#) since 2013 as part of its Syria Response which also encompasses Türkiye and Syria. In [FY21](#), which ran from October 2020 to September 2021, World Vision Syria Response continued to respond to the tremendous protection, educational and livelihood needs of Syrian refugee children and their families, as well as vulnerable host communities. Almost 90% of the children living in Türkiye and Jordan who were supported by World Vision were characterised as “most vulnerable” and facing extreme deprivation, discrimination, abuse and exploitation. In 2022, World Vision Syria Response reached more than 590,000 beneficiaries, including more than 180,000 women and 300,000 children, many of whom are impacted by conflict, displacement and climate change.

## World Vision equipping schools in Jordan for a greener future

Thanks to generous support from World Vision Korea, the Schools for Green Future project ran from February 2021 to February 2023 in two phases. Through this initiative, Ministry of Education (MOE) supported schools in Jordan gained access to alternative water sources to reduce their water expenditure. The project was implemented in 13 schools scattered across the 5 governorates of Irbid, Al Balqa, Jerash, Al Mafraq and Ajloun, which are all densely populated and home to vulnerable host and refugee communities.

As part of this project, schools, teachers and students were provided with the necessary equipment and awareness that would allow them to reduce their water consumption:

- 7 schools were equipped with an upgraded greywater system which consists of a tank in which greywater is collected and treated with a sand filter. This tank also reduces suspended solids in greywater through the sedimentation process, allowing schools to safely reuse water.
- 6 other schools were equipped with an upgraded wastewater treatment system which consists of a collective tank, treatment tanks, solar panels and dripped irrigation systems.
- In addition, 70 water saving devices (10 devices for each school) were installed on the taps in kitchens and bathrooms to reduce water waste. The students who were enrolled in the awareness sessions participated in installing those devices and gained further knowledge on responsible water usage.
- 392 students – including 142 boys and 250 girls – between the ages of 9 and 12 benefited from awareness raising sessions conducted by World Vision’s health awareness teams. They were able to familiarise themselves with a handful of themes linked to climate change including (1) The importance of water; (2) Water Conservation; (3) Climate change issues; (4) Global warming; and (5) Basic knowledge of greywater treatment systems such as the ones that were installed at their schools.
- In parallel, 4 faith-based schools in Jordan’s capital, Amman, were also approached for awareness raising sessions regarding water conservation, climate change and waterborne diseases, with 304 students aged between 9 and 12. They included 159 boys and 145 girls.

- At the end of these awareness sessions in both governmental and faith-based schools, personal hygiene items were distributed to students and teachers, in addition to awareness raising posters on handwashing, COVID-19 and head-lice prevention.
- Lastly, students were engaged in tree-planting activities at their schools, which enabled further understanding of the importance of re-greening water-stricken lands. The trees were planted around the greywater system tanks so that they can be easily irrigated with its recycled water source.

World Vision's work in Jordan's schools has driven climate awareness and understanding among some of the children who will be most impacted by climate change. Our work supporting clean water infrastructure will reduce children's vulnerability to waterborne diseases that are exacerbated by climate change-driven events. By planting trees, we provided localised shade against extended and prolonged heat and educated the children on the value of natural resources and their role in ensuring a brighter and more resilient future for them. As the intervention reached an end, our monitoring and evaluation teams found that 89% of boys and girls reached by these activities showed an increase in their knowledge about climate change. World Vision is eager to continue working with children, teachers and communities in Jordan to raise awareness on preserving water resources and green spaces.

## LEBANON

### Compounded crises and rising temperatures resulting in amplified levels of poverty and vulnerability

Rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns coupled with an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events – such as floods, storms, droughts and forest fires – have become more prevalent over the years in Lebanon.<sup>64</sup> Water resources are scarce and vulnerable to the effects of climate change, while ensuing changes in precipitation patterns are threatening the country's agricultural industry.<sup>65</sup> As a result, dry lands will further accelerate the depletion of already stressed groundwater supplies, increasing the likelihood of destructive forest fires during the warm summer months.<sup>66</sup>

In parallel, the humanitarian situation in Lebanon continues to drastically decline due to increased poverty, hardship and compounded crises. Lebanon holds one of the world's highest numbers of refugees per capita, hosting approximately 1.5 million Syrians.<sup>67</sup> The country's economic collapse has ranked among the worst recorded in recent times, and has resulted in severe inflation and unemployment.<sup>68</sup> The poverty rate has doubled from 42% in 2019 to 82% of the total population in 2021, with nearly 4 million people living in multidimensional poverty including refugee and host communities.<sup>69</sup> Towards the end of 2022, the World Food Programme (WFP) found that 700,000 refugees



Students supporting each other during the planting campaign which aims to make the school greener. © World Vision

(46%) and 1.29 million Lebanese (33%) were food insecure.<sup>70</sup>

Climate change has had a devastating impact on Lebanon's most vulnerable. Quality of life, level of income, and career possibilities are all predicted to decline as a result of climate change, particularly for agricultural workers.<sup>71</sup> Vulnerable farmers' and herders' livelihoods are at heightened risk of collapse due to environmental stress or drought.<sup>72</sup> As the primary household managers responsible for food production, hygiene, as well as caring for young children and the elderly, women and girls are particularly affected by climate change which requires them to take up even more work within the household despite limited resources.<sup>73</sup>

Children from the refugee and host communities are also impacted, and girls are at increasing risk of dropping out of school to support their families.<sup>74</sup> A 2022 assessment among Lebanese families revealed that 45% of families did not have access to enough drinking water, 53% of families were unable to provide their children with enough food, and 9% of families sent their children to work while girls were said to be at increasing risk of being married young.<sup>75</sup> In addition, more than 50% of school-aged Lebanese children were estimated to be out of school due to the ongoing crisis.<sup>76</sup>

The 2022 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) also showed that 4% of Syrian refugee children were engaged in child labour, with boys being most affected.<sup>77</sup> In addition, 22% of Syrian refugee girls between the ages of 15 and 19 had been married, up from 20% in 2021.<sup>78</sup> The top three needs identified by Syrian refugee families were food (87%), housing (73%) and healthcare (71%).<sup>79</sup> Many Syrian families reported residing in temporary or substandard shelters and being at constant risk of eviction due to a spike in rent prices resulting from the local

currency devaluation.<sup>80</sup> Vulnerable host and refugee communities are expected to be further impacted in the coming years as Lebanon's socio-economic situation worsens and the impacts of climate change intensify due to rising temperatures.

World Vision has been working with the poorest communities in [Lebanon](#) for nearly 45 years, and has established strong relations with communities and local stakeholders. Our programmes are designed to strengthen a child-sensitive social protection system for vulnerable girls and boys, through evidence-based interventions in child protection, education, water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH), basic assistance and livelihoods. Since 2012, World Vision has also been assisting Syrian refugees and vulnerable members of local host communities through humanitarian relief programmes across all sectors. Currently, we continue to respond to the worsening socio-economic situation in Lebanon while taking into account the increasing risks of climate change and environmental degradation. During [FY22 which ran from October 2021 to September 2022](#), World Vision Lebanon reached more than 845,000 beneficiaries including more than 449,000 children.

### World Vision providing winterization assistance and alternative heating methods to vulnerable host and refugee families in Akkar

The ongoing economic crisis in Lebanon has spiked basic living costs including rent, diesel and firewood, meaning that many host and refugee families were unable to heat their homes during the last winter seasons. Thanks to generous funding from the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP)'s Activation – Protracted Crisis Response in Lebanon Project, World Vision Lebanon (WVL) was able to provide winterization assistance to some of the most vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian families of Akkar governorate in Northern Lebanon. The project ran from September 2021 to February 2023 and was three-fold:

- The first component consisted of promoting the use of passive techniques to adapt the households of the most vulnerable with simple and available technologies that improved the thermal efficiency of homes. This included improving and adapting roof structures to reduce standing water, improvements to windows using plastic glazing window shields, draft proofing, and installation of simple greenhouse structures to capture heat from sun and draw it into the home.



Roula shows us that she was forced to burn plastic in her heater to stay warm.  
© World Vision



Samira shows the cow that the family relies on for additional income.  
© World Vision

To raise awareness on these techniques, WWL organised assisted visits to the demo houses where these techniques were applied. In addition, multi-purpose cash assistance was provided by World Vision Lebanon and partners at LebRelief to cover the cost of winterization needs among 2,270 households consisting of 11,159 individuals. All heads of households were trained on heating preservation techniques and the different methods that can preserve heat in households.

This modality allowed beneficiaries to exercise a maximum degree of choice, flexibility, and dignity in covering their winterization needs, to invest in copycat household improvements should they wish, and adopt practices to reduce heat losses. Specific focus was given to highly marginalised groups including nomadic groups, migrant workers, female-headed households, and households with people with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 who are most vulnerable to cold weather.

- The second component of the project focused on promoting alternative heating materials to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and provide a renewable and sustainable source of energy. World Vision Lebanon connected waste streams (olive stone and pith from local olive oil production) and supported olive pomace producers to increase their production by providing them with business coaching sessions and relevant tools. The adoption of new briquettes was promoted through the community. The project addresses the carbon intensity of winter heating while preserving local forests, often a local source for firewood. To ensure gender equality, the project

incorporated gender-inclusive financial literacy training for beneficiaries, with a particular focus on empowering women in decision-making processes linked to climate change and the preservation of natural resources. Additionally, messaging on child protection was delivered to empower vulnerable households allowing them to make informed decisions in safeguarding children from harm, abuse, and exploitation.

- Thirdly, a total of 773 tarpaulins and 131 thermal blankets donated by the Australian Embassy in Lebanon were distributed to the project beneficiaries. The tarpaulins served as protective covers for wood or alternative materials during harsh weather conditions. Burning of wet wood is far more harmful for the environment as an unclean burn leads to more emissions of particles and tar released into the community.

This smaller-scale climate change mitigation project demonstrates how few behavioural changes can go a long way for environmental preservation. Drivers of localised deforestation were addressed by reducing the use of unsustainable sources of solid fuel during two harsh winter seasons and beyond. By promoting passive techniques to improve thermal efficiency, promoting alternative heating materials, and distributing tarpaulins and thermal blankets, the project provided much-needed relief and hope to those who needed it the most. The project demonstrated how we can empower vulnerable households, promote gender equality and child protection, while also addressing climate change together with impacted communities.

## CONCLUSION

Community, child and youth-led “climate-conscious” interventions are not only possible in the humanitarian and development sectors, they are also needed now more than ever. Through inclusive interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon we have seen how small changes and innovative approaches can go a long way when it comes to preserving natural resources and reducing carbon footprints. As global warming continues to advance at full speed, it is crucial that those most impacted by climate change are included in the development of policies and interventions aimed at tackling its causes and effects. For this reason, World Vision continues to involve farmers, community leaders, faith leaders, and more importantly, women, children and youth, in the design and implementation process of its “climate-conscious” interventions in the Middle East and Eastern Europe region (MEER). We truly hope that they will become the torch-bearers of sustainable behavioural and institutional change aimed at climate preservation in years to come.



The plants planted by students as part of the Climate Change project. They will be irrigated by the installed grey water system in the school. © World Vision

## WORLD VISION MEER REGIONAL LEARNINGS ON CLIMATE CHANGE & OUR RESPONSE:

- MEER countries are extremely vulnerable to climate change, particularly water stress, temperature rises, heat waves, dust storms, and flooding. Resilience to these region-specific vulnerabilities must be integrated into all program thinking and activities.
- IDPs’ and refugees’ situation in MEER is acute and chronic and they are often the most vulnerable to the negative consequences of climate change. We will increase the resilience of these communities, targeting the most vulnerable first as they will suffer the greatest consequences of inaction.
- Building the resilience of communities for returnees is a critical path to mitigating future vulnerability. We will work to support refugees and IDPs within the MEER region to return to resilient communities.
- By working on climate change we are addressing the needs of children and adolescents who will become the leaders of tomorrow and work with them to ensure they understand and are motivated to take actions to address climate change in MEER countries.
- Through evidence-based research, World Vision will seek to measure and recognise the consequences of climate change in the countries where it operates in MEER. It will also seek to recognise how it negatively affects mental and physical health, livelihoods, gender, and childhood well-being.
- Climate change mitigation activities in MEER can be achieved in all contexts through close collaboration with affected communities, women and children. We will seek opportunities in our programs to mitigate climate change while raising awareness on its impact. We will also ensure that our operations, facilities, and engagement mitigate negative environmental impacts.
- Through education, awareness and advocacy, World Vision will foster an environment where duty-bearers in the MEER regions are motivated and enabled to act on climate change. We will continue to demonstrate and deliver practical solutions for MEER populations and partners to steer communities away from climate change’s negative consequences, and ultimately contribute to a greener roadmap that benefits all.

## CALL TO ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE!



### The international community must:

- Take ambitious climate action to tackle climate change and meet the 1.5° temperature goal set out in the Paris Agreement.<sup>81</sup>
- Continue to treat climate change as the global emergency that it is, while recognising and documenting its impact on the most vulnerable, including refugees, IDPS, women, children and youth.
- Recognise that the climate crisis is a children's crisis at the household level. Increased school dropouts, child labour and early marriages are directly correlated with the pressures impacting climate-dependent livelihoods.
- Act with longer-term solutions to address the climate related aspects of the global food crisis and protect children from hunger, malnutrition and other related threats.
- Build on the landmark decisions that were ushered in during COP27, including the 'loss and damage' fund established to aid countries facing severe damage from climate change, as well as the Global Shield against Climate Risks, which provides vulnerable countries with more means to protect themselves from extreme weather conditions.<sup>82</sup>
- Recognise that carbon emissions remain at the core of global warming, and climate change cannot be addressed if global emitters – including developed nations and corporations – do not rapidly reduce their carbon footprint so that more vulnerable nations and populations avoid facing climate disaster.
- Ensure that those most impacted by climate change – including women, children, youth, refugees, IDPs, vulnerable host communities, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and others – are adequately represented at key events linked to climate change policy such as the upcoming COP28 taking place in Dubai in November-December 2023.



### Donors, UN and development agencies must:

- Support governments in their development of national action plans and nationally determined contributions (NDCs)<sup>83</sup> to address climate change by setting concrete objectives to tackle its negative effects, introducing policies adapted to the local contexts, and involving communities and CSOs at all stages of the process.

- Dedicate adequate funding in annual climate finance support – particularly for developing countries that are impacted by climate change – while focusing on the needs of those most affected by its socio-economic and health effects, including refugees, IDPS, women and children.
- Foster the development of flexible grants and funding mechanisms that can be adapted to address the ever-changing and unpredictable cause and effects of climate change. In parallel, encourage innovative approaches linking Disaster Risk Reduction with Climate smart actions such as multi-purpose cash assistance and smart business support solutions that can uplift communities impacted by climate change, while preserving their decision-making power and agency.
- Recognise that refugee and other forced displacements are rarely short term. As a result, hosting arrangements should consider climate adaptation and impact from the very start of the intervention, while serving both the host and refugee populations and preserving social cohesion.
- Encourage the inclusion of women in the design and implementation of grants earmarked for climate change prevention as they are able to provide unique gender perspectives, and identify climate-smart approaches that are tailored to the specific needs of girls and women.
- Foster additional child and youth-led initiatives for climate change mitigation and empower girls and boys to meaningfully participate in local, national and global climate change discussions and decision-making processes.



### National governments must:

- Ensure climate action targets the most vulnerable communities and is child-centred, inclusive, and supports women's economic and social empowerment by making Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans adapted to their needs and protective of their human rights.
- Develop national plans and nationally determined contributions (NDCs)<sup>84</sup> to tackle climate change in close cooperation with affected communities and CSOs, while also stressing on the various scientifically proven methods that prevent and address its impacts across all sectors – particularly education, health, industry, and agriculture.
- Invest in raising a generation of "climate-conscious" children and youth who will be able to tackle climate change head-on, and preserve the know-how on environmental and natural

resources' preservation for years to come, as per the Action for Climate Empowerment under the Paris Agreement.<sup>85</sup>

- Support programmes to make schools as “green” as possible and set a strong message to the next generations on the importance of environmental preservation. This should include considerations around energy efficiency, curriculum development and after school activities that promote climate action among children and young people.



### Local and international humanitarian organisations must:

- Work hand-in-hand with governments in all affected countries to foster and implement policies aimed at raising awareness on climate change and reducing its impacts, particularly through the health, education and agricultural sectors among others.
- Strive to ensure that all programmes “do no environmental harm” where possible. In parallel, reduce carbon footprint by prioritising flexible interventions such as cash-based programming which can stimulate local markets rather than the procurement and long-range transport of goods in kind.
- Prioritise inclusive, bottom-up programming aimed at addressing climate change while meaningfully involving communities, faith leaders and local authorities, women, men, children and youth, persons with disabilities – as well as IDPs, refugees and migrants – at all stages of the project design, implementation and evaluation.
- Support and encourage women’s leadership and decision-making in projects aimed at addressing climate change while keeping in mind that gender equality is key to the advancement of sustainable development, environmental protection and social justice.<sup>86</sup> It is also important to inform and empower girls at a young age to take up leadership roles in environmental preservation at their schools or communities.
- Empower children and youth as per the Action for Climate Empowerment set out by the Paris Agreement, and support girls’ and boys’ active participation in climate action at the national, regional and international levels.<sup>87</sup>
- Make a commitment to proactively assess and reduce the carbon footprint of facilities, operations and programmes so that NGOs can also contribute to global efforts to reduce emissions and fight climate change.



Abdul Rahman, one of the farmers of the Badghis province, is happy with his potato harvest and the seed aid he received from World Vision under the FRAMES project. © World Vision

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**For more information, please contact:**

Evita Mouawad Jourdi, World Vision Middle East and Eastern Europe Region  
Communications & Advocacy Specialist [evita\\_jourdi@wvi.org](mailto:evita_jourdi@wvi.org)

Aaron Tanner, World Vision Middle East and Eastern Europe Region Environmental  
Stewardship and Climate Adaptation (ESCA) Adviser [aaron\\_tanner@wvi.org](mailto:aaron_tanner@wvi.org)