

JUST AND RESILIENT CITIES FOR CHILDREN

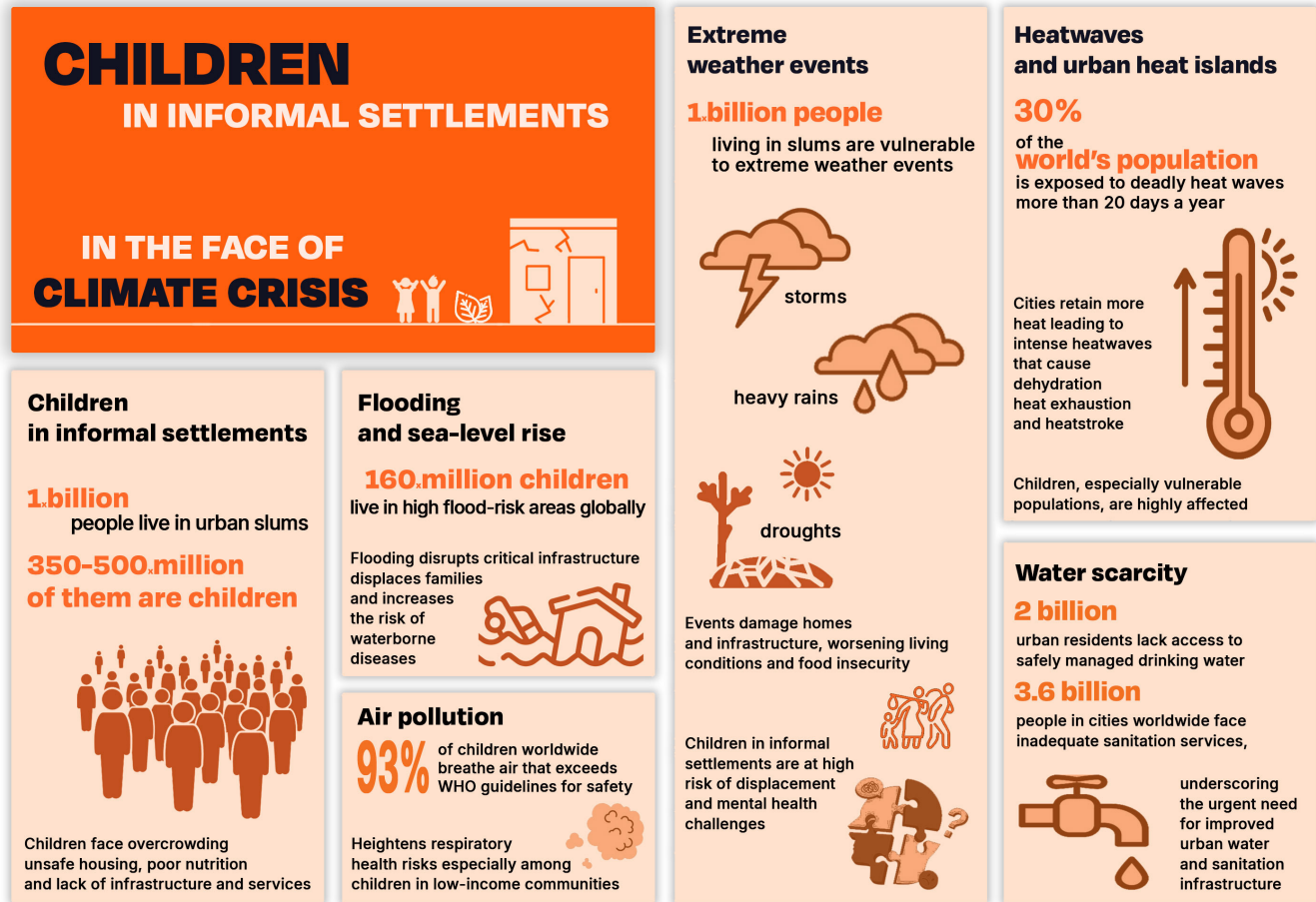
'In my community there is no proper management. During heavy rainfall, floodwater enters our houses due to lack of proper sewerage system. There is no availability of pure drinking water and people also throw household waste haphazardly. Municipality has constructed exercise ground in our community, but it is not safe for children as drug addicts capture the place most of the time.'

Meera, 12 years old, Nepal

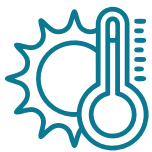


THE ISSUE

Climate change is a 'threat multiplier' for children, amplifying existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, including those based on age, gender, class, ethnicity, ability and land rights – and children are bearing the greatest burden.ⁱ Children living in cities are exposed to several risks that are exacerbated by extreme weather events such as heatwaves, flooding and other natural disasters, for example, air pollution which is often found at high levels in densely populated cities.ⁱⁱ Girls and boys living in informal settlements and urban slums specifically within and around cities often have much greater exposure and vulnerability to extreme weather events and other climate change risks due to their settlements being on unsafe and marginal lands, lack of infrastructure and basic services, poor quality housing, and congestion within households and settlements.ⁱⁱⁱ A staggering 1 billion people – 350–500 million of them children – live in urban informal settlements at the forefront of the climate emergency.^{iv}



The multiple climate challenges children in urban informal settlements face include the following:



Extreme heat due to urban 'heat islands': Cities receive and retain more heat than the surrounding countryside areas, as natural cooling processes are weakened in the absence of plant cover. Intensifying rising temperatures lead to more frequent and severe heat waves, disproportionately affecting children and vulnerable populations that are more susceptible to heat-related illnesses such as dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke.^{vi}



Flooding and sea-level rise threaten coastal cities and areas near rivers, damaging critical infrastructure, disrupting education and healthcare services, and displacing families. The loss of homes and schools disproportionately affects children in vulnerable communities who typically lack resources to recover effectively. In Bangladesh, for example, more than 19 million children are at risk of climate-related disasters, including floods,^{vii} leaving them particularly vulnerable to displacement and exposed to waterborne diseases like cholera and diarrhoea.^{viii}



Air pollution: Children are more vulnerable to air pollution due to their developing respiratory systems. About 93% of children worldwide breathe air that is beyond recommended levels of safety in air quality guidelines, and this exposure contributes to conditions like asthma, which disproportionately affects children in urban slums and marginalised areas.^{ix}



Extreme weather events, such as storms, heavy rainfall, and droughts often damage housing and drainage systems, among others, further exacerbating poor living conditions in urban slums. Children's access to education is also affected: Since 2022, 400 million students globally experienced school closures due to extreme weather.^x In the Philippines, for example, an estimated 10 million children are exposed to significant risks from typhoons each year, with many living in informal urban settlements that are highly prone to flooding and landslides.^{xi}



Access to clean water is increasingly at risk as climate change alters rainfall patterns, reducing water availability and impacting urban water supply and sanitation systems. This disproportionately affects children in marginalised communities who already struggle with inadequate sanitation. Approximately 5% of global under-5 deaths are attributed to diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation, and climate change is expected to worsen this crisis.^{xii}



Urban climate governance often suffers from a fragmented approach, where lack of coordination among various key urban stakeholders – including both formal and informal networks and institutions – leads to inefficiencies and missed opportunities for comprehensive solutions. Governance actors may lack the necessary human, technical or financial capabilities, political will, or access to opportunities to carry out their duties. This fragmentation frequently overlooks the needs and voices of children, especially those living in slums and informal settlements, rendering them invisible in decision-making processes that directly impact their future. Integrating children's perspectives is crucial for creating resilient and inclusive urban environments.

While cities are a key contributor to climate change, with urban activities accounting for nearly 70% of greenhouse gas emissions,^{xiii} they also have a critical role to play in providing solutions and mitigating climate change. Some cities are forerunners in ensuring citywide carbon emissions through the Global Covenant of Mayors.^{xiv} There is no simple guaranteed solution to the complex issues of rapid urbanisation in the climate crisis. However, World Vision, drawing on our evidence-informed practice in urban and fragile contexts, has witnessed firsthand that children can be powerful agents of change, contributing to the transformation of their communities and cities.



OUR APPROACH

World Vision's [Cities for Children framework](#) (Figure 1), tailored to urban contexts, focuses on creating healthy, safer, prosperous, resilient, and just cities for children. This framework is essential to addressing the climate crisis and its impacts on children and vulnerable populations.

Just and resilient cities

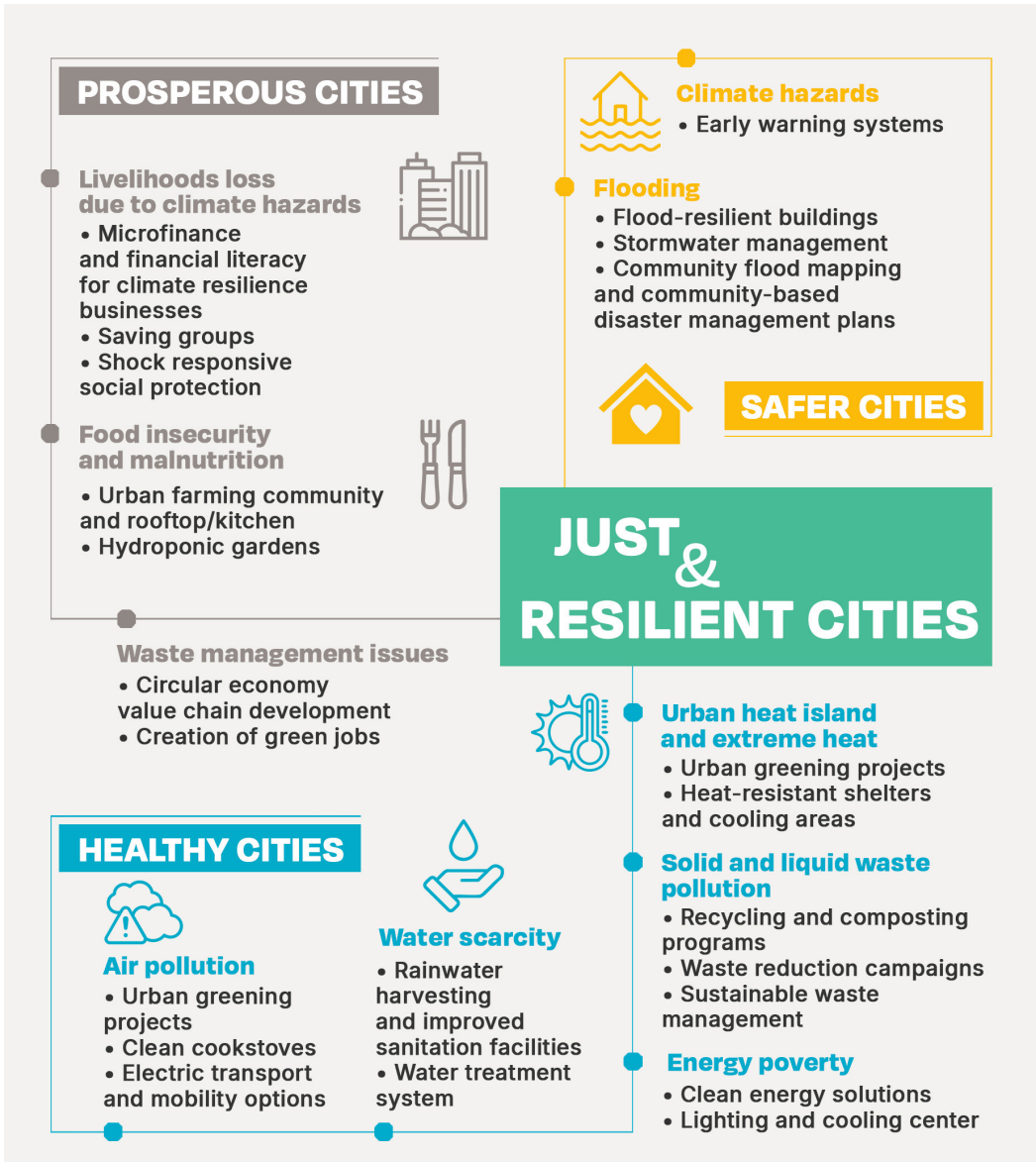
The diagramme below showcases World Vision's approach to the Cities for Children Framework. The framework's five domains of change (healthy, safer, prosperous, resilient and just cities) are particularly critical to address the needs of children in urban areas, especially those in slums and informal settlements, while effectively advancing climate action through mitigation and adaption measures. In the face of the climate crisis, the 'resilient cities' domain is of particular importance.

Figure 1. World Vision's Cities for Children Framework



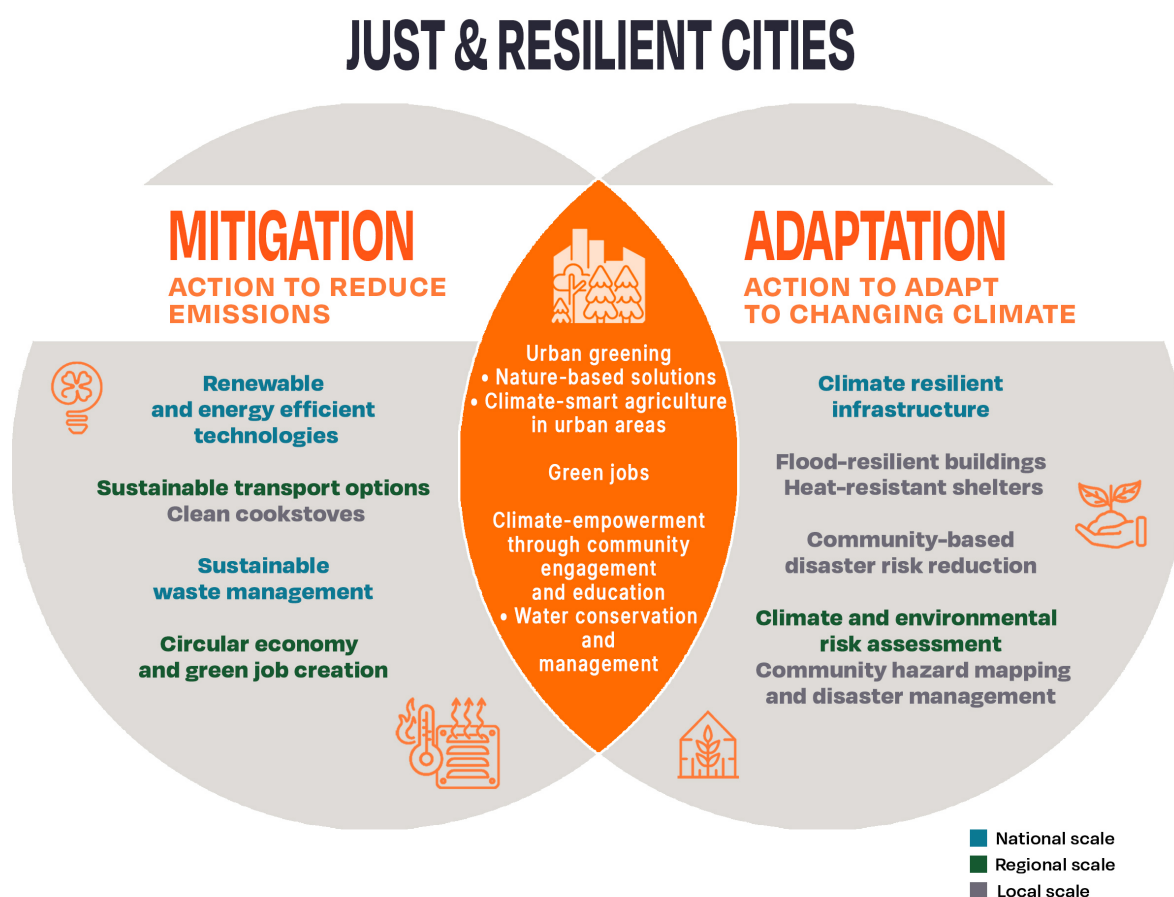
What do just and resilient cities look like? These are cities where urban planning and design are led with children as key stakeholders. Children living in just and resilient cities are able to enjoy their rights to a healthy and sustainable environment, with clean air, safe green spaces, and equitable resources. As a child-focused organisation, World Vision addresses environmental sustainability and climate change through the lens of child-centred urban planning, working to create healthier, more inclusive, and sustainable environments that foster equitable and green growth and development for children as well as future generations to come.

Figure 2. World Vision’s just and resilient cities approach



There are various ways to integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts into the building of just and resilient cities. Climate action should be integrated at the local, regional, and national urban planning and policy levels as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures that can be implemented at different scales



World Vision has tested different project models to build urban resilience against climatic shocks and stresses. One such approach is [Community-Based Disaster Risk Management](#) (CBDRM) which strengthens the disaster risk management capacity by working directly with the community members and local municipalities to enhance preparedness and resilience. Urban greening initiatives are another key strategy, with project models like [Regreening Communities](#) improving city liveability through urban greening efforts, including climate-smart agriculture. These initiatives contribute to climate adaptation and mitigation while promoting healthier and greener urban environments.

Furthermore, [the Citizen Voice and Action \(CVA\) project model for climate action](#), World Vision's proven approach to social accountability, empowers citizens – including children, youth and potentially affected people – to actively participate in climate change and environmental management decision-making processes. This model enables urban communities to monitor services and climate financing, while holding governments accountable. By amplifying local voices, including those of young people, CVA strengthens climate resilience and ensures that adaptation and mitigation efforts reflect the diverse needs and priorities of the community.

Additionally, along with disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation efforts, World Vision's commitment to [anticipatory action programming](#) is another area contributing to creating just and resilient cities for children. Anticipatory action programming has been implemented in over 30 counties in rural and urban areas and continues to expand.

Integrated programming

Just and resilient cities for children require multi-dimensional, holistic and urban-specific interventions that capitalise on the unique and sustainable advantages present in all urban settings. Key recommendations for successful holistic/integrated programming interventions include:

1. collaboration and coordination with a wider range of urban players (e.g., local governments, public and private service providers) at all tiers of the city
2. engaging children exposed to extreme vulnerability (e.g., children outside of the formal school system, street children, undocumented children, children in forced labour)
3. a stronger spatial focus, for example, in mapping hazards and risks as well as pockets of fragility where climate vulnerability could be heightened
4. an expansion of World Vision's advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives on risk mitigation and disaster response and recovery to the private sector, especially micro- and small enterprises, industry and business actors, and service providers – while also including the participation of children and youth in this advocacy.



World Vision contends that just and resilient cities for children require a combination of physical interventions, governance reform, improving knowledge, and social cohesion/inclusion, as well as partnerships to capitalise on each other's multi-disciplinary strengths.



SPOTLIGHT

World Vision collaborates with urban community members to actively conserve their landscapes and seascapes to ensure a more climate-resilient and sustainable future. World Vision has a long history of implementing programmes that address climate change and environmental degradation while also advancing positive outcomes for children living in vulnerable urban communities.

[PHINLA Global Waste Management Programme](#) is a global programme funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented in three countries: Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The programme aims to enhance the livelihoods of urban community members at risk of poverty by creating opportunities in waste management, while also improving environmental management in urban areas by establishing effective waste management systems. Over the past five years, PHINLA has significantly increased community awareness and participation in waste sorting and waste collection initiatives, contributed to sustainable livelihoods, and reduced waste in urban areas. Watch this video for more information: [PHINLA Programme](#).

[‘CHIP’: Cooking, Heating, and Insulation Product](#): This case study focuses on Mongolia’s efforts to reduce air pollution and improve public health, particularly for children, through the installation of the ‘Cooking, Heating, and Insulation Product’ (CHIP) in traditional ger households in informal settlements. This energy-efficient and environment-friendly technology solution replaces coal-fired stoves with electric heaters, reduces coal and wood burning, improves indoor air quality, addresses climate-related hazards, and largely improves child safety.

[Anticipatory action in South Asia and Pacific Region](#): In the South Asia and Pacific region, the impact of climate change is evident through the increased frequency and severity of typhoons, floods, droughts, and heat waves. The UN's [Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2023](#) revealed that in 2022 alone, over 140 disasters occurred, resulting in more than 7,500 deaths, affecting 64 million people and causing an estimated economic loss of US\$57 billion. Responding to these challenges, World Vision has shifted our strategy to become more agile and responsive, adopting an integrated disaster management approach. We aim to enhance the efficiency of humanitarian assistance by taking anticipatory action before hazards impact vulnerable communities, thereby mitigating the disruptive effects of disasters. World Vision implements anticipated interventions based on forecasts, early warnings or pre-disaster risk analyses to protect communities. This approach involves equipping communities with cash, seeds, tools and knowledge ahead of time, preserving development gains and increasing resilience to future shocks. World Vision's South Asia and Pacific [Anticipatory Action Capacity Statement](#) report further details some of the anticipatory action work in the region spanning from India towards Samoa.

[Dhaka Thrive Project](#) is an innovative joint initiative by World Vision Bangladesh and Humanitarian OpenStreetMapping (HOT OSM). This project leverages participatory open mapping to address urban vulnerabilities and strengthen climate resilience in one of the world's most dynamic yet fragile urban contexts.

What has been achieved to date:

- Mapped over **7,700 buildings**, **12 km of roads**, and **696 lifeline facilities** in Dhaka's informal settlements (we completed the mapping of 40 informal settlements in less than six weeks).
- Identified critical vulnerability layers, including **flood hazards**, **fire risks** and **dengue hotspots**.
- Created a user-friendly interactive dashboard to visualise these findings for decision makers.

Explore the dashboard: [Dhaka Thrive Dashboard](#). Watch the video: [Phase 1 Video Highlights](#).

This dashboard is more than just data – it's a tool to empower local governments, non-governmental organisations and urban planners to make data-driven decisions that truly impact communities. We envision use cases such as:

- Disaster preparedness: Identifying high-risk zones for targeted interventions.
- Urban planning: Mapping underserved areas to prioritise infrastructure development.
- Health systems: Aligning responses to disease outbreaks with spatial vulnerability data.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our field experience and the pivotal role of urban areas in driving innovative climate action, World Vision recommends the following for practitioners, governments and stakeholders:

- **Mainstreaming environment and climate action in urban governance:** World Vision urges governments, local authorities, and stakeholders to prioritise the integration of environmental sustainability and climate action within urban governance frameworks. Effective governance requires collaboration among local authorities, citizen groups, and the private sector, alongside partnerships with institutions at national and global levels, to integrate climate change adaptation plans that incorporate nature-based solutions and edible urban landscapes. World Vision's capacity-building initiatives in urban planning (for example through the use of CBDRM) should focus on equipping local governments, community leaders, and partners with the necessary skills to design resilient and inclusive cities, while ensuring that children's voices are actively included in decision-making processes to address their specific needs in climate adaptation strategies.
- **Advocacy for climate justice in urban areas:** World Vision supports children and youth joining their communities in advocating for climate action through [Citizen Voice and Action](#) and on the international climate change policy decision-making spaces such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties. To support and amplify these efforts, World Vision recommends that a comprehensive framework for climate action be promoted in urban settings. This framework should focus on both mitigation

and adaptation strategies that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 13 Climate Action and SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities. By integrating local and international advocacy efforts, this framework will help drive climate justice and ensure urban areas are better prepared to address climate change challenges.

- **Child-centred climate-resilient urban planning and design:** World Vision calls on governments, practitioners, and stakeholders to adopt an inclusive, climate-resilient urban planning approach that prioritises children, youth, women, and marginalised groups. This approach should focus on designing resilient infrastructure, ensuring access to clean energy, and conducting comprehensive climate vulnerability and risk assessments.
- **Inclusive urban climate finance:** Supporting community-led initiatives through innovative mechanisms is essential for creating just and resilient cities. There is a need to work with our finance partners for innovative financing mechanisms that support equitable urban development, with a focus on engaging local governments, private sector investors, and international donors to prioritise projects that address climate crisis and mitigation measures. Additionally, financial mechanisms must ensure equitable access to climate finance, and all climate interventions should be designed to promote both gender equality and social inclusion, with robust monitoring through gender-disaggregated data.
- **Knowledge sharing:** When promoting just and resilient cities for children, it is crucial for cities engaged in climate action to actively share their learnings and best practices. This exchange of knowledge, facilitated by organisations like World Vision, can help identify effective strategies, avoid common pitfalls and foster innovative solutions tailored to the unique needs of urban environments. By collaborating with and learning from each other, cities can ensure that their climate initiatives are inclusive, addressing the specific vulnerabilities and rights of children, thereby creating safer and more sustainable urban spaces for future generations.

Acknowledgements

World Vision is a Christian relief, development, and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

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ⁱ UNICEF. (2021). *The climate crisis is a child rights crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index*.

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ⁱⁱ UNICEF (n.d.). *The impacts of climate change put almost every child at risk*. Available at: [The impacts of climate change put almost every child at risk | UNICEF](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ IIED. (2015). *Climate Change Risks and Resilience in Urban Children in Asia: Synthesis Report for Secondary Cities: Da Nang, Khulna, and Malolos*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282855028_Climate_Change_Risks_and_Resilience_in_Urban_Children_in_Asia_Synthesis_Report_for_Secondary_Cities_Da_Nang_Khulna_and_Malolos

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^{viii} UNICEF. (2021).

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^x World Bank. (2024). *Choosing Our Future: Education for Climate Action*.

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^{xi} UNICEF. (2017). *Climate Landscape Analysis for Children in the Philippines*. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/media/526/file/Climate%20Landscape%20Analysis%20for%20Children%20in%20the%20Philippines.pdf>. More insights can also be found in the World Bank Philippines Urbanization Review (2017), available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/963061495807736752/pdf/114088-REVISED-PUBLIC-Philippines-Urbanization-Review-Full-Report.pdf>.

^{xii} WHO/UNICEF. (2020). *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene*.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} For example, the first area-wide greenhouse gas protocol was for cities; more can be found here: www.globalcovenantofmayors.org.



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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