

World Vision West Africa Advocacy Statement for World Environment Day

June 2nd 2025

On World Environment Day, we raise our voices for the children of West Africa, whose lives, dreams, and futures are increasingly shaped by the accelerating environmental and climate crisis. From rising temperatures and erratic rainfall to deforestation and desertification, the ecological degradation in our is a direct and growing threat to child well-being, survival, and protection.

In West Africa, children living in vulnerable communities are among the first and worst affected. They are more likely to face hunger due to failed crops, displacement due to floods and droughts, and health risks from polluted air and water. Climate change is deepening poverty, disrupting education, increasing the risk of child labor and exploitation, and threatening children's very right to a safe and healthy environment.

Let us be clear: access to a clean, safe, and sustainable environment is not a privilege. It is a fundamental child right. It is essential for their health, dignity, and future, and when we fail to act, it is children who pay the highest price.

World Vision believes that protecting the environment and addressing climate change are essential to safeguarding the well-being of children. That's why we are committed to working with communities and children to be part of the solution. Across the region, we are supporting sustainable farming practices, community-led conservation efforts, climate education in schools, and youth-led initiatives to build climate resilience from the ground up.

This year, while the world focuses on the urgent need to beat plastic pollution, World Vision West Africa places a spotlight on the *power of youth*. Our regional theme, "*Youth Engagement in Environmental and Climate Action: Challenges, Opportunities, and Solutions*," is a call to center the voices of young people as key actors and leaders in climate solutions. We believe that lasting environmental progress cannot be achieved without the active participation of the next generation.

We call on governments, regional institutions, donors, civil society, and faith actors to:

- Prioritize child-centered environmental and climate action in policy, budgeting, and programming;
- Ensure meaningful youth engagement in decision-making spaces from local councils to national climate forums;
- Invest in climate education and innovation that prepares children and youth to lead the future;

- Support locally driven, sustainable solutions that reflect the realities of our communities.

As António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, aptly stated, *"We need an ambitious, credible, just agreement"* to solve environmental crises like plastic pollution. Likewise, we call for that same ambition, justice, and credibility to be dedicated to securing a sustainable and just future for the children of West Africa.

The time for listening is over. The time for co-creation is now.

We must answer that call, stand with children and youth and act boldly, urgently, and with courage to protect their future. where every child can grow up safe, healthy, and hopeful in a thriving environment.

Thank you.