

# GENERATION HOPE

## Responding to children's calls to tackle the climate and inequality crisis in East and Southern Africa

### Summary

The combined threat of climate emergency and inequality is eroding children's rights in East and Southern Africa (ESA). Incidents of child marriage and school dropouts are on the rise as families struggle to cope with loss of livelihoods due to droughts, floods and storms. Prolonged conflicts, droughts and the worst locust swarms in 70 years have led to a food and nutrition crisis in the region which is taking a life every 48 seconds in the Horn of Africa alone.

Children most affected by economic inequality and discrimination are the hardest hit by the impacts of climate hazards, but their rights are often neglected, and their voices often go unheard. This briefing presents new analysis by Save the Children showing that **162.2 million children** in East and Southern Africa are both living in poverty and exposed to high climate risk. Without concrete and urgent action, these children will be pushed further into poverty as the frequency and intensity

of slow-onset and sudden climate-related disasters increase in the future.

It also presents the rich insights and ideas for addressing the combined climate and inequality crisis that **932 children** in seven countries in ESA shared with us as part of a global listening exercise. This project confirmed that children across the region are witnessing the impacts of the crisis on a daily basis. They are calling on leaders in their communities, countries and globally to take urgent action.

Drawing on children's insights and broader research and programming experience, this briefing presents five key policy areas in which action must be taken in the ESA region and globally to tackle the climate and inequality crisis and its disproportionate impact on children. The findings and recommendations in this briefing draw and build on Save the Children's global report, *Generation Hope: 2.4 billion reasons to end the global climate and inequality crisis*.



Save the Children

# I The climate and inequality crisis

Climate change is often described as problem for future generations. But children in East and Southern Africa (ESA) are already experiencing its impacts in their everyday lives. This is a global emergency, which is taking lives and undermining children's rights across the region.

East and Southern Africa has been experiencing longer and more intense droughts, increased heatwaves, catastrophic cyclones, rising sea levels and repeated floods than previous decades. Several parts of East Africa are seeing the driest conditions and hottest temperatures since the beginning of satellite record-keeping.<sup>1</sup> The frequency and intensity of storms and flooding in Southern Africa have increased.<sup>2,3</sup> Erratic weather, particularly droughts, has also triggered violent conflicts in the Horn of Africa.<sup>4</sup> Children are on average more at risk than adults from the impacts of these events because they are at a unique stage of physical and emotional development, and because they have longer to live with the climate emergency.

The climate emergency and inequality are interconnected. The climate crisis is exacerbating inequalities, as children in the lowest-income households and most vulnerable to climate change are least protected from its impacts. Communities most affected by inequality also have the least power to push for change and climate action because of their political and economic marginalisation. When they do, they are often ignored or side-lined by those that are most responsible for environmental destruction and the climate emergency, and who have vested interests in the status quo.

It is therefore worrying that East and Southern Africa has high levels of inequality between and

## 66 Poverty is a brother to climate change. 99

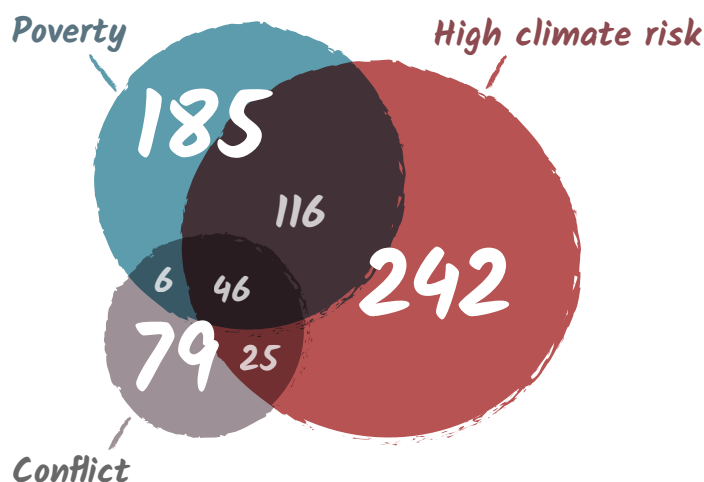
11 year old boy, Kenya

within countries. South Sudan has nearly 92% of its population living in multi-dimensional poverty compared to 41% in Namibia.<sup>5</sup> South Africa has been ranked as the most unequal country in the world, with the wealthiest 10% of the population owning more than 80% of the country's total financial assets.<sup>6</sup> There are also huge inequalities in children's rights to health and education between more and less affluent households in the ESA countries. Net enrolment rates in secondary education in the wealthiest quintile are almost double those in the bottom quintile in Kenya.<sup>7</sup> In Uganda, children from the lowest-income households are twice more likely to be stunted compared to the most affluent 20% of children.<sup>8</sup>

New research by Save the Children found that 242 million children, (87% of children) in the region, are at high climate risk (facing at least one extreme weather event a year).<sup>9</sup> 185.1 million children are living in poverty, severely deprived of good healthcare, nutrition, education, housing, water or sanitation. **Our analysis shows that as many as 162.2 million children in East and Southern Africa face the double threat of extreme climate events and poverty.** The increasing frequency and severity of disasters and shocks caused by the climate emergency is likely to claim lives and push these children further into poverty in the years ahead.

Children also affected by conflict<sup>10</sup> are exposed to even greater risk. **We found that 46.1 million children in the region face the triple burden of high climate risk, poverty and conflict.**

**Figure 2: How poverty, the climate emergency and conflict risk intersect in East and Southern Africa (millions of children affected)**



## II Children's experiences of the climate and inequality crisis

Between June and August 2022, Save the Children staff reached out to over 930 children in seven countries of the region<sup>11</sup> through a series of in-person and online consultations, interviews and surveys. As part of a wider global listening exercise, our aim was to listen to children about their experiences of the climate emergency and inequality, and the changes that they want adults to make, in order to shape our own work and campaigning.

The dialogues globally, and in East and Southern Africa, revealed two key overarching insights. First, **the climate emergency is having profound impacts on the lives of children in the region.** Children are aware of the changes happening around them and many are experiencing the impacts of climate disasters on their rights to health, nutrition and education. Food insecurity and hunger due to droughts and floods destroying crops and livestock were among the major consequences identified by children. Children are feeling the effects of the current food and nutrition crisis which is taking a life every 48 seconds in the Horn of Africa. This crisis has stemmed from prolonged conflicts, droughts and the worst locust swarms in 70 years.<sup>12</sup> Millions of livestock which sustain the livelihoods of pastoralist communities have been emaciated or died as a result of the hotter climate.<sup>13</sup>

In Zambia and Malawi, children also made links between climate and health problems caused by heat exposure, water scarcity and contamination and increased prevalence of diseases such as cholera. They also shared stories of damage to roads and school infrastructure during floods which impacted children's access to education.



Children and camels at Barmil watering point in Wajir, Kenya

PHOTO: MARK NJORAGE/SAVE THE CHILDREN

**66** Floods, this makes plants, houses, classrooms being washed away and we no longer go to school. **99**

16 year old boy, Malawi

**66** In summer the wells and rivers dry up therefore causing scarcity of water and communicable disease like scabies and cholera because we are forced to drink unhealthy water. **99**

17 year old girl, Malawi

**66** There is very strong wind in the communities due to tree cuttings and adults are not doing anything. They need to stop cutting trees. **99**

13 year old girl, Uganda

**66** We can tell the difference in heat temperature of our summers right here in Limpopo during the past years because we've seen that every year it is getting hotter and hotter. So I could say we are experiencing an increased amount of heatwaves around our country. **99**

16 year old boy, South Africa

**66** Drought is killing animals in the rural areas. No animal or human deserves to die this way from this harsh climate and droughts. **99**

17 year old girl, Somalia

**66** We no longer harvest rice and maize the way we used to some time back, these days we harvest very little or nothing at all. **99**

16 year old girl, Zambia

Second, **children care deeply about inequality and see the damage it is causing.** Those from lower income households shared how they were struggling to afford textbooks, pay school fees, and access health care. There was a strong understanding among children about some of the links between the climate emergency and inequality. They noted that changes in the climate are contributing to rising inequality due to increased costs of living, affecting lower income households disproportionately and often forcing children from these households to drop out of school and take up work to support their families. They reported that these children were more at risk of resorting to coping strategies like drug abuse and theft.

Children also articulated the differentiated impacts of the climate emergency felt by more and less affluent households. They observed that wealthier households are able to feed their children regularly when food prices shoot up, afford fertilisers and water resources to keep their crops alive during droughts, live in stronger houses that don't get destroyed from storms, and drive in four-wheelers when floods inundate their neighbourhoods. Lower income households, on the other hand, have extremely limited means to cope with the impacts of climate emergency. Several children also spoke about the lack of sustainable livelihood alternatives which drive lower income households to cut trees to make charcoal.

Most of the children participating in our dialogues felt that adults are not doing enough to stop the climate and inequality crisis and identified how members of their community were doing things that are exacerbating the problem.

Many of the children we spoke with believe that the climate emergency will worsen in the future and impact their rights the hardest. Several of them are already campaigning on these issues and want to work together with adults and organisations to collectively find solutions. Some children requested more information on the issues to be able to campaign. While many believe that everyone has a role to play in tackling the crisis, they were also very clear that adults, particularly those in positions of power in government and in the community, needed to take greater responsibility and action. Several children also expressed that international cooperation to tackle the climate and inequality crisis was critical, with a number believing that higher income countries have a particular role to play in supporting lower income nations.

**66 There's an area called Mamadimo Park, that place... it was wrong for the municipality to give it out to people so that they can settle down there because like it's actually above water level, it's not a safe place. Later last year...it flooded. 99**

*17 year old girl, South Africa*

**66 The prolonged drought has affected the availability of maize in our country. Food prices have gone up and people cannot afford to buy food. 99**

*14 year old boy, Kenya*

**66 Inequality is real in our country. That inequality is impacting our livelihoods. We cannot buy the needed goods with the same amount of yesterday. 99**

*18 year old girl, Somalia*

**66 In my area, we have some children that have resorted to theft because of hunger, because they don't have food. 99**

*15 year old girl, Zambia*

**66 The government is not providing alternatives on charcoal burning so that the environment can be spared and improved. 99**

*14 year old boy, Malawi*

**66 The wealthy people have money to either dig well or treat the water once it's contaminated. At a times when it doesn't rain they are able to put diesel or electricity powered generators on their or relatives' farms and harvest the crops. 99**

*17 year old girl, Somalia*

**66 It is the responsibilities of adults to talk and do awareness on the current situation. Children are losing lives, dropping out of schools and suffering from major health problems – all because of the rising drought situation and the overall inflation the country is going through. 99**

*14 year old girl, Somalia*

**66 We need to work together because we don't live in the same country but in the same world. 99**

*15 year old girl, South Africa*

### III Driving systemic change: five key entry points

Our dialogues with children, coupled with broader research and programming experience, suggest that there are five key entry points that have particular potential for driving systemic change towards a greener and more just planet. These five entry points can be tailored to the ESA context as follows:

#### 1) Delivering on climate and inequality through maximising synergies between green economic development and poverty reduction

Fossil fuels are a major source of energy in East and Southern Africa. However, use varies significantly among nations. Coal provides over 70% of the energy supply in South Africa, while renewable energy accounts for 73% of Kenya's installed capacity. At the same time, millions of households in the region are yet to receive access to electricity. There is considerable scope in the region to build green energy infrastructure to expand electricity access and improve living standards. East Africa has high solar irradiation levels due to proximity to the equator, strong wind speeds, plentiful hydropower resources, and the Great Rift Valley, a promising source of geothermal power.<sup>14</sup> Southern Africa has abundant mineral resources such as cobalt essential to produce electric batteries, wind turbines and other low-carbon technologies<sup>15</sup> whose sustainable and socially responsible development could support livelihoods, although child labour and other rights violations in the extraction industry must be addressed with urgency.<sup>16</sup>

For highly fossil fuel-dependent countries such as South Africa, measures should be pursued to reallocate public money from supporting fossil fuels towards investments in a green economy, while protecting and supporting low-income households. In South Africa, fossil fuel subsidies amounted to \$10.9 billion on average annually from 2017–19.<sup>17</sup> Renewable energy investments also have potential to create millions of jobs in the region. In South Africa's coal-dependent Mpumalanga province alone, estimates suggest that green transition could create up to 79,000 clean energy jobs by 2030.<sup>18</sup>

Other examples of approaches to promote green and inclusive development are measures to protect and restore ecosystems and support sustainable agriculture and agroforestry, which research shows have strong synergies with poverty reduction.<sup>19</sup> Children participating in our dialogues put particular emphasis on reducing deforestation and planting of trees. They also stressed the importance of creating decent, sustainable livelihoods so that lower income households would not be driven to take up environmentally harmful practices.

**66** The solutions favour the affluent, the 1st world countries... if we see that we don't want to use coal anymore, what is the other solution that we have that will benefit the people of that particular country and also the children specifically? We only focus on 1st world countries where it works only to find that it doesn't work in the 3rd world countries. **99**

*18 year old girl, South Africa*

**66** Adults need to come-up with a better way to handle their industries instead of polluting the air with their toxic pollution release. **99**

*17 year old boy, Somalia*

**66** It's high time the community (adults) realises that they are harming the environment that we children depend on to survive. As much as cutting trees and producing charcoal or having big industries that produce mass production goods are needed to earn a living, we should ensure we have another source of livelihood so that children can breathe fresh air and play in healthier environment. **99**

*18 year old girl, Somalia*

**66** Our leaders could give our parents more jobs so that they are able to provide for us. This will reduce poverty levels. **99**

*13 year old girl, Kenya*

## 2) Investing in children

East and Southern Africa has some of the highest rates of multidimensional poverty among children globally, with children severely deprived of their right to good healthcare, nutrition, education, housing, water and/or sanitation. Over 75% of children in Kenya, Mozambique, and Madagascar are poor.<sup>20</sup> Gender inequalities mean that girls often suffer most as families struggle to cope in times of crisis, for example often being the first to be taken out of school when fees are unaffordable and being at risk of child marriage. At least 40% girls in Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia are married before they turn 18.<sup>21,22</sup> These rates are set to go up as the climate emergency intensifies and pushes low-income families further into poverty.<sup>23</sup>

All states are obliged under the international child rights framework to invest in children's health (including sexual and reproductive health), education, and freedom from poverty and violence. These are not only fundamental rights which set children up for success in life, but also yield considerable economic benefit through, building human capital, decreasing child marriages and reducing inequalities.

Research by the United Nations Population Fund in Mozambique shows that girls aged 15–17 who are in school are about 8 times less likely to marry as children than girls who have never attended or have dropped out of school.<sup>24</sup> This underscores the importance of investments in girls' education and keeping girls in schools through social protection programmes, school bursaries/scholarships, and school feeding programmes.

Social protection is an area that requires particular investment, with a focus on ensuring systems are child-sensitive and shock-responsive. In East Africa, only 10.6% of the population were covered by at least one social protection benefit in 2020.<sup>25</sup> An investment of 1% GDP in social protection was found to reduce poverty by 4% in Rwanda, alongside increasing tax revenues, GDP and employment of female workers.<sup>26</sup> Zambia's Child Grant Programme has been shown to have positively influenced livelihood strategies among the households most affected by economic and social inequality, helping to increase food consumption and ownership of productive assets such as livestock and agricultural implements.<sup>27</sup> Such schemes must be further strengthened, with explicit regard to children's rights and protection from climate shocks and coverage gaps across the region must be filled.

**66** Early marriage is high; a lot of children are (being) given into marriage. **99**

*Child in Zambia*

**66** The government should provide funds for the poor, give out clothes to the needy and introduce food programs in schools. **99**

*14 year old girl, Zambia*



**Girls in school are 8 times less likely to marry as children than those out of school.**

**66** Adults need to join hands in order to ensure that children from economically unstable homes have access to bursaries to be able to study without worrying. **99**

*17 year old girl, Kenya*

**66** The government should construct health centres. **99**

*Discussion with children in Malawi*

### 3) Protecting and securing justice for children at the frontlines of the climate and inequality crisis

Children are calling upon leaders to help them adapt to climate change impacts, as well as for support when disasters strike. For example, in the July 2022 Africa Children's Parliament, children in Southern Africa called for the change in the school calendars because the winters are getting too cold, making it challenging for them to go to school. This is affecting children living in poverty more as they cannot afford warm clothing and go to schools with poor infrastructure.

Droughts, extreme weather events and conflicts have increased risks of school dropouts, incidents of child marriage and displacement of children and their families from their homes, leaving them vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse.<sup>28</sup> More action is required to adapt and increase the resilience of essential children's services to climate impacts, including schools and healthcare, as well as food production and access. Child-sensitive, shock-responsive social protection is an essential component of climate adaptation and requires considerable investment.

The national climate action and/or adaptation plans of ESA nations should strengthen anticipatory action (see Box: Strengthening anticipatory action in Somalia) and ensure that adaptation interventions are child-centred. Only 7 ESA countries had submitted their National Adaptation Plans (NAP) to the UNFCCC as of September 2022.<sup>29</sup> Save the Children calls on ESA countries to prioritise child-sensitive interventions in their NAPs. For countries that have not submitted their plans, we call upon them to develop and submit plans with clear indications on how they will prioritise children. Children's rights should be explicitly considered in all climate policy, action and finance.

**66** I hope we get solution to this prolonged drought so that children whose parents have no other choice other than sending them to work would be able to cultivate their farms and herd their cattle. Every child has the right to experience their childhood and be at school just like I am. **99**

*13 year old girl, Somalia*

**66** It would be better if the government appoints people to study the environment and tell municipalities that this area needs to be avoided due to the fact that it is not suitable for settlement in order to avoid crisis. **99**

*Child in South Africa*

**66** We want organisations and government to give us tree seedlings and construct strong bridges. **99**

*17 year old girl, Malawi*

#### Strengthening anticipatory action in Somalia

In **Somalia**, Save the Children has supported four shock-responsive safety net pilots, working with local actors to use data for early warning of shocks. The Shock Responsive safety nets programmes are a response to shocks that will likely impact livelihoods, education, health, and protection. The response ranges between 12–24 days.

The system is helping to save lives and livelihoods and save on costs of responding to emergencies after they have happened. Such mechanisms can act as a bridge between short-term humanitarian cash transfers and longer-term government-led social protection systems.

## Loss and Damage from Cyclone Idai – Gaute’s story

Gaute lives with his six children in a resettlement site in Sofala province, Mozambique, after their home was destroyed in Cyclone Idai. When the cyclone struck, Gaute and his family fled their home and had to climb a tree nearby to escape the rising water levels. He had to help his six children climb the tree. During this moment his wife was washed away by the rising water. Gaute tried to save her but he was not able to. While he and his children were on the tree, a helicopter sent by the government came to deliver emergency food and supplies. After four days of clinging for their lives to the tree, the family caught a canoe that was able to take them to dry land. They then went to a local shelter where they stayed for four months.

Gaute has his own farmland, which means he has to leave the children regularly on their own so that he can go and harvest his crops. He hates leaving his children but he has no other option since their mother passed away. Ana, who is the eldest child, has taken on the responsibility of caring for her younger siblings whilst her father is away. She does not attend school as there is no educational provision for older children in the resettlement site and the nearest secondary school is too far for her to walk to. As her father is often away, she has to spend much of her time looking after her siblings. Her younger brother, Elias, attends



the temporary learning centre (TLC) run by Save the Children.

Pedros, Ana and Elias’s brother, describes how he prefers living in the resettlement site because it did not get flooded as severely as his previous home. He talks about how their previous home was surrounded by rivers and how he now feels much safer living in the resettlement site.

Gaute wishes for a better home for his family. The home that they currently live in is too small for them and it has holes in the roof. He wants his family to move to a bigger home and to be able to live in dignity. He grows his own food on his farmland, but climate change and the effects of adverse weather conditions is making this impossible for him to continue to do.

## 4) Ensuring children have a meaningful seat at the decision-making table

ESA nations are signatories to the UN Convention on Rights to the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which recognise the intrinsic rights of children to have their views taken into account in decision-making that affects their lives. There are numerous examples in East and Southern Africa of how children’s meaningful participation can be supported, which should be built on and extended into other countries and institutions. For example:

- In Uganda, the government developed a National Child Participation Strategy in 2017, in partnership with Save the Children and UNICEF. The process has been participatory, including children from marginalised groups and remote areas as well as adult stakeholders. The strategy provides a common framework for supporting and measuring progress and has helped to raise the profile of child participation as an important issue.

**66** The actions we do today...we are going to be the ones suffering from the consequences, so they should include us. Nothing about us, without us. **99**

*18 year old boy, South Africa*

**66** As children, we are never invited in their meetings about climate change and we really do not know what they are discussing. At community level, we are also not engaged, we are considered as children and that is all. **99**

*16 year old girl, Malawi*



- In Zambia, Save the Children is supporting the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, Department for Child Development to develop a new National Framework for Child Participation with children informing the process.
- In Ethiopia, Save the Children has supported the establishment of the National Children's Parliament as a platform for children to highlight their issues at the highest level.<sup>30</sup>
- In Malawi, the government, with support from Save the Children, developed Guidelines for Child Participation to support uniformity and establish minimum standards. These guidelines aim to foster meaningful child participation at community, district and national levels.

### 5) Financing a just and green future for children

The investment required for meeting the climate mitigation and adaptation costs of ESA nations has been estimated to be over \$1.9 trillion between 2020 and 2030, and bulk is expected to come from international and private sources.<sup>31</sup> The international community beyond East and Southern Africa has responsibility to help fill financing gaps for green and just development in the region. The share of the African continent in historical carbon dioxide emissions is only 3%<sup>32</sup> but it is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of the climate emergency. High-income countries which have contributed the most to historic global emissions must take the lead in cutting their emissions first and fast. They also have a responsibility to provide technological and financial support, where requested, to ESA nations to achieve their climate mitigation and adaptation goals, and to support families and communities affected by loss and damage caused by the climate emergency.

International climate finance flows to East and Southern Africa are currently woefully inadequate. **Our analysis shows that high-income countries committed to provide only \$4.4 per person per year on average in climate adaptation finance to ESA nations from 2016 to 2020. This pales in comparison to the estimated \$11.4 per person that is needed in adaptation investment per year in Sub-Saharan Africa.**<sup>33</sup>

High-income countries must meet both their climate finance and ODA commitments, including to dedicate 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to ODA. They must also commit to significantly scaling up climate finance, allocating at least 50% of climate finance from public sources to adaptation, increasing consideration of children's rights in investments and making allocations needs-based and predictable. As economic and human losses from climate change mount in the region and beyond, a new Loss & Damage financing mechanism should be established under the UNFCCC by 2023. All international finance should explicitly commit to and deliver on children's rights.

**66 Organisations and adults should realize that children have the potential to raise their voices on those issues hence, they should create platforms where children will be heard and engage with adults in order to find solutions to the existing problems. 99**

*15 year old boy, Zambia*

**66 The countries that have more responsibility are the rich ones. 99**

*12 year old boy, Madagascar*

**66 Some countries have more money than Zambia so they need to help us handle some of the problems that we have faced with climate change. 99**

*17 year old girl, Zambia*



**High-income countries are providing less than \$5 per person per year in adaptation finance to countries in East and Southern Africa.**

**66 There is a need to find companies that produce minerals that pollute the environment, they should pay a certain tax specifically allocated to them for the pollution that they are producing. 99**

*16 year old boy, Zambia*

Reforms to the broader international financial architecture should also be pursued to ensure that lower income countries have equal decision-making power to higher income countries concerning the rules that govern the global debt, trade, and tax systems. Tax avoidance costs Namibia and Zambia annually the equivalent of 3.96% and 4.4% of their GDP respectively.<sup>34</sup> Kenya is estimated to lose KES 40 billion (~USD 335 million) to illicit financial outflows every year.<sup>35</sup>

Governments in East and Southern Africa too have a role to play in strengthening domestic tax systems and ensuring that revenue is spent for maximum impact on children's rights. Critical measures to support this include:

- **Prioritising and pursuing a holistic approach to public investment in children** – ESA governments must ensure that sufficient budget is allotted for the realisation of children's rights, including for quality social protection, education, health and protection services. The interconnections between these sectors must be recognised, and synergies maximised between them. For example, if families cannot make ends meet, they will not be able to send their children to school. In addition to direct spending on education, complementary programmes so that children can stay in school and perform well are needed. This includes cash transfers to poor families with children, school fee waivers for all levels of education, and school meals for pre-primary and primary learners. Education and other sector budgets need to be gender sensitive to further support unique challenges faced by girls.
- **Introducing or strengthening progressive and redistributive fiscal policies** – ESA governments should ensure that the wealthier companies and members of society contribute the most to the system, and that revenue is used to support and invest in children most affected by inequality and discrimination. Somalia more than doubled its tax revenues from 2013 to 2018 through improving tax policy and educating taxpayers. Uganda has constituted a Domestic Resource Mobilisation Committee with the objective of increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio by 0.5% per year.<sup>36</sup> The tax system can also be designed to disincentivise harmful activities that are contributing to the climate emergency. For example, a carbon tax was introduced in South Africa in 2019 and has generated an estimated 1.3 billion rand (~USD 78 million) from April to November 2021.<sup>37</sup> Such taxes must be carefully designed to be progressive and leave lower income households better off, for example ensuring that they do not

place undue burden on low-income families, that they are accompanied by parallel investment in access to affordable green energy, and that a portion of revenue raised is invested in social protection and other poverty reduction measures.

- **Pursuing debt sustainability and using Special Drawing Rights (SDR)** – High debt servicing costs are also constraining investments in children in East and Southern Africa, with governments spending 3.5 times more per person on debt service than on education, health and social protection combined before the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>38</sup> Data analysis by Save the Children found that debt payments overtook education spending in Uganda in 2020, with the same projected to happen in South Africa in 2023. ESA governments facing unsustainable debt burdens should work with creditors on debt restructuring to ensure payments do not crowd out investments in children. All governments should actively push for strengthening the Common Framework for Debt Treatments to make it fit for purpose, including measures to ensure private creditor participation and that applicant countries are guaranteed continued access to concessional sustainable lending. The international community must also accelerate progress on making recycled SDRs available for immediate use amongst recipient countries, and governments in the region should use every avenue to push for expedited SDR recycling.
- **Harnessing private finance** – Country platforms are emerging as a mechanism to mobilise large-scale finance from public and private sources for a specific goal. South Africa is a global pioneer for this model through its \$8.5 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) with four high-income country governments and the European Union. Ensuring that the rights of current and future generations are upheld should be a central component of such initiatives.
- **Improving transparency** – Transparency and citizen oversight of public spending, debt restructuring, and new lending agreements is critical. In particular, **children and adolescents** must be involved in the process of setting spending priorities and budgets at the local, regional and national levels as well as in analysis of what, where and how resources are being allocated, in line with children's right to be heard and participate in decisions that affect them. As well as being an intrinsic right, this will improve transparency and accountability, as well as ensuring that children's own expertise and influence informs spending decisions to help improve efficiencies and impact.

# Conclusion

Tackling the crisis in East and Southern Africa will not necessarily be straightforward. Bold policy decisions have to be made. But making them is not a choice – it is a necessity and governments have particular obligations to act under the international human and child rights frameworks. Children who are living the reality of the climate and inequality crisis on a daily basis are calling on governments and business

to rise to the challenge. This is a call that cannot be ignored.

A 15 year old boy in Kenya told us, “**I wish the society can be an equal place where the bridge between the rich and poor is minimized or eliminated completely.**” The climate and inequality crisis is threatening this dream. Action is needed, fast.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, ‘On verge of record drought, East Africa grapples with new climate normal’ (webpage) <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/verge-record-drought-east-africa-grapples-new-climate-normal>

<sup>2</sup> Oxfam International, ‘Climate and food crisis in East and Central Africa’ (webpage) <https://www.oxfam.org/en/what-we-do/emergencies/climate-and-food-crisis-east-and-central-africa>

<sup>3</sup> S. Godfrey, F.A. Tunhuma, *The Climate Crisis: Climate Change Impacts, Trends and Vulnerabilities of Children in Sub Sahara Africa*, United Nations Children’s Fund Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, Nairobi, 2020 <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/7061/file/UNICEF-The-Climate-Crisis-2020.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Relief Web, ‘How is climate change driving conflict in Africa?’ (webpage) <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/how-climate-change-driving-conflict-africa>

<sup>5</sup> S. Alkire, U Kanagaratnam, N. Suppa, ‘The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2021’, OPHI MPI Methodological Note 51, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, University of Oxford, 2021 <https://ophi.org.uk/mpi-methodological-note-51/>

<sup>6</sup> V. Sulla, P. Zikhali, and P.F. Cuevas, *Inequality in Southern Africa: An Assessment of the Southern African Customs Union (English)*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2022. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099125303072236903/pdf/P1649270c02a1f06b0a3ae02e57eadd7a82.pdf>

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