



Children in Albania campaigning to raise awareness about climate change, 2021

## Climate Resilience Snapshot, Middle East and Eastern Europe

May 2022

## OVERVIEW

As the climate is changing, no country is left untouched by its impact. The regions in the Middle East and North Africa, and Eastern Europe (Balkans and Caucasus) are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.<sup>1</sup> Many of the region's countries are already facing warmer temperatures, a changing hydrology, water scarcity, and more extreme droughts, floods, melting glaciers (Caucasus), heat waves, windstorms, and forest fires.

Climate change will exacerbate environmental, economic, political, and social challenges, leading to potential further increase in inequality and discrimination in the countries in these regions already impacted by conflict, crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Middle East is expected to be among the regions hit first and hit hardest by climate change. According to Save the Children's, [Born into the Climate Crisis Report](#), children born in the Middle East and North Africa will face the highest increase in climate threats in the world for river floods, crop failure, and drought. Children born in 2020 will experience 4.5 times as many river floods, 4.4 times as many crop failures, and 3 times as many droughts as someone born 60 years ago. They will be second in the world only to East Asia and the Pacific for heatwaves, seeing 7.2 times as many.<sup>2</sup> Children in Europe and Central Asia will experience 4.8 times as many heatwaves, 2.6 times as many droughts, 1.5 times as many river floods and 1.7 times the number of wildfires as their grandparents' generation.<sup>3</sup> While the impacts of climate change may be less dramatic in Eastern Europe, climate change will still disrupt the lives of millions of children through rising seas, flooding and other extreme weather events. Additional climate stress on water resources and agriculture, due to an expected increase in water demand, in parallel with an expected decrease of water resources, will likely result in farmers suffering from declined land productivity.

Moreover, according to research by Save the Children on migration and climate specifically, in 2020 alone, 10 million children were displaced by extreme weather events.<sup>4</sup> Children in low to middle income countries, making up most of the Middle East and Eastern Europe region, will continue to bear the brunt of the worsening climate crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> *Adapting to Climate Change in Eastern Europe*. World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/2407>

<sup>2</sup> *Born into the Climate Crisis*, Save the Children, 2021. Available from: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/born-into-the-climate-crisis.pdf/>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Walking into the Eye of the Storm*, Save the Children, 2021. Available from: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Eye-of-the-Storm.pdf>

## CLIMATE RESILIENCE AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND EASTERN EUROPE REGION

Save the Children Middle East and Eastern Europe (MEEE) strategic priorities for 2022-2024 include climate change and economic inequality as strategic focus areas. Within this period, the region will aim for a significant uplift in the work on responding to the climate crisis. At the regional level resources will be secured to support dedicated technical capacity in the region, and new partnerships will be pursued to improve programmatic and advocacy and campaign responses, in support of communities directly affected by climate change and slow-onset disasters.

All MEEE Country Offices referred to climate change in their 2022-2024 strategies and will pursue stronger programmatic responses, build technical expertise to address challenges associated with climate change. Supporting and empowering children to have a meaningful voice in decision making on these two areas will be a key priority across the region.

Save the Children International will be launching a global, 5-year campaign, on climate change and economic inequality in 2022, Generation Hope. Throughout the next strategic period, the region will be host to two COP processes, COP27 in Egypt, and COP28 in the UAE. This presents a key and strategic opportunity to influence across these processes to ensure the meaningful engagement and participation of children, to further national level advocacy objectives through local-global approaches, and to build further strategic partnerships with civil society, international organisations, and corporate partners, among others. As part of the campaign, the Egypt CO and the MEEE regional office, co-led a climate change workshop with the [World Youth Forum 2022](#) and IOM, on Youth and Climate Action. Utilising the 6 high-risk settings for climate change, identified in Save the Children's research, [Walking into the Eye of the Storm](#), the workshop supported young people to identify the key actions needed to support children and youth across these settings. Key recommendations put forward by youth taking part in our workshop were presented as part of the Forum, and the President made a clear commitment in the closing ceremony to immediately form groups of youth in Egypt and globally, to engage and participate in COP27. Save the Children are now working to try and ensure children are meaningfully engaged as part of this process.

These issues will be at the strategic forefront in the coming period as they receive heightened global attention at COP27 and 28, and Save the Children in the region will be engaging across key partners to try and ensure the meaningful inclusion of children in these processes.

## SNAPSHOT OF INTERVENTIONS

Below is a snapshot of country offices in the region that are currently engaged in climate resilience, either through a project, or through components of climate integrated within their programs such as in the field of education, voice of adolescents and youth, or child rights governance, or working on climate change in their advocacy and campaigns. The climate resilience interventions across the region are within all thematic areas, varying from child rights governance (CRG) and child participation, to water supply and WASH. Interesting examples include Albania's Children Stand Up! Project, holding duty bearers to account for climate action; projects addressing water scarcity in Iraq and Syria; campaigns and child led initiatives in Kosovo; awareness raising and child participation actions in Lebanon, Georgia, Egypt and Turkey; and North West Balkans focus on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change.

### Albania

- **Children Stand Up!** - A joint project running both in Albania and Italy, the aim is to raise awareness on climate change among youth and the general population in Albania and Italy, and build networks connecting youth groups and schools in both countries. In Albania, they are working to: (1) promote an institutional environment open to child participation and awareness on issues related to climate change; (2) improve teachers' competences and provide quality environmental education program based on improved knowledge and tested methodologies and tools; (3) enhance students' engagement, which will translate in performing eco -actions.  
Several highlights from the project successes.
  - Climate change advocacy actions led the local government to establish dedicated committees on climate change and the environment, including the representation of Children. Here is a video on ['our right to a healthy environment'](#).
  - The project supported the development of the study "The impact of Air Pollution on Children's Health". The main findings and recommendations of the study were shared with Climate Change Committees and included in a Children's UPR alternative report.
  - An Educational Kit, including lessons ready to use in classes and targeting different age groups, and other kinds of materials such as video, activity sheets, infographics to print and hang in class have also been produced in the Albanian language.
  - Children's representatives have also been supported to participate in a COP26 event, 'The Future Children Want: [A child-led dialogue](#) on [building a climate resilient future](#)'.
- **From Children to Children** - An outcome of the project **Children Stand Up**, was also the [Climate Change Information material](#) for children, published to help children better understand climate change and the role that children as actors of change can have, leading civic awareness on the environment.
- **Underadio** is a children's radio internet platform, used to exercise their right to speak out & raise their peers' awareness on climate change issues. It's an online radio platform for and by children to spread out their messages and is [available to listen to here](#).

## Egypt

- **Supporting Young People via Civil Society Actors and Youth Groups in Syria and Neighboring Countries, (Al Bawsala):** Within the Egypt component of this regional project, Save the Children partnered with the local Banlastic Egypt social enterprise, that aims to ban single use plastic (SUP) by changing single use plastic consumption behaviour in Egypt. In this partnership, the aim is to transform Alexandria's districts into green spaces by having plastic free districts, efficient waste management systems and encouraging sustainable transport in Alexandria. The project approaches local businesses offering alternative eco-friendly options, such as they introduced reusable packaging and offered it for free to local shops as a pilot. Within the project young people have been reaching out in the community and volunteers have been mobilized to support them. The project also encouraged using bikes and installed bike racks in the district and is going to install vending machines to collect recyclable plastic bottles.
- Save the Children Egypt are leading much of our work engaging on **COP27**, which will be hosted in Sharm El Sheikh this year. This includes the meaningful engagement of children throughout the year and advocacy towards their inclusion in the COP itself.

## Georgia

- **Situational Analyses of Climate Change Knowledge:** In June 2021, Save the Children initiated an online quantitative survey among school students in the capital Tbilisi, in order to gain information on the level of awareness on climate change and available sources of information on this topic. The survey was expanded to rural areas and full-scale research was commissioned. The result of the Situational Analyses identified key challenges and gaps in climate change education, levels of awareness among school age children (12-18 years) and recommendations for further advocacy.
- **Climate Change awareness video:** To support the process of popularization and awareness raising on the importance of climate change at an early age, recording and broadcasting of a [short awareness raising video](#) on climate change on a child-led YouTube channel "Zutasani" was conducted. The target audience was children aged 6-10 and their parents. [The episode](#) was broadcast on YouTube and Facebook.

## Iraq

- **"Anticipatory Action on Climate Change" project:** The objective of the project is to increase resilience of affected communities adapting to water scarcity through building the capacity of local actors and strengthening systems. SCI will work with the affected community to build capacities of local level actors, such as the directorate of water, underground water resources, planning, and mayor's office in order to strengthen relationships with national level stakeholders including the Ministry of Environment and Health. SCI will also address water shortages in some of the high prioritized areas in Khanaqin district, by working with the local directorates in facilitating digging boreholes and addressing the partially functioning water treatment plants due to low levels of water at the intake.
- An assessment has been conducted on the **impact of drought** in the Diyala province and Iraq are also included as a key case study in the Walking into the Eye of the Storm report, which included consultations with children in Iraq.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Walking into the Eye of the Storm, Save the Children, 2021. Available from: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Eye-of-the-Storm.pdf>

- Iraq have also been speaking out on the climate crisis and water scarcity in Iraq, including working with the Syria Response Office on a [media release](#) and related advocacy products.
- **Waste Reduction in Iraq – Scavengers Programme:** SC Iraq is working with local municipalities to support their efforts to improve community waste management systems. The first step involves building community support for garbage segregation at the household level where families in targeted program areas are encouraged to begin household waste separation for recyclable materials (e.g. plastic, metal, glass, paper and cardboard) and organic waste (food and green waste) into separate bins. In addition to awareness raising at the household level, there is much progress to be made by involving communities, startups and emerging businesses in these problems, and ensuring these groups have ownership in the solution. This programme seeks to 1. Establish a start-up fostering program partnership universities of Zakho and Duhok through Save the Children's office in Duhok. 2. Kick-start business ideation initiatives that tackle issues of environmental health and garbage accumulation. 3. Support select graduates to develop ideas/application to organise recyclable waste scavengers. 4. Promote recycling of waste through systematic job creation, and enhancing economic prospects of the targeted population. 5. Contribute to the circular economy through promotion of new businesses and jobs by developing a network of scavengers through mobile app who will move waste to factories and receive payment.
- Finally, SC Iraq have also **published research** in collaboration with Oxfam and World Vision, on agriculture and climate change in [Iraq, Unfarmed Now, Uninhabited When?](#)

## Kosovo

- **CSO Capacity Building in Climate Resilience and Child Rights Programming:** Save the Children Kosovo supported its local and regional CSO partners to integrate environmental protection and climate resilience in their child rights programming between 2020-21. 'Children's rights, environment and sustainable development' and 'Green Deal Initiatives' trainings provided the opportunity for CSO partners to support the development of child campaigns in Kosovo, Serbia, and North Macedonia ([report](#)).
- **Supporting Children to Campaign on Climate Change and the Environment:**
  - Children from Child-led groups and local child-led Municipal Assemblies in Kosovo, initiated "Think of the Earth" campaign, identifying means to contribute to environmental sustainability in Kosovo through their own actions (2021). These included:
    - [Child-led virtual consultations sessions](#) on climate issues, child rights and ways of engaging to mitigate impact;
    - Ecological intergenerational camp, to exchange ideas on environmental protection, advocate with and draft [recommendations](#) to the Minister of Environment on recycling, securing renewable energy and environmental education in schools.
  - Child-led groups in Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, Ukraine, and Moldova utilized safe venues to [express their views on climate issues in their countries](#) and exchanged ideas on different '[calls for action](#)' to duty bearers in their respective countries (2021).
  - Children, parents, and educators in one municipality were also [supported to partner and take action](#) (e.g. recycle, grow plants) toward the fulfilment of SDGs (2020).
  - Child representative has also been supported to inform the General Comment No. 26 on child rights, environment and climate change through the engagement in the [Children Advisory Team](#) (2021-23).
  - Children [facilitated the drafting of the Young Voices Survey](#) with inputs and recommendations to grasp young people's needs and hopes on safety, climate and their future (2021).

## Lebanon

- Children have taken part in consultations contributing to Save the Children's strategy development of the new global campaign on climate change and economic inequality. Child campaigners engaged in the 2021, Save Our Education campaign, took part in a consultation to share their views on climate change and what change would look like for them.
- Children have also been supported through child rights governance programming, funded by NORAD, to engage in a climate change consultation. This consultation worked with children to identify how climate change is impacting on child rights in their lives in Lebanon.
- Children in Burj Barajne camp took part in participatory action research (PAR), where the group identified the key environmental issue of the pile up of rubbish in their community as a core concern for their health and well-being. The children identified key responsible stakeholders and recommendations to take solutions forward for this.
- Children also participated in a climate champions invention challenge with the support of Save the Children and partners.

## North West Balkans

- **"Building resilience to natural or other disasters in the field of education in local communities":** This project includes capacity building of local institutions and schools to respond to natural and other disasters. The project introduced Climate Change topic in DRR and Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment trainings with school managements and workshops with children.
- **"Schools as green zones – increasing the climate change readiness in the education sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina",** NWBs CO started new project in Jan 2022. Building on previous work on DRR with educational institutions, this project is envisaged as a small pilot intervention whereby chosen schools will be supported to become "eco-friendly" but also to promote and raise awareness of the importance of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation and measures to reduce air pollution, as well as to improve waste management, air pollution monitoring and to support children to become agents of change.
- **Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub (BMDH),** SCNWB initiative focused on migrant and displaced children, promotes discussion on the link between climate change and migration. The BMDH launched the global Migration and Displacement Initiative report "Walking into the eye of the storm: How the climate crisis is driving child migration and displacement" in the local market and presented it to the relevant regional actors in [the webinar](#).

## Occupied Palestinian Territory

- **"Women and Youth Empowerment, Entrepreneurship and Employment in the West Bank and Gaza"** project: The four-year project works on promoting gender equality and the advancement of women and girls, as well as addressing climate change and harnessing innovation. Environmental sustainability is at the heart of this initiative by integrating the principles within all capacity building efforts with female youth and focusing on green higher-value entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture, TVET trainings on climate-smart technologies, and sustainable natural resource management.
- **"Adolescents and Youth (AYs) for GREEN: Gaza Resilient Economy and Environment"** project: This three-year project aims to improve inclusive and sustainable economic development conditions for Adolescents and Youth (AYs) in the Gaza strip. In terms of supporting climate resilience, a balance between agricultural business, recycling business, COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

production and other creative ideas is maintained and the businesses include green technologies such as Aquaponics, Hydroponics, hanging agriculture, climate-smart agriculture and urban agriculture, while in the field of various recycling businesses mainly plastic and general recycling.

## Turkey

- **“No Lost Generation” Project:** Youth committees organized discussions on protecting nature, environmental cleaning, forest fires and the children carried out awareness-raising activities and produced various materials on these issues.
- **“Community-based Child Protection systems strengthening in Esenyurt Project:** Awareness raising sessions about climate, environment, and protecting nature were conducted by the active participation of children and youth. The theme of climate change and its impact on earth occurred in child/youth club activities. Children produced materials, drew pictures about [the love of nature](#) through their initiatives.
- **“Strengthening resilience among refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable host community children, youth and their families” project:** In the frame of Social Cohesion and Recreational activities, workshops were organized with the participation of Turkish and Syrian women; the title of the workshop was upcycling of materials, which is linked to climate change.

## Syria

- Save the Children has responded through **WASH and Nutrition programming**, in addition to conducting research on the impacts of the water crisis on infant and young child feeding practices. This will be released in February 2022, with findings used in a press release.
- The SRO is also contributing to a forthcoming **hydroecological study** that seeks to evaluate the availability of groundwater, as a critical buffer to supply water.
- Programmatically, the CO has sharpened its focus on WASH and climate-related vulnerabilities both in camps as well as in communities. In North-East Syria, to off-set the impact of reduction in water levels that are in part due to the drought, the CO has retrofitted a water station in Raqqa to support around 60,000 people and reduce reliance on water trucking. In northern Syria, Save the Children has so far reached over 800,000 people with emergency WASH assistance since the start of the pandemic, including rehabilitating 18 communal water systems, distributing hygiene kits and promoting hygiene. In NWS, teams and partners have leveraged available funds and emergency stocks to respond to climate-linked flooding and the devastating impact it has had on children and families in the affected areas.



Jihane\*, 37 and her daughter Zaina\*, 6 in Al Hol camp, North East Syria

## Middle East and Eastern Europe Regional Office

- Following the successful engagement at the World Youth Forum in January 2022, the regional office will focus efforts on child campaigning, **to support meaningful platforms and pathways for child and youth engagement**; not only on climate specific policy, but on the financial and economic systems needed to ensure every child is able to survive, learn and be protected. We will work with those children most impacted by inequality and discrimination, including children affected by conflict and other crises.
- Save the Children have most recently engaged in the **MENA Climate Week** discussions, supporting children's meaningful engagement in a high-level panel. Children from Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Egypt, and Lebanon took part and spoke to a panel about how climate change and economic inequality are impacting their lives. They used art and story-telling to show the impact and the potential outcomes if their recommendations were taken forward. The panel included high-level representation from the League of Arab States, the COP27 Presidency Team in Egypt, the UAE Supreme Higher Council of Childhood and Mothers, the Green Climate Fund, and Community Jameel. Save the Children also co-led an innovation hub event with Banlastic, a youth-led social enterprise, on best practice for engaging children and youth in decision-making, which included an interactive session using art and drawing with the participants.

## Future Plans

Across the region we will be looking to increase our programmatic, advocacy and campaign work, with and for children, in a number of key areas. These include, smart agriculture, construction, public waste management, recycling, water scarcity and approaches to adaptation. Alongside this, Save the Children are planning work and engagement on climate and migration, including building on our expertise in disaster risk reduction and preparedness across the region, as well as long-term adaption to slow-onset climate change. A core part of our approach will continue to be the meaningful engagement of children in our work, including children most impacted by inequality and discrimination, which we will prioritise throughout our programme design and in our advocacy and campaigning toward children's participation in climate decision-making nationally, and before, during, and after COP27 and towards COP28. Youth-led initiatives will also be a core partner that we will support. We will continue to strengthen existing partnerships and work towards new partnerships to better ensure the voices of children and youth are elevated and meaningfully heard. We will do this by engaging with key partners on business solutions, ensuring young people can engage in this decision-making and best practice on reducing carbon footprint.