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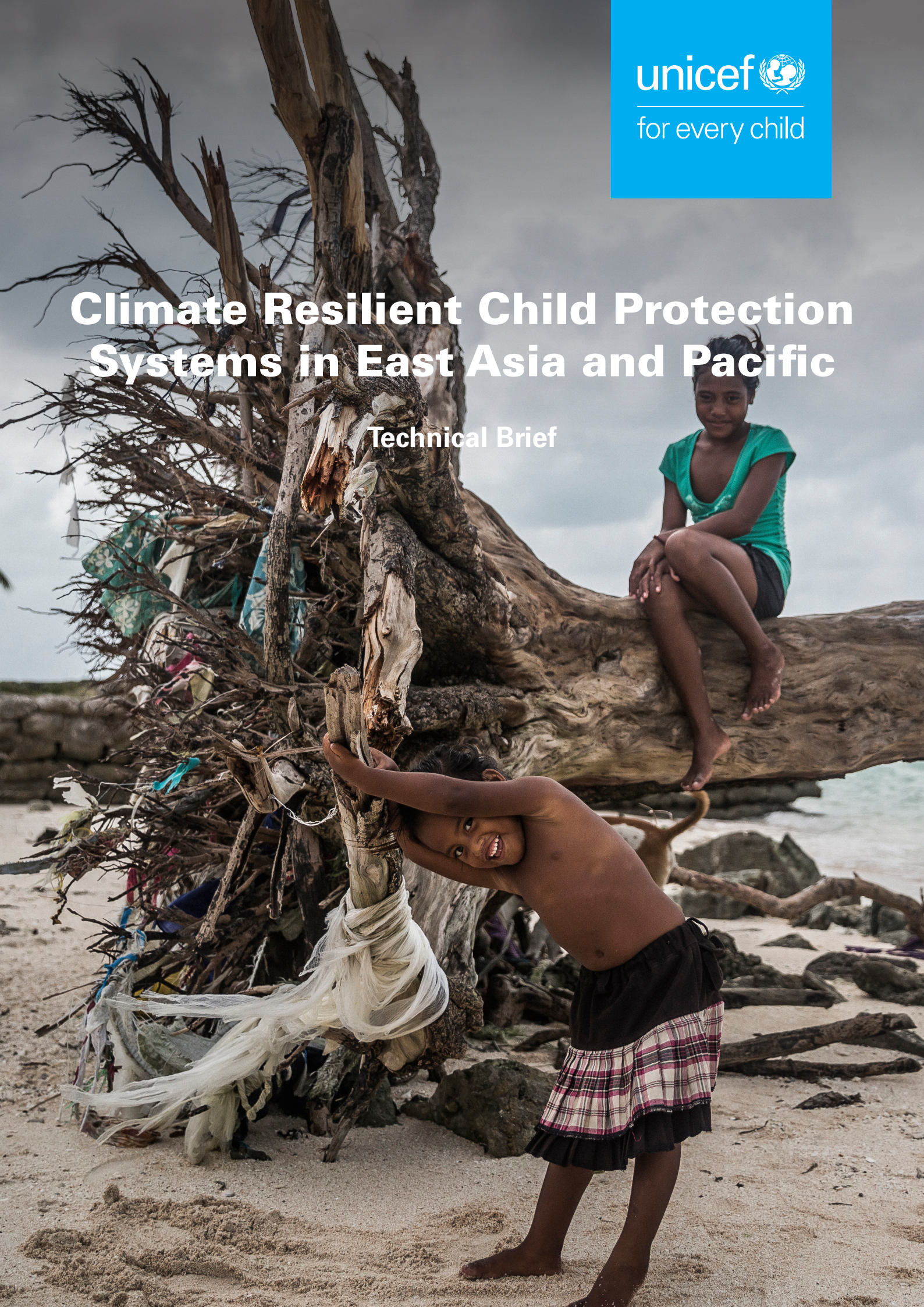
Climate Resilient Child Protection Systems in East Asia and Pacific

Technical Brief



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Summary

- **Climate change is not only an environmental issue; it is a protection crisis**, **disproportionately affecting children** – and the consequences are felt most acutely in the East Asia and Pacific region.
- Both sudden and slow onset climate-related disasters trigger displacement, family separation, undermine family and community resilience, and **drive violence, exploitation, abuse and harmful practices.**
- **Climate change is undermining, overwhelming and disrupting protection services**. Yet protection systems continue to be excluded from investments to build resilience and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- **An investment in resilient child protection systems is an investment in climate adaptation.** It fosters the stability and resilience of families, enabling them to effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from the impacts of climate change. By integrating child protection into climate change and disaster strategies, governments and partners can ensure vulnerable populations are protected, while maximizing the impact and sustainability of climate action and investments.
- **Climate resilient child protection systems are effectively able to:**
  - Prevent, mitigate and respond to climate-related protection risks and harms affecting children, including violence, gender-based violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect, harmful practices and family separation;
  - Strengthen family and community capacities to cope with and recover from climate-related shocks and stresses;
  - Provide a continuum of protection and care before, during and after a disaster, reaching children where they are; and
  - Promote and facilitate community engagement and participation.

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Why Climate Resilient Child Protection Systems are Urgently Required

Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect in all settings, as well as from harmful practices and unnecessary family separation. This right is not diminished by the impact of climate change. A resilient child protection system is critical to ensuring effective prevention, risk mitigation and response. This technical brief outlines what is meant by a climate resilient child protection system, the building blocks and adaptations for resilience, and high-impact interventions.[1]

Climate change is not only an environmental issue; it is a protection crisis that disproportionately affects children. In the East Asia and Pacific region, the consequences are particularly severe. Children today are growing up amid increasingly frequent and intense extreme weather events, rising sea levels and soaring temperatures. From wildfires to floods, droughts, cyclones and typhoons, the impacts of climate change and associated disasters continue to escalate.

Understanding the full scope of climate impacts is complex. There are both slow-onset[2] and rapid-onset[3] events, which can exacerbate each other and are intricately linked to socio-economic factors affecting children, adolescents and families. Climate change disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities, groups and individuals who already experience multiple layers of vulnerability and have limited capacities to cope, adapt and recover. While climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, it also creates new protection risks.

Climate change and climate-related disasters – both sudden- and slow-onset – can erode livelihoods, trigger displacement and unsafe migration, cause family separation, increase anxiety and stress, undermine family and community resilience, heighten risks of violence, exploitation and abuse (including gender-based violence, trafficking and child labour), and lead to harmful negative coping mechanisms.

At a systemic level, climate change strains public resources and social services – especially in emergency and fragile contexts – undermining, overwhelming and disrupting protection and welfare services. It can also overstretch care capacities, particularly as trained workers migrate. Most notably, climate impacts expose gaps in preparedness and response, leaving millions of children and women across the East Asia and Pacific region at risk.

Child protection systems that are climate resilient, inclusive and transformative help build safety nets around families and communities, enabling them to cope with, plan for and adapt to the impacts of climate change and disasters. Through preventive and responsive measures, these systems strengthen family resilience, increase capacities to address and recover from climate-induced protection risks and harms, and prevent further harm.

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1 This technical brief is a companion piece to *Violence Against Children – The Forgotten Impact of Climate Change: Why child protection must be central to climate resilience and adaptation in East Asia and Pacific*, UNICEF, Bangkok, 2025.

2 *A slow-onset disaster* develops gradually over time and may be associated with drought, desertification and sea-level rise.

3 *A sudden-onset disaster* is triggered by a hazardous event that occurs quickly or unexpectedly, such as flash floods and tropical storms.

***Resilience** is the ability of children, households, communities and systems to anticipate, prevent, withstand, manage and overcome cumulative stresses and shocks in ways that advance the rights of every child, with special attention to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.[4] Strengthening the resilience of social services that children depend on is critical to reduce the risks they face.[5]*

When communities are safe and resilient, they can focus on adapting to climate change and its impacts, reducing emissions, and preparing for resource scarcity and displacement.

In addition, by integrating social welfare and child protection into climate and environment strategies, governments and partners can protect vulnerable populations while maximizing the effectiveness and sustainability of their climate initiatives. This holistic approach is essential for building societies that are both equitable and resilient to the challenges of climate change.

What is a Climate Resilient Child Protection System?

UNICEF defines a child protection system as the formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. It also includes various actors – children, families, communities, sub-national or national stakeholders and international organizations. Most important are the relationships and interactions among these components and actors. The outcomes of these interactions define the system.[6]

To be climate resilient, a child protection system – including its laws, policies, governance structures, coordination mechanisms, workforce, services and resources at both national and local level – must anticipate, prepare for and deliver inclusive services to children living on the frontlines of the climate crisis. These efforts should be informed by up-to-date multi-hazard risk analyses.

Child protection systems, social service workforces and services themselves need to be shock resistant, responsive, adaptive and mobile to achieve climate resilience.

A climate resilient child protection system effectively:

- Prevents, mitigates and responds to climate-related protection risks and harms affecting children.
- Strengthens family and community capacities to cope with and recover from climate-related shocks and stresses.
- Provides a continuum of protection and care, reaching children where they are before, during and after disasters.
- Promotes and facilitates community engagement and participation.

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4 United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF DRR in Action - Every country protected. Every child resilient, UNICEF, New York, 2022.

5 United Nations Children's Fund, Sustainability and Climate Action Plan, 2023-2030, UNICEF, New York, 2023, p. 6.

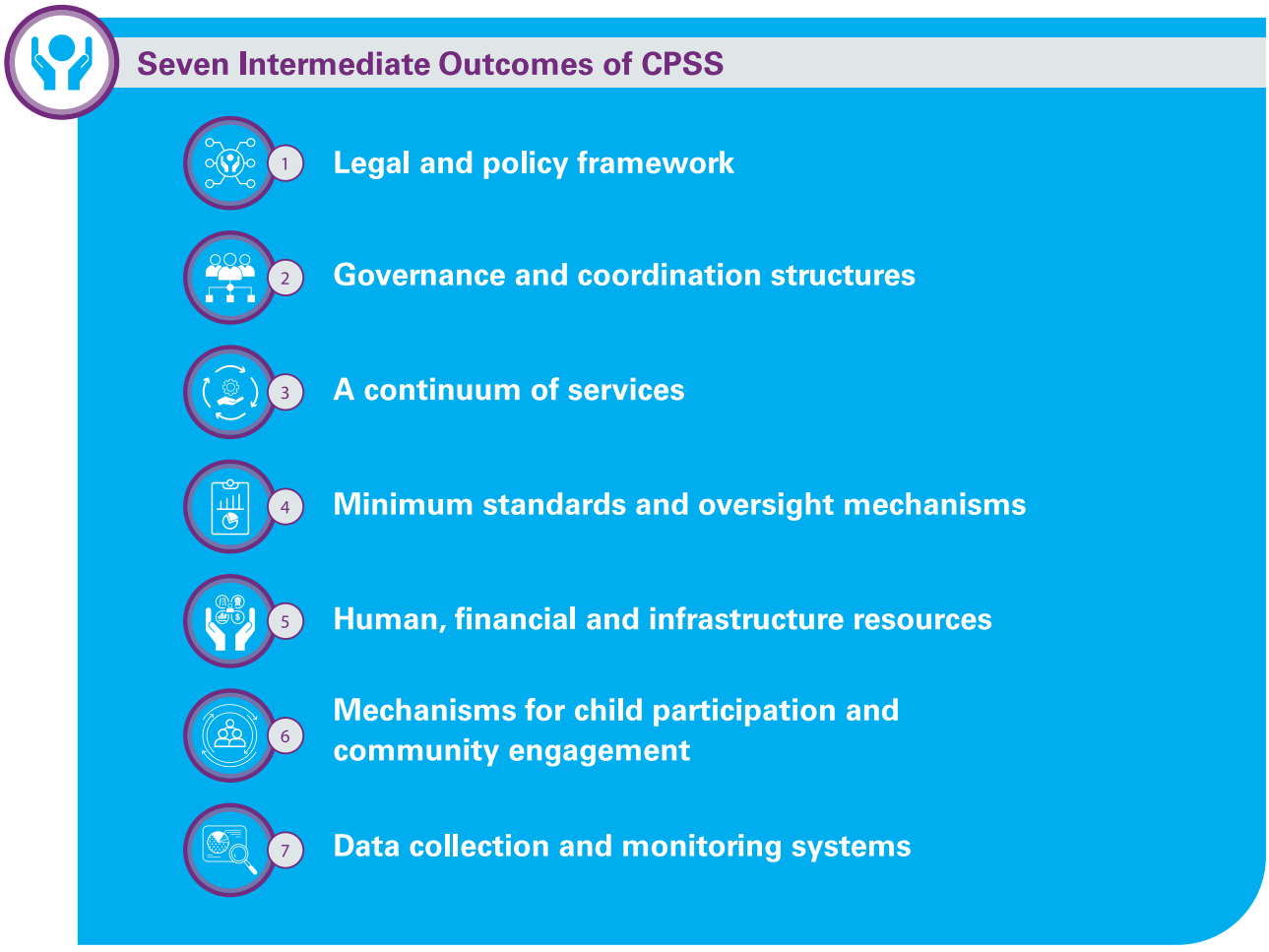
6 United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Save the Children and World Vision, 'A better way to protect all children: The theory and practice of child protection systems, conference report', 2013, p. 3., cited in United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Protection Systems Strengthening: Approach; Benchmarks; Interventions'. UNICEF, New York, 2021.

These systems must also be inclusive of **all** children, especially migrant, displaced and relocated children; children with disabilities; children remaining behind; and unaccompanied or those separated from their families and caregivers.

This approach ensures the child protection systems are robust, adaptable and inclusive of the most vulnerable, which is critical as the increasing impacts of climate change multiply and exacerbate risks for children.

Elements of a Climate Resilient Child Protection System

UNICEF identifies seven elements of a well-functioning child protection system (CPS).[7]



Source: United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Protection Systems Strengthening: Approach; Benchmarks; Interventions', UNICEF, New York, 2021, p. 25.

This section recommends adaptations to support climate resilience across the seven domains of the child protection system. Wherever possible, these adaptations should be apart of approached in ongoing system strengthening strategies and financing approaches and prioritized based on country context, opportunities and the maturity phases. In addition, these adaptations should be part of approached in isolation from efforts to strengthen the child protection system for disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action.

[7] United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Protection Systems Strengthening: Approach; Benchmarks; Interventions, UNICEF, New York, 2021.

Continuum between Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), anticipatory action and climate resilience

Ensuring climate resilience does not exist in isolation of DRR and anticipatory action. Together, DRR, anticipatory action and climate resilience form a continuum of preparedness, action and adaptation, helping children, families and communities thrive despite climate-related hazards, shocks and stresses.

- ***DRR** is the foundation, focusing on minimizing risks.*
- ***Anticipatory action** builds on DRR by enabling quick, targeted responses to specific threats before they materialize.*
- ***Climate resilience** takes both elements further, creating systems that can handle not just one disaster but a future of ongoing climate challenges, with both slow-onset and sudden impacts.*

The technical note clusters interlinked adaptations and actions. The table in Annex 1 sets out the adaptations and priority actions against each of the seven domains of the child protection system.

1. **Legal and policy frameworks, governance and coordination structures promote and integrate DRR, anticipatory action and climate resilience at national and local levels** (CPS domain 1, 2 & 4)

   - **Child protection policies, legislation and standard operating procedures** (SOPs) **articulate the role and accountabilities of the child protection system and social service workforce in DRR and climate action**. This includes defining and overseeing functions, accountabilities and capacities of the social service workforce to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to and recover from the impacts of climate change.
   - **National climate and disaster policies and frameworks recognize, prioritize and formalize the centrality of protection in climate action.** They acknowledge the role of child protection services and the social service workforce, including as first responders for disasters exacerbated by climate change.

     ***Example: Vanuatu's** National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement seeks to minimize the drivers of displacement from sudden and slow-onset disasters. Where displacement or planned relocation does occur, it aims to minimize negative impacts on affected populations, especially on vulnerable and minority groups, including children. A key element of the approach is close consultation with those affected – both displaced populations and their host communities – to ensure they can make voluntary and informed decisions.*

   - **Agencies responsible for child protection and social welfare, civil society and community representatives are included in national and local coordination structures responsible for climate change planning and DRR.** Cross-sectoral information sharing, collaboration and joint emergency preparedness and response planning, informed by child protection risk assessments, are essential to protecting the most vulnerable children.

- **Community-based protection coordination mechanisms directly engage in multi-hazard risk analyses and local disaster preparedness and response plans/strategies.** The child protection system provides situational analysis and monitoring of protection concerns and risks, disaggregated data, and insights into the needs, perceptions, aspirations and capacities of children and families disproportionately affected by climate change and disasters. This extends beyond protection, as frontline workers also monitor and manage other risks to children's wellbeing, such as access to education, health and nutrition, and engaging with NGOs, civil society and other community-based groups and networks.

2. **Climate responsive and inclusive child protection services identify and address new and exacerbated protection risks** (CPS domains 3, 5 & 7)

A capacitated, resourced and mobile social service workforce

- **Workforce planning** – including staff ratios, roles and job descriptions – considers the capacities needed for climate resilience and DRR, including expanding the Social Service Workforce (SSW) on short notice.
- **Climate change assessments, modules and tools** are integrated into in-service and pre-service training, curricula and capacity-building strategies.
- **The workforce receives ongoing education** on gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and climate resilient social work, alongside the development and dissemination of materials on their role in preventing and addressing climate impacts.
- **Workforce scenario planning** ensures the system can adapt to slow-onset and sudden-onset climate impacts, as well as mass relocations.

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Effective case management and information management

- **The case management system effectively coordinates responses for children and families most at risk.** Digitizing processes and tools – including for teleservices – and planning for service disruption are critical.
- **Intersectoral coordination** in case management for climate-related risks and harms (e.g., family separation and gender-based violence), including with immigration authorities, is a priority.
- By **facilitating remote access and reducing administrative burdens,** caseworkers can focus more on direct support, improving the overall efficiency and impact of child protection efforts. Ensuring interoperability across countries is also key.
- **Climate risks and considerations are integrated in information management systems (IMS).** IMS provides critical data and evidence on the impacts of climate change on vulnerability.
- **Investing in a climate marker** can help track cases where climate change is driving vulnerability, abuse, exploitation or harmful practices and identify ***hot spots*** for evidence-based interventions and investments that target the highest-risk communities with the least resources to cope.[8]

Digital transformation for climate resilient child protection systems – climate marker

Digital case management is essential in the context of climate change, streamlining case tracking and resolution to ensure timely interventions and better outcomes for vulnerable children. It enables secure and centralized storage of case data, reducing errors and improving collaboration among agencies, caregivers and service providers. Real-time updates and automated alerts ensure critical actions, such as responding to violence in the aftermath of a disaster, happen promptly. Additionally, digital tools help monitor trends, allocate resources effectively, and maintain transparency and accountability.

Across the region, Primero™[9] is operational in Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

*UNICEF is collaborating with the Government of Timor-Leste to pilot the integration of a **climate marker**, with a view to a regional rollout. Integrating a climate marker in Primero will allow for systematic collection and analysis of data on climate-related or climate-induced child protection risks, including experience of violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.[10]*

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8 InterAction, Protection for People: What Do We Mean? Guidance for Senior Leadership, 2021, cited in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Regional Guidance for ASEAN Member States on Strengthening the Role of Social Workers and the wider Social Service Workforce in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience, 2024, pp. 15–16.

9 A certified digital public good, Primero is an open-source software platform. It is a complete, user-friendly and cost-effective digital case management solution and a critical tool for social services and social workers.

10 United Nations Children's Fund, East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Piloting a Climate Marker in Primero Technical Guidance Note, October 2024 (internal).

Planning and financing

- **Child protection sector planning accounts for services disruptions** and the need to scale up portable, localized services to ensure a continuum of protection and care for children before, during and after climate-related disasters and mobility (e.g., displacement, pre-emptive evacuation, migration, planned relocation and return).
- **Public financing explicitly allocates resources to prepare the child protection system to prevent, mitigate and respond to the impacts of climate change.** Climate resilience integrated into planning, budgeting and allocation of public resources for child protection.
- **Child protection services and infrastructure are designed, built and maintained to minimize environmental impact, reduce vulnerabilities to climate change, and ensure continuity and sustainability.** For example, solar power can provide reliable, renewable energy for facilities and services, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and ensuring continuity if power is interrupted. Digital services (such as case management and birth registration) can eliminate paper use, streamline processes, and enable secure, efficient handling of and access to child protection data, even during emergencies.
- **Infrastructure planning for protection, care and justice services** – including social work centres/offices, emergency protection shelters, residential care institutions, detention centres, courts, child-friendly spaces and child-friendly spaces – must account for climate change and climate-induced disasters to ensure service continuity. Disaster mitigation measures (e.g., elevating buildings to avoid flooding) must also ensure accessibility and inclusion, particularly for persons with disabilities.

3. Children and communities are meaningfully engaged on climate change and protection

- **Children, families and communities are sensitized, educated and empowered to meaningfully engage in DRR and climate action.** Providing children and families with accessible, gender-responsive and age-sensitive information and knowledge of climate change and resilience techniques through climate education is critical to enable them to effectively influence climate policies, budgets and plans. It is important to ensure that climate mitigation and adaptation efforts are directly informed about and shaped by the lived experiences, priorities and knowledge of communities affected by climate change and displacement.

> ***Example:*** *Young people in* ***the Philippines*** *want to actively engage in DRR. According to a UNICEF U-Report poll in the Philippines (September 2024), over 700 respondents – 80 per cent under age 25 – indicated interest in DRR participation. Despite challenges such as lack of information (27 per cent), limited opportunities (26 per cent), and lack of support from adults (8 per cent), adolescents and youth expressed a willingness to contribute by educating peers and communities (40 per cent), volunteering in preparedness activities (15 per cent) and participating in community planning (11 per cent).*[11]

- **Inclusive, accessible and independent complaint and feedback mechanisms are available** for reporting on protection risks, needs and services related to the impacts of climate change.

[11] United Nations Children's Fund Philippines, Young people in the Philippines demand more involvement and support for child and youth-led programmes in Disaster Risk Reduction, 12 October 2024; UNICEF U-Report, Youth Speak on Disaster Risk Reduction, September 30, 2024.

- **Community child protection mechanisms are capacitated and connected with climate and disaster contingency planning, preparedness and response efforts.** Community actors such as religious organisations, community-based organizations – including local women's organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities – are linked to multi-hazard monitoring systems to both contribute and receive timely and accurate information on climate risks, DRR and anticipatory action.

> ***Example**: **Indonesia** has linked its Child-Friendly City Initiative with climate change and disaster risk reduction objectives by piloting a child-centered climate risk assessment method.*

4. **Climate-informed data collection and monitoring** (CPS domains 4 & 7)

- **More and better data is collected on how addressing child protection risks in climate-affected communities contributes to building resilience** and helps children and families adapt to climate change, fostering more peaceful and sustainable communities.
- **Data systems are strengthened to plan for, track and monitor the weather-related displacement of children** and leverage innovative technologies to help predict and simulate disasters. Where possible, data should be disaggregated by age, sex, disability status, location, ethnicity, household income and other key social and demographic variables to inform more targeted and effective investments and interventions by governments, humanitarian organizations and development partners.

- **Disaster displacement data and forecasting** is overlaid with social welfare and protection vulnerability mapping to better understand the needs of displaced children and the types of services needed.

> ***Example:** In **Cambodia**, the Children's Climate Risk Index – Disaster Risk Model dashboard has identified the highest-risk locations for climate-related impacts. This data will be leveraged to reach the most vulnerable populations based on their exposure to climate hazards and access to essential social services that support resilience.*

Progress on climate resilient system strengthening is monitored using UNICEF's maturity benchmarking framework, which provides a structured approach to assessing and tracking advancements over time. This framework helps identify gaps, set priorities and guide actions to build more effective and resilient systems that meet the needs of children and communities.[12]

Given the advances in visioning and positioning the child protection sector within the climate space since the issuance of the CPS benchmarking framework, this technical brief recommends that a child protection system cannot be considered fully mature if it is not resilient to climate impacts.

[12] United Nations Children's Fund, Measuring the Maturity of Child Protection Systems – a guide on how to use the CPSS benchmarks, UNICEF, New York, 2022.

Social service workforce strengthening – an overarching, high-impact priority

Given its crucial role in ensuring resilient child protection systems and social welfare systems that reach the most vulnerable groups, families and communities, this section provides additional guidance on climate resilience and social service workforce strengthening.

A climate resilient child protection workforce cannot effectively be developed in isolation from a robust social service workforce that is also climate resilient.[13]

What is the Social Service Workforce?

The SSW is a diverse group of professionals and paraprofessionals, working in both government and non-government roles, who are trained to deliver services that protect and promote the well-being of children, youths, adults, families, older persons, communities and vulnerable groups. This workforce includes social workers, child protection officers, community-based workers, counsellors and other professionals who provide critical services in areas such as child protection, social welfare, mental health and allied sectors such as education and health.[14]

The SSW plays a central role in alleviating poverty, identifying and managing risks, and facilitating access to and delivery of social services to enhance child, family and community well-being.

Before, during and after climate-induced disasters, displacements and migration, the SSW can play a critical role in reducing vulnerability, minimizing exposure to hazards and building resilience by:

- **Engaging** high-risk groups and communities and providing timely information to communities.
- **Communicating** local information on population vulnerabilities to subnational and national authorities.
- **Identifying** existing and newly vulnerable individuals and families and **assessing their needs** – recognizing that certain segments of the population (e.g., persons with disabilities, the elderly, migrant populations) may have limited capacity to cope, adapt and recover.
- Providing **support** to vulnerable individuals, families and populations, including those who are temporarily or permanently displaced.
- Ensuring the continued **provision of** and **access to** essential care, protection and support, including social protection.
- Providing direct **mental health** and **psychosocial support** and ensuring access to such services.
- **Preventing**, **mitigating** and **responding to risks** of harm (e.g., violence against children and women, exploitation, abuse and family separation).

[13] United Nations Children's Fund, 'Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection', UNICEF, New York, 2019.

[14] Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, Briefing Paper on the Definition of the Social Service Workforce, 2018.

- **Coordinating** across sectors, local protection, and welfare structures and networks, including civil society, organisations for persons with disabilities and faith-based organisations.
- Supporting families and communities in **building resilience** and **preparedness for both slow-onset and sudden climate impacts.**

These roles are essential for advancing climate action. The SSW is uniquely positioned to fulfil these responsibilities, given their role as first responders, their established trust within communities, their extensive reach through existing networks and programmes, their deep local knowledge, and their ability to lead a multi-sectoral approach.

Equipping social workers with DRR and climate literacy skills ensures they can reinforce preparedness and sustainability practices in homes and help families build resilience.

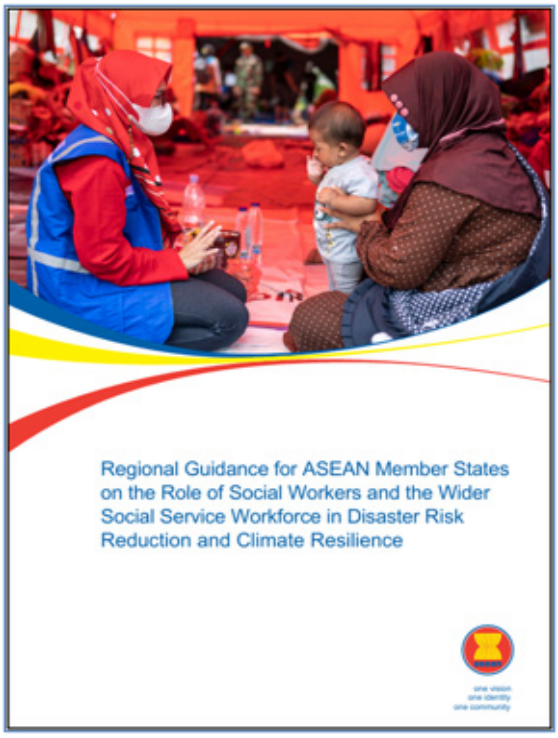
Given the often deep, lasting and compounded economic impacts of disasters and climate change – such as loss of jobs, asset depletion and livelihood disruptions – the SSW also plays an essential role in supporting medium- and long-term recovery.

A climate resilient social service workforce is resourced and capacitated:

- ***Aware** of the impact of the climate crisis and associated protection risks, as well as available community services and resources.*
- ***Equipped with DRR and climate literacy skills** and the capacity to support personal readiness for families, carers and community preparedness.*
- ***Knowledgeable about how to undertake multi-hazard risk analyses** at the community level in partnership with children and families.*
- ***Agile, mobile and prepared to respond following a disaster** and be deployed where and when needed, including to reach children and families as they move.*
- ***Supported with flexible resources and partnerships** to ensure surge capacity when needed.*

With the right capacity building and tools, the social service workforce can play a critical role for climate action and resilience. However, it is recognised that in the East Asia and the Pacific region, the social service workforce is often understaffed and under-resourced.[15] In the countries in the region where UNICEF operates, few have professionalised social work. While support and advocacy can be provided for adaptations to existing robust SSWs in some countries, in most, it is recommended to embed climate resilience into ongoing social service workforce strengthening.

[15] United Nations Children's Fund East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, The Social Service Workforce in the East Asia and Pacific Region: Multi-Country Review, UNICEF, Bangkok, 2019.



Climate resilient social service workforces in Southeast Asia – *Under a wider framework to strengthen social work through the Ha Noi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work towards a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community and accompanying Road Map, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific, in partnership with the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, supported the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in developing a first-of-its-kind guidance on why and how social services and their workforce should be effectively integrated and strengthened for disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation efforts – "Regional Guidance for ASEAN Member States on Strengthening the Role of Social Workers and the wider Social Service Workforce in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience."*[16]

High-impact interventions for investment and scale-up

Building a climate resilient child protection system demands complementary strategic investments in high-impact interventions that address both immediate risks and long-term vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change.

Mobile, digital birth registration

Services that ensure children are registered and have an identity are critical in protecting children in the context of climate change, particularly as they face pressure to migrate or relocate. Proof of identification is essential for registration and tracking population movements, supporting family tracing and reunification. It also ensures access to critical social services that build a child's resilience. Birth registration system interoperability is also critical to ensure sharing of data between governmental and civil entities to register births, helping to increase birth registration coverage across the region. Interoperability can also help determine eligibility for programmes like child grants, granting access to critical services for children.

UNICEF is working to adapt mobile birth registration services to target children and communities in the highest-risk locations for climate-related shocks and stresses. Accelerating the process of obtaining legal status, nationality and other civil identity documents for all children affected by climate-related mobility is also essential. Community-based information campaigns, in connection with health and immunization campaigns, can be an important strategy in increasing uptake and reach.

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[16] Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Regional Guidance for ASEAN Member States on Strengthening the Role of Social Workers and the wider Social Service Workforce in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience, 2024. The guidance underscores the critical role of social workers in preparedness, response and climate adaptation, providing pragmatic recommendations for action aligned with the adaptations in this brief.

Example: *In* ***Papua New Guinea,*** *where only 13 per cent of children have a birth certificate and over 800,000 remain unregistered, transformative progress is underway. In 2024, UNICEF supported the delivery of 44 mobile birth registration kits, now deployed across the country's 22 provinces, reaching remote communities like never before. In tandem, UNICEF is aiding the government in digitalizing birth registration – a pivotal step made possible by the newly passed Civil and Identity Registration Bill.*[17]

Climate-informed parenting programmes

Strengthening the resilience of families to climate shocks is at the heart of UNICEF's approach to climate adaptation. Parenting programmes, including positive and gender-responsive parenting programmes, provide an unparalleled opportunity to both strengthen resilience and build the knowledge and capacity of communities on climate risks and adaptation strategies. UNICEF is delivering integrated learning modules on climate change through parenting support programmes to reach children and families living in climate-vulnerable locations. Preparing families for climate-induced disasters, relocation processes, and other disruptions and distress caused by climate change is a priority and key in building children's resilience. Further, a focus on mental health is helping support families who may be pushed into negative and unsafe coping mechanisms, such as exploitative labour arrangements and child marriage. Ensuring parenting and community support networks are linked to multi-hazard early warning systems (that reach them in languages and formats they understand and through communication channels they can access) is critical in preparing and empowering frontline communities.

Community-level mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

Climate anxiety and climate grief are increasingly affecting children, who feel a profound sense of uncertainty about their future or sense of loss as a result of climate impacts, and parents, who face the challenge of supporting their children while managing their own concerns about the planet and who may have lost livelihoods and had to leave their communities behind. Additionally, children and families affected by the impacts of climate change and disasters can experience severe psychological and emotional effects, particularly for individuals living in vulnerable situations such as those in poverty or at-risk groups (e.g., people with disabilities or with pre-existing mental health conditions, women and children, migrants or displaced people). MHPSS approaches and activities, together with community-level support networks, play a critical role in reducing reliance on negative and unsafe coping mechanisms (such as exploitative labor arrangements, unsafe migration, child marriage and violent conflict resolution). A comprehensive service package, co-designed and delivered to networks, caregivers, schools, emergency shelters and other child spaces to promote positive mental health, covering key interventions including emotional regulation, problem-solving and stress management, is critically needed.

Multi-hazard community-level risk analysis

Multi-hazard community-level risk analysis helps identify and assess risks from interconnected hazards such as extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and socio-economic disruptions exacerbated by a changing climate. By using data-driven insights, including geospatial and climate

[17] United Nations Children's Fund and PNG Government unveil 44 mobile enrolment kits to boost birth registration – new equipment to reach more than 500,000 registrations annually, published on 12 July 2024. December 2024 – Papua New Guinea's National Parliament has passed the Civil and Identity Registration (CIR) bill, replacing the previous act from 1963. This landmark legislation paves the way for universal access to birth registration, ensuring every child is recognised and protected. The new law guarantees legal identity for all citizens, providing essential documents like birth certificates and national IDs. It also modernises the civil registration process, making it secure, efficient, and effective.

modelling, local child protection mechanisms – such as parenting and community support networks – can be leveraged to analyse vulnerabilities and their impacts on populations living in the highest-risk locations. Parenting and community support networks linked to multi-hazard early warning systems can facilitate family-level anticipatory action, preparedness measures and support greater agency over risk mitigation.

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Child-friendly spaces became a safe haven for children in San Benito, Siargao Island. The activities offered support their unique mental and psychosocial needs. Typhoon Odette (Typhoon Rai) swept through 11 of the Philippines' 17 regions in October 2024, leaving thousands of families without shelter, food, safe water and livelihoods. Six regions were declared under a state of calamity, and United Nations' assessments showed there were 912,000 children in need of assistance.

Child-sensitive and family-resilient community relocation

Pacific countries are reporting losses and damages caused by climate change and recurrent climate-related disasters, including impacts on food production, exacerbating insecurity, disrupting access to services and safe water, and increasing food and waterborne diseases. Governments are already having to support communities to relocate to higher ground in order to adapt. To address the immense challenges that climate change poses to children across the Pacific, child-sensitive and safeguarding tools, resources and policy frameworks are critical to ensure children are protected before, during and after planned relocation.

*In collaboration with the Climate Change Division and the Fijian Taskforce on Relocation and Displacement, UNICEF is supporting the development of a **child safety, well-being and resilience checklist for technicians** to ensure that the rights and needs of the children are considered, protected and fulfilled in planned relocations. Practical tools for field personnel are critical to translate broader guidance into action for the most impacted children and families.*

Conclusion

Investing in climate resilient and transformative child protection systems not only safeguards children from heightened protection risks of violence, exploitation, abuse and family separation in the face of intensifying climate impacts but also strengthens and reinforces investments in climate action.

It is critical that climate resilience is not pursued in isolation of DRR or child protection systems strengthening (CPSS) but that a holistic approach across the humanitarian–development nexus is adopted. Systems strengthening, promoting inclusion and building resilience should go hand in hand. By integrating climate adaptation and DRR strategies in efforts to strengthen the child protection system, the child protection sector – including a supported, resourced and mobile Social Service Workforce – can maximize investments while ensuring that children, including the marginalized groups, are protected before, during and after climate-related crises, and that families and communities remain resilient.

Reaching children and families with the tools and information to adapt and support climate mitigation efforts will also help empower future generations to foster a more sustainable and equitable future. **To achieve this, scaling up child-responsive climate finance will be critical** to ensuring that the funds flow to priority countries in the region, strengthening their capacity to prepare and cope with climate impacts.

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ANNEX 1

ADAPTATIONS AND PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS FOR CLIMATE RESILIENT CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

1. LEGAL & POLICY FRAMEWORK		
Sub-domain	**Key adaptations to build a more climate resilient child protection system**	**Priority interventions for climate resilience**
1.1 Understanding and articulation of national child protection systems	Climate resilience is integrated into national Child Protection framework(s). This includes defining functions and accountabilities of child protection services and the social service workforce to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to and recover from the impacts of climate change. National climate and disaster policies and frameworks recognize, prioritize and formalize the centrality of protection in climate action. Climate-related migration, displacement, pre-emptive evacuation and community relocation plans reflect child protection risks, needs assessments and prevention and response.	▪ Advocate for and support the revision/development of inclusive, gender-responsive and risk-informed child protection policies, legislation and frameworks that promote and integrate climate adaptations across the 7 domains of CPS. ▪ Revise/develop gender responsive, disability inclusive policies and strategies that recognize and prioritize the role and accountabilities of CP services and the SSW in preparing for, mitigating against, responding to and recovering from the impacts of climate change. ▪ Support evidence-based advocacy and national dialogues/consultations to secure recognition of CPS/SSW in disaster and climate agendas. ▪ Engage in the development/ revision of climate and environment policies, plans and strategies to position the child protection sector, and secure high-level commitment on its role and contribution in resilience building.
1.2 Legislation on child protection systems and implementation structures/ mechanisms	Child protection legislation, regulations and SOPs articulate the role and accountabilities of the child protection system and SSW in DRR and climate action. Child protection mechanisms include climate mitigation, adaptation, emergency preparedness and anticipatory action (through regular reviews, evaluations and audits).	

2. GOVERNANCE & COORDINATION STRUCTURES		
2.1 Lead ministries/ agencies with responsibility and mandate to strengthen child protection	Lead ministry/agency responsible for child protection is mandated/responsible for promoting climate resilience, emergency preparedness and anticipatory action; and coordinating with other national and local bodies. Agencies and key stakeholders responsible for child protection are included in national and local coordination structures responsible for climate change planning and DRR.	▪ Support lead ministry/agency to integrate climate considerations and adaptations across child protection coordination structures/mechanisms at all levels. ▪ Develop climate-smart tools drawing from existing humanitarian standards and procedures for DRR and response planning, monitoring and reporting. ▪ Advocate for and provide technical support to revise TORs and work procedures to ensure engagement of the CP sector and centrality of protection in climate/disaster coordination and planning mechanisms.
2.2 National, multisector, coordination mechanisms	The national multisector child protection coordination mechanism includes climate resilience, emergency preparedness and anticipatory action in its ToR and includes members from the ministry/agency responsible for DRR and climate change. Child protection in emergency coordination mechanism mandates explicitly articulate roles and contributions to climate resilience and responding to climate-related disasters. The national coordination structures for emergency preparedness/DRR/climate include child protection sector representatives.	
2.3 Availability of intrasectoral and intersectoral coordination mechanisms at the implementation level	SOPs that formalize intrasectoral and intersectoral coordination mechanisms for CP include climate resilience and facilitate coordination amongst key actors (including social service sector, climate/environment, emergency, and disaster and migration management sectors and agencies). Community-based protection coordination mechanisms are leveraged to support multi-hazard risk analyses. This extends beyond protection, as frontline workers monitor and manage other risks to children's wellbeing, such as access to education, health and nutrition. Local coordination structures for emergency preparedness/DRR/climate include child protection sector representatives/community-based protection mechanisms.	

3. A CONTINUUM OF SERVICES		
3.1 Modelling, testing and scaling of child protection services	Child protection prevention and response services integrate climate adaptations, including: ▪ Clear instructions on role/functions in a climate-related disaster or crisis. ▪ Climate impact assessments identify high-risk communities and groups of children, specific protection risks and type and level of services required to mitigate risk and respond to harm. ▪ Data-driven targeting of disaster-prone areas and climate-vulnerable communities. ▪ Costed community relocation, preparedness and response plans. ▪ Portability and localization of inclusive child protection services that can be scaled. ▪ Infrastructure for child protection, care and justice services are located and designed to mitigate the impact of climate/disasters without preventing access (e.g., measures to avoid flooding should not inadvertently prevent access for people with disabilities). ▪ Plans for accessible and mobile birth registration and certification services for children and families impacted by climate change and disasters (and other emergencies). ▪ Periodic reviews of CP services (annual audits and external evaluations) consider coverage, reach and effectiveness of climate-related adaptations (including activation of contingency plans).	▪ Develop and roll-out SOPs for climate resilient and disaster prepared case management and referral systems – that are shock-responsive, portable and localized (including digitalization of services and remote delivery). ▪ Develop and roll-out out tools and guidance on climate/disaster impacts and needs assessments, including key child protection considerations and data to inform preparedness and service planning, as well as situation and response monitoring. ▪ Support integration of climate impact in planning and assessment of infrastructure required for child protection, care and justice services. ▪ Develop and support the roll-out of mobile and digitalized birth registration and certification services, prioritizing high risk locations and displaced communities. ▪ Develop/revise/upgrade case management processes, tools and guidelines (including on digitalization) to ensure effective intersectoral coordination, timely identification and care for children impacted by climate change and disasters, including relocation and migration. ▪ Develop/strengthen multi-country case management approaches and interoperability of systems across countries (including to address family separation and trafficking).

3. A CONTINUUM OF SERVICES		
3.2 Availability of SOPs and/or protocols for child protection services, as outlined in statutory provisions	SOPs and/or protocols governing child protection services at national and local levels integrate climate adaptations and promote risk-informed and resilience building approaches.	
3.3 Availability of child protection case management and referral systems	Case management systems integrate identification, prevention and response to risks and harms (including family separation, violence, GBV and trafficking) associated with climate impact (slow onset, sudden onset and relocation/migration), coordinate and deliver a response for children and families impacted by climate change and disasters. Referral protocols between child protection/ social welfare and other sectors integrate a risk-informed and resilience building approach, and include effective links with social protection programs, income generating activities and other resilience building initiatives.	
4. MINIMUM STANDARDS AND OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS		
4.1 Availability of independent accountability and oversight mechanisms for child protection	Oversight and quality assurance mechanisms consider capacity of child protection services to meet the needs of children and families impacted by climate change and disasters in line with national minimum standards.	▪ Develop and implement minimum standards and advocate for the establishment of oversight mechanisms that consider climate impacts and resilience, and quality and coverage of services (with a focus on high-risk areas/ communities).
4.2 Monitoring and oversight of minimum standards for child protection services	National minimum standards for child protection services include adaptations required to prevent and respond to risks and harms impacting children and families as a result of climate change and disasters.	

5. HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES		
5.1 Availability of qualified social service workforce for child protection	**SSW strengthening strategies include:** **Planning:** Mapping and assessment of the SSW integrates review of capacity to prevent and respond to climate and disaster-related protection risks and harms and build family and community resilience. National plan/strategy for strengthening the SSW reflects their role in resilience building, responding to emergencies and mitigating the impacts of climate change/disasters. Develop/update SSW tools and resources to ensure climate impact is considered in assessments, preparedness and response planning. **Developing:** Pre-service training includes modules on climate change and climate responsive case management and social services. In-service training modules tailored for different levels of the social service workforce developed and delivered to improve case management, supervision and service planning for climate-related protection risks. In-service training modules (stand alone on case management for climate change/DRR/ emergencies or integrated in wider training) delivered to front-line workers in climate hotspots. Capacity building for DRR/emergency frontline workers developed and delivered on protection risks and response. **Supporting:** Human Resource Information Management System tracks social service workforce who have the skills and capacity to respond to climate impacts and disasters in different roles (frontline, supervisory, deployable). Across the country, social service work associations, councils and the overall SSW supervision system offer guidance, continued education opportunities and support for enhanced capacities for gender responsive, inclusive and climate resilient social work. Develop awareness and communication materials on the role and functions of SSW in preventing, addressing and recovering from climate change impacts (disseminated across sectors and agencies and to the general public).	▪ Advocate for the inclusion of climate adaptations into SSW planning and strengthening strategies – including modalities for portability/mobility of social services, contingency ratios, development of job descriptions and targeted climate-focused capacity building for SSW and allied workforce. ▪ Develop SSW capacity building strategies and plans for multidisciplinary and intersectoral training to improve work on climate resilience and facilitate collaboration with allied sectors, including in migration and relocation. ▪ Design and deliver intersectoral capacity building programs, and accompanying training toolkits for the SSW with dedicated modules on DRR and climate resilience. ▪ Support training institutions to include DRR, climate resilience and green practices in the social work training curriculum. ▪ Advocate for public finance to be leveraged to resource, incentivize and sustain climate adaptations to the CPS.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">5. HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES</th></tr>
<tr><td>5.2 Financing of child protection services</td><td>National and local child protection services, SSW and coordination structures to prevent and respond to climate impacts and disasters are integrated into planning, budgeting and allocation of public resources in a whole of government approach.

Legislation/regulation explicitly recognizes public financing to prevent, mitigate against and respond to the impact of climate change and disasters.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">6. MECHANISMS FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</th></tr>
<tr><td>6.1 Child-friendly and gender-responsive legal procedures for children's access to justice</td><td>Child-friendly and gender-responsive law enforcement units and courts are accessible to children and families impacted by climate change and disasters, including those displaced or relocating, to report and address protection issues.

Judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms are in place for children to claim their climate rights.

Children and young people are empowered and supported to claim their climate and environmental rights* (as below)</td><td rowspan="3">▪ Support and promote community engagement forums/platforms and adolescent empowerment.

▪ Provide accessible information and knowledge on climate risks and resilience, preparedness and response actions, available services and mechanisms to report and claim rights.

▪ Advocate for and support integration of community engagement within CPS, to ensure climate resilience efforts are shaped by the experiences, priorities and knowledge of communities affected by climate change, displacement and relocation.

▪ Support and promote platforms for child and adolescent empowerment and engagement on climate risks and prevention and response.

▪ Promote and set-up inclusive, accessible and ethical independent complaint and feedback mechanisms for reporting on protection risks, needs and services related to climate change and disasters.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6.2 Independent complaint mechanisms exist for children</td><td>Relevant child protection independent complaint mechanisms are accessible for children (and families) impacted by climate crises (incl. in displacement, evacuation or planned relocations, disaster emergency response), including with respect to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), safeguarding, and prevention, mitigation and response to gender-based violence in emergencies (GBViE).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">6.3 Child and adolescent empowerment for child protection Forums/consultations for child protection provide space for dialogue and feedback on climate risk and prevention and response action and services.

Children and young people are consulted about protection risks, needs and services as a result of climate impact (including in the development and implementation of relocation plans, based on the country context).

Children and young people are empowered and supported to claim their climate and environmental rights* (as above).</td></tr>
</table>

6. MECHANISMS FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
6.4 Existence of community-based mechanisms for child protection	Community-based mechanisms are mandated to prevent and respond to climate-related protection risks and harms, are included in climate disasters/DRR planning, and linked to local and national child protection coordination structures and disaster and climate stakeholders/agencies. Community-based mechanisms are capacitated and supported to promote climate resilience, prevent and respond to protection risks and harms, and support anticipatory action to mitigate risks and promote family and community resilience. In disaster prone areas, community-based mechanisms, including local women's organizations and organizations for persons with disabilities, are linked to multi-hazards early warning systems to channel timely and accurate information to children, women and families.	▪ Promote collaboration at community level with local DRR and climate/environment stakeholders, including for consultations with disaster prone communities (collaboration on risk and resource mapping, information provision, climate and disaster preparedness, response and recovery plans.)
7. DATA COLLECTION & MONITORING SYSTEMS		
7.1 Administrative data systems that routinely generate quality child protection data	Child protection information management systems (such as Primero) are able to identify and track cases in which climate change/crises is driving vulnerability, abuse, exploitation, harmful practices and family separation, through an explicit and integrated climate change marker. Administrative data is generated and analyzed from child protection information management systems providing timely information on prevalence and hotspots for child protection cases linked to climate change/crises. Data analysis from child protection information management systems is used to target investment and preparedness activities in hotspot communities and areas impacted by climate with elevated protection cases and risks.	▪ Support to strengthen administrative data systems, including through development of diagnostic tools and tools to support data collection, analysis and dissemination. ▪ Devise collaborative arrangements with disaster and climate stakeholders to enable secure inter-operability of information management systems (IMS) and to build forecasting and risk analysis capacities critical to effective anticipatory action, preparedness and resilience building. ▪ Integrate climate markers in case management and information management systems to track hotspots and linkages between climate change impacts and child protection.
7.2 Surveys	Data on violence and protection issues impacting children (and women), linked with climate change and disasters is regularly collected. Regular data collection integrates children and communities impacted by climate change and is able to link protection risks and harms with climate impact.	
7.3 Data governance (coordination, oversight and secure management)	Data protocols integrate sharing and storage of data between ministries and agencies responsible for social welfare/child protection and ministries and agencies responsible for DRR/ climate change and migration. Secure inter-operability of information management systems (IMS) is supported.	

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