



EMPOWERING CHILDREN IN CLIMATE ACTION

CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

ZAMBIA

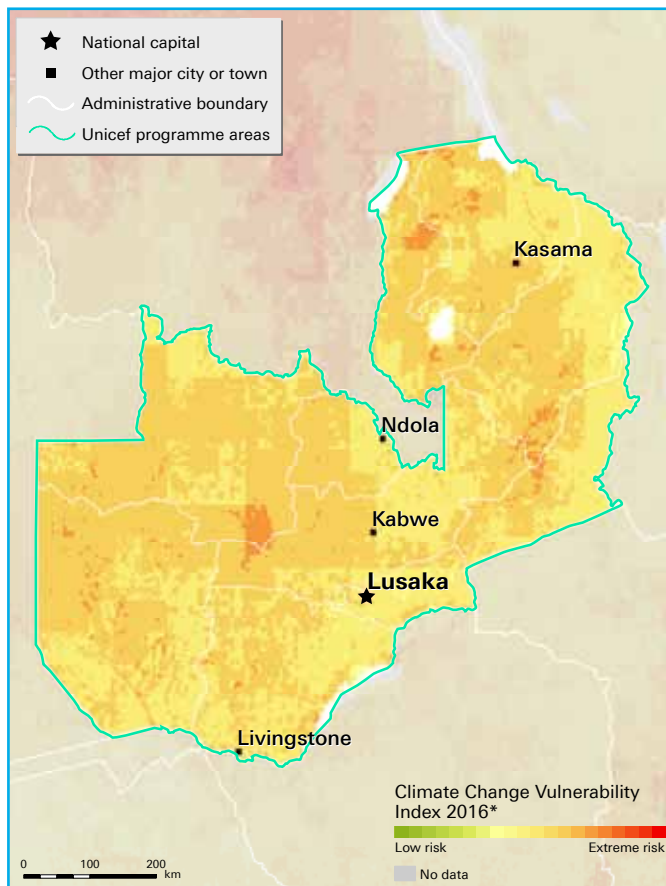
Human development index: 141/187⁵²

Climate change vulnerability index (2016): 64/186⁵³

Child population: 7.76 million (53.3 per cent of population)⁵⁴

“I visit schools to educate children about the environment and climate change. It is a good feeling to see how I change people’s mind just by speaking with them. At home we also have good practices now. We have two containers so that we separate waste. It was my idea and my mother accepted.”

Namwiinga Malambo, 16,
a climate ambassador in Mongu



CLIMATE CHANGE AND CHILDREN IN ZAMBIA

Zambia is highly prone to droughts, dry spells, flash floods and extreme temperatures. Many of these impacts have increased in intensity and frequency over the past decades, adversely affecting food security, water access and quality and livelihoods. Deforestation and land degradation are compounding these challenges. Climate trends indicate that mean annual temperature has increased by 1.3°C since 1960, while rainfall has decreased by an average of 2.3 per cent per decade.⁵⁵ Reduced rainfall and rising temperatures lead to falling crop yields – such as the dramatic 21 per cent decline in crop production reported in 2015.⁵⁶ With 70 per cent of the population – and often the poorest – concentrated in rural areas that depend on agriculture for their livelihood, the impacts are disastrous for children and families.

As our climate changes, malnutrition and increasing transmission rates of malaria – the disease already responsible for more deaths of children under the age of five than any other illness in the country⁵⁷ – are also likely to present even greater threats to children in Zambia. The median age in Zambia is just 16.7, and the country has the second highest annual predicted population growth in the world.⁵⁸ Children will therefore continue to suffer disproportionately from the impacts of climate change, this is linked to the predicted population growth. Empowering these children and future generations to adapt to climate change and adopt sustainable lifestyles is critical.

CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY*
ZAMBIA

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UNICEF'S WORK

Since 2010, UNICEF has been equipping young people with knowledge and advocacy skills help them to be leaders on climate change at the community, national and even international levels.

'Unite4Climate' is a child-led advocacy programme that empowers 11-17-year-olds in all 10 of Zambia's provinces to become climate ambassadors. They go on to inspire thousands of children through peer-to-peer outreach and education, media programmes, debates, advocacy efforts, and implementation of low-cost community projects on climate change adaptation and mitigation. From creating a plan to build a floating school in Mongu, where flooding restricts school attendance every year, to hosting radio programmes and theatre performances that address climate change, more than 1,000 ambassadors are putting their training into action and reaching more than 1 million community members through their efforts.

The project clearly demonstrates the valuable role that children and young people can play in finding innovative solutions to issues that affect their daily lives.

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OUR PROGRAMME

Location: nationwide

Funding: US\$1,850,000 from April 2010 to December 2015

Partners: Ministry of Education and the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Society of Zambia (WECSZ)

Number of children helped: 1,325 trained ambassadors that have reached more than 1 million children, youth and community members

RESULTS

- 1,325 climate ambassadors, aged 11 to 17, have been provided with education and training on climate change, as well as new advocacy and communication skills.
- Through a system of peer-to-peer outreach and activities, climate ambassadors have reached more than 1 million people in the country, providing information on climate change, mitigation and adaptation actions, and helping to realise environmental sustainability goals set out in the Zambia government's National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA).
- The voices of Zambian children have been raised to the national level, through engagement with Government officials, Members of Parliament, and traditional leaders. Through district consultations, 350 climate ambassadors have provided inputs to the Zambian government's country position paper for the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21) meeting in Paris, France in December 2015.
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation projects have led to planting of 30,000 trees in schools and communities in 2015 alone.
- Construction of a floating school in an area susceptible to flooding, as a direct result of child-led advocacy, leading to a 44 per cent increase in enrolment.
- Ambassadors have influenced small-holder farmers to engage in adaptation activities such as conservation agriculture.



**"I WANT TO HELP
PEOPLE WHO
FACE FLOODS"**

"As a result of being a climate ambassador I want to study Civil Engineering so that I can find eco-friendly solutions and ways of adapting to the effects of climate change," says 18-year-old Thompson Manda, pictured. "I want to help people who face problems like floods to have good houses and bridges."

Mubita Sitali, 16, is also inspired by being an ambassador. "I used to experience the effects of climate change but I did not know what caused those things. I now know and will do something in my school. I will work with my friends and plant 1,000 trees at school and at home," Mubita says.

Mubita attends Mayukwayukwa Secondary School in Zambia's Western Province and was one of 250 children to be trained as climate ambassadors during the Zambian Children's Climate Conference held in Livingstone in August 2015.

Mubita joins the ranks of other climate ambassadors such as Brighton Mukupa Kaoma, now 21 and currently a second year Environmental Education student at the University of Zambia in Lusaka. Kaoma was one of the first 300 climate ambassadors trained in April 2010.

Kaoma set up a community-based organisation called Agents of Change.

"The foundation builds capacity in young people between the ages of 12 and 19 on issues that resonate among them including climate change, inequalities, and education through peer-to-peer mentorship, as well as leadership and social media trainings," says Kaoma. "The foundation believes in cultivating well-informed young leaders who can hold their leaders accountable in order to enhance transformative change."