

# “NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US”

## RESULTS of Save the Children’s child hearings on climate change and inequality



Save the Children



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PHOTO: MOHAMMED NAYEF/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Sara\*, 15, writes notes during the Generation Hope child hearing in Gaza, oPt



# 1

# Introduction

In 2022, Save the Children held a series of hearings with 58,035 children from 46 countries<sup>1</sup> to understand children's experiences of climate change and inequality, their ideas and recommendations for addressing the issues, and how organisations like Save the Children can better support their activism. Children are rarely consulted on policies and initiatives that impact them – a violation of their rights, and a frustration cited by many children who took part in the hearings. Save the Children's new strategic focus on climate and inequality offers an opportunity to speak with children directly about what they would like to communicate to decision-makers, so we can shape our own campaigning and advocacy, amplify children's views, and better support children's campaigning and activism.

The hearings took place through a series of in-person and online consultations and surveys; the following report offers a summary of the findings.<sup>2</sup> In-person and online focus group-style consultations will be referred to as “dialogues”, while overall results encompassing dialogues and online surveys will be referred to as the “hearings”. Further analysis of the results of the survey can also be found in a separate document in Save the Children's Resource Centre.

Key takeaways from the hearings and considerations for future action on climate change and inequality include:

- Children in all regions and from a wide diversity of backgrounds are bearing witness to the impacts of climate change and inequality. Nearly all participants in the dialogues cited these crises as affecting them directly or affecting their wider communities. 83% of survey respondents reported having seen either climate change, economic inequality, or both affect the world around them.
- The impacts of adverse weather due to climate change – such as higher or lower than normal temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and changes to the seasons – were cited by children in all hearings. This was the most common change that respondents to the survey observed, followed by changes to the environment such as sea and river levels, forests and soil fertility.
- Climate change and inequality were linked to impacts on multiple dimensions of wellbeing. In our dialogues, children in lower-income contexts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, often linked these challenges to food security and water access. In higher-income contexts, children reflected more frequently on impacts related to unemployment and income, and children who were displaced or affected by conflict spoke frequently of shelter and psychological wellbeing. Children in all regions were worried about the impacts of climate change, with those in high-income countries speaking explicitly about the fear and anxiety it is causing them.
- The unequal distribution of the impact of climate change and inequality was widely observed across the dialogues, with children suggesting those living in poverty, girls, children with disabilities, and those who have been displaced are disproportionately affected by these issues. In the survey, there were variations between countries in whether children saw economic inequality in the world around them, ranging from 20% of children in Japan and Bhutan to more than 50% in Nepal and Philippines. Children from poorer families observed more economic inequality than children from wealthier households, as did children in urban areas compared to children in rural areas.

1 Number correct as of 21st October 2022. Please note that our global Generation Hope report states that children were from 41 countries, as this was the number that we had reached and whose inputs we had analysed at the report publication cut-off date.

2 For the UK, the analysis included qualitative responses from the survey rather than the in-person and online consultations which were held on a confidential basis.

- Calls for greater action to tackle climate change and inequality were made in all hearings, ranging from individual actions they and their peers can take, to community-wide initiatives and government policies and investments that are needed to drive change. According to the survey, 73% of respondents said that adults should do more to address the issues. The most common call for more action was directed towards government (63%), followed by community leaders (56%), individual adults (52%) and the private sector (50%).
- Tree and garden planting and better waste management were two areas that children spoke with strong conviction about in the dialogues. These were seen as actions needing immediate attention and where solutions are well within reach.
- Many children participating in the hearings are already taking actions to address climate change and inequality. More than 1 in 3 respondents to the survey (35%) are already campaigning on these issues or would like to start.

- Children would like more support from adults to implement their ideas for a better future. A leading request communicated across the hearings was the simple desire to be heard. Children expressed frustration at being silenced purely on the basis on their age and many felt they were being excluded from discussions that directly affect them. The most common request from survey respondents was help in understanding the issues, followed by amplification of their voices and training.

The next section of this report discusses the methods used to conduct the hearings, where they were conducted and the children that were involved. The subsequent section summarises themes that children raised about the impacts of climate change and inequality in their communities and in the world around them. This is followed by an overview of the main areas that participants identified for action to tackle climate change and inequality. The final section presents actions that children themselves are already taking and their requests for support to better tackle these crises.



Krishna, 17, and his friend Vivek do door-to-door campaigning to teach people about climate change in their slum in Patna, India

# 2

## Hearings methods

To reach a diverse group of children with different lived experiences, hearings were conducted in a broad set of countries across global regions and different income levels. Table 1 shows the geographic spread of hearings and the number of children consulted in each country.

**Table 1 Summary of Hearings participants by region and country**

Country	Total Hearings number
<b>Africa</b>	
Kenya	129
Madagascar	10
Malawi	502
Nigeria	283
Sierra Leone	62
Somalia	104
South Africa	87
Uganda	16
Zambia	95
<b>Asia and Pacific</b>	
Bangladesh	5,263
Bhutan	907
Hong Kong	200
India	3279
Indonesia	21,465
Japan	1,000
Nepal	7,674
Philippines	224
South Korea	1,000
Vanuatu	7
<b>Europe</b>	
Italy	342
Norway	1,103
Spain	53
UK	3,034

Country	Total Hearings number
<b>Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe</b>	
Albania	789
Egypt**	4,000
Iraq	98
Lebanon	3,395
MENA Regional Hearing*	42
occupied Palestinian territory	180
Türkiye	47
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	
Colombia	464
Ecuador	2
El Salvador	2
Guatemala	6
Honduras	1
Mexico	177
Perú	90
Venezuela	1
<b>North America</b>	
Canada	1,118
USA***	802

\* This dialogue was conducted in partnership with UN ESCWA and UNFPA, including participants living in Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, occupied Palestinian territory, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Somalia and Oman.

\*\* 969 out of 4,000 responses were translated into English and analysed for this report.

\*\*\* USA survey results were not included in the global analysis due to differences in methodology.

## In-person and online dialogues

Children from a diversity of backgrounds were invited to contribute to the in-person and online dialogues. Save the Children offices led the recruitment of participants and were encouraged to invite children who have engaged previously with Save the Children and those who have not. They also invited children from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Diversity was sought according to participants' gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability, race, ethnicity, caste and indigeneity, nationality and migrant, refugee, and internally displaced status.

Dialogues were conducted in multiple formats. The majority were conducted in-person with groups of 20–30 children. Some individual interviews were conducted where children shared more in-depth insights, and some larger hearings were held to include a wider group of participants. A small number of dialogues were held online. Most hearings began with a short presentation introducing the topics of climate change and inequality to help participants understand the topics being discussed.

The hearings were structured around a set of open-ended questions to encourage children to speak freely about the main impacts they are observing linked to climate change and inequality and to gain insights on what adults could do to address them. These questions are summarised in Box 1. Hearings were convened by Save the Children staff and results were summarised by the conveners using direct quotes from hearing participants. Quotes were coded

by a team of three researchers using NVivo 12 and thematic analysis was used to draw out common issues discussed across the hearings. Results were compared by the research team to ensure representative themes were reflected in the analysis.

## Surveys

The survey was administered by Save the Children and in some cases by an external provider. A common survey template was developed on Google Forms for individual countries to use, with some countries administering the survey with alternative platforms (e.g. KoBo). In some countries, the survey was translated into the local language(s), where rendition of specific terminology or slight edits to the original text were discussed with the lead researcher and compiled to assess comparability. Each country embedded survey dissemination into its broader existing strategy for the child hearings. A survey analysis key was developed for data cleaning and coding. The survey was conducted in 15 countries. A total of 42,213 survey response were collected, a large proportion of which were from Indonesia (47%), Nepal (14%) and Bangladesh (12.47%).

Several limitations should be noted in the interpretation of the results from the dialogues and the survey. The aim was to speak with a large and diverse group of children, not a representative number in any one context or of any socio-economic background. Although some disaggregation is offered in the summary of the results in this report, this should

### Box 1 In-person and online hearing guiding questions

The following questions were used to guide discussion in the hearings. These questions were intended as a prompt, and facilitators were encouraged to let the conversation be led by the topics that emerged following these prompts.

1. Thinking about the presentation you've just seen about climate change and economic inequality, have you noticed changes in the world around you that affect you or other children? If yes, what changes have you noticed in the world around you that affect you or other children?
2. Do you think adults in your country are doing enough to stop climate change and economic inequality? If no, what more could adults do?
3. Are you already campaigning on these issues? What are you doing?
4. What kind of support from adults and other organisations would help you?



Esther, 17, in a man-made forest where she has planted trees near her home in Zomba, Malawi

not be taken as representative of those groups or regions. Dialogue formats and facilitation methods also varied by country. This was deemed beneficial to allow hearings to be adapted to be relevant to local contexts and campaign strategies, and to account for

office capacities, but also means that hearings were not carried out in a systematic way. Comparisons across countries are therefore treated with caution, with the analysis instead focusing on common themes that were raised by common prompts.

# 3

## Themes raised on the impacts of climate change and inequality

**M**ost children participating in the hearings have noticed climate change or economic inequality affecting the world around them. Among survey respondents, 83% had witnessed either or both challenges. For countries where a breakdown was possible, 44% of respondents observed the impacts of only climate change, 15% observed the impacts of only economic inequality, and 22% had observed both. In-person and online dialogues revealed a similar level of awareness of these issues affecting participants and their communities. The following themes were highlighted by participants across the dialogues and the survey. They reflect the most common issues that children linked to the impacts of climate change and inequality.<sup>3</sup> They are presented in the order of how frequently they were raised in the dialogues.



Kamani, 14, lives with her family in a small village in Nepal's Mahottari District, which is often hit by flash floods

PHOTO: BINOD THAPA MAGAR/SAVE THE CHILDREN

<sup>3</sup> The Annex shows frequency distributions of the themes identified in the analysis of the dialogues.





## **Adverse weather events and associated environmental problems** were a theme

discussed in all dialogues. Participants bore witness to rising temperatures, colder winters, increased rainfall, and changes to the timing, predictability, and the nature of weather and its seasonality. While some referred to standalone extreme weather events, most spoke of how they had noticed changes over time in terms of the frequency or intensity of events. Participants across the hearings discussed how these adverse weather events were impacting them directly, including negative effects on their health, education, and households' livelihoods.

Changes in the weather were also the most common change linked to climate change or inequality reported by participants in the survey, with 48% responding that the weather is getting worse. Heatwaves were the most commonly cited disasters affecting their communities, followed by wildfires, floods, earthquakes and drought. Observations of adverse weather varied significantly by country; heatwaves were the most commonly reported disaster in Canada, Italy, the occupied Palestinian territory and South Korea, landslides the most common in Bhutan and Nepal, earthquakes in Japan, and wildfires in Albania.

In dialogues in lower-income countries, particularly in Africa, Middle East, and South Asia, children were more likely to reflect on the impacts of climate change on disruption to crop yields, agriculture and water supply. Children in these contexts frequently cited the impact these weather events were having on food, nutrition and access to drinking water (see below). In our dialogues, children in all regions and across income levels also discussed the impact that higher than normal prices were having on food security and other basic needs.

**66** It is very sunny and hot; sometimes it rains and sometimes it doesn't. You can no longer study seasons of the year. **99**

*6-year-old girl living in urban Mexico*

**66** We used to have four seasons in Lebanon which are fall, winter, spring and summer. Now winter is very long, and summer is also very long. **99**

*Boy living in Lebanon*

**66** Usually in the summer we plough, but then this year, no one ate what was ploughed... because all of a sudden there was this drought, no rain. Crops just stopped growing and they started dying, livestock were also dying. We started buying water, the taps are dry. **99**

*Child living in South Africa*

**66** Dry season is sometimes very long. When the rain does not come as it used to, people cannot plant. Because it is hard to plant, things will be hard, and people will die of hunger. **99**

*12-year-old-girl living in Nigeria*

**66** There is heavy rain in our area each year. Croplands and fishponds are going underwater as a result. Vegetables are not growing well. We are facing a lot of problems because of it, and children are suffering from malnutrition. **99**

*14-year-old boy living in Bangladesh*

Kayd\*, 9 and his siblings fetching water in Beledweyne, southern Somalia



PHOTO: MUSTAFA SAIED/SAVE THE CHILDREN



**Pollution** was a common concern raised in the dialogues, particularly in lower-income countries. Many children spoke of damaging levels of pollution in their communities, and expressed frustration with small-scale pollution such as littering and larger-scale pollution such as air and water pollution. Their concerns included frustration with adults, and sometimes fellow children, for burning garbage in the streets and with the general absence of proper waste management (including disposal and recycling). Issues were also raised with regard to the placement of factories in residential areas or the use of polluting vehicles.

**66** People leave waste in the streets and clog the few sewers in my community, so the streets are flooded. **99**

*9-year-old-boy living in Colombia*

**66** Water gets polluted from factory waste and the air gets polluted from chimneys. **99**

*Child living in Egypt*

**66** There are people who throw trash into lakes, rivers or lagoons and when the rain comes it is carried by the flow and reaches some trees, so when we breathe we are also contaminated and then there can be diseases or pain. **99**

*10-year-old-girl living in Guatemala*



### **Damage to the natural physical environment, particularly trees,**

was a widely cited concern across dialogues. Frequent and explicit complaints were raised about loss of trees in urban areas and wider deforestation. There was a sense from these complaints and those related to pollution that children felt these were some of the more avoidable environmental threats. This is supported by many clear and tangible calls to action on deforestation and pollution (outlined in the next section). Survey findings supported these concerns, with the second most frequently cited change that children observed being changes in the environment, including sea or river levels, forests and soil fertility. These concerns were raised in both higher income and lower income countries and across global regions.

**66** Deforestation, cutting down trees, is causing soil erosion. The rain is clearing the soil and plants are not able to grow well... Some people are cutting sticks to make charcoal. If they do not cut trees, where do we expect them to get money to sustain their family? **99**

*Boy living in Sierra Leone*

**66** Adults need to plant more trees, a law should also be put on tree planting, adults should keep the planted trees well so that they grow. **99**

*Child living in Uganda*

**66** The local government should promote a green environment by planting plants and trees in appropriate and available spaces. **99**

*10-year-old boy living in Nepal*



### **Income losses and property destruction**

were commonly linked to climate change. Many children in the dialogues had first-hand experience of income or property losses in their own households, or had witnessed the losses of others in their communities. The loss or destruction of housing was a common observation, and destruction caused by flooding was a noted in a number of countries. These income and property losses attributed to climate change were often associated with other dimensions of children's and communities' wellbeing. Some children observed that these impacts were contributing to migration and displacement, while others noted associated impacts on access to services such as education and health. Just over half of survey respondents felt that children's access to a safe and adequate home was improving over time, but 38% felt it was getting worse or were seeing no changes.

**66** We fled from our homes to this camp, and we have been here for many months due to floods. Our properties including houses were washed away and even our school materials, food, bedding, clothes. Climate change has contributed to all the losses. **99**

*Child living in a camp for internally displaced people in Malawi*

**66** I have seen how children in my community lived in a temporary shelter due to recent floods in Hyderabad. I have lost my own books. **99**

*Child living in India*

**66** My father lost his source of livelihood to flooding: his farmland became a river. **99**

*14-year-old-boy living in Nigeria*



## Differences in wellbeing driven by inequality were observed in most contexts.

Although children tended to speak more often in absolute terms – such as levels of poverty or access to key resources and services – there was recognition in most dialogues that resources are distributed unevenly and that some households and families are better able to cope than others. Discussions around higher than normal prices for basic goods arose in many contexts in higher and lower income countries, and it was widely recognised that this has had a greater impact on those living in poverty. Children in Norway, for example, spoke frequently of higher costs of food, fuel and electricity. Children in Malawi discussed increasing costs of fertiliser, food and school supplies. However, while these were common themes raised in our dialogues, just over half of survey respondents (54%) felt that access or affordability of food was getting better, while 22% saw no change and 16% felt it was getting worse.<sup>4</sup> 47% reported improvements in the affordability of basic things like clothes, fuel and other essentials, and 19% felt this was getting worse.

Dialogue participants referred to inequalities within their communities most frequently, but a number also spoke about global inequalities. Responses to the survey revealed that children in urban areas were more likely to observe high levels of inequality (41%) than children in rural areas (32%). Children from poorer families were also more likely to report high levels of inequality (43%) compared to children from wealthier families (34%). There were significant differences in perceptions of inequality across countries; fewer than 20% of children in Japan and Bhutan observed inequality around them, compared to more than 50% in Nepal and Philippines.

Dimensions of wellbeing were emphasised to varying degrees in different dialogues. In Perú, for example, there was a strong emphasis on unemployment as a driver and outcome of inequality. In hearings in Nigeria, children observed the unequal physical accessibility of services experienced by children with disabilities due to insufficient infrastructure. Children in conflict settings or children who were displaced in countries such as the occupied Palestinian territory, Egypt, Lebanon, Mexico and Malawi spoke of material and psychological needs and the extreme challenges they were facing. Some suggested that climate change was not as much of a priority in their communities because conflict was a more pressing concern, though others also noted the role of climate change in driving or exacerbating conflict.

<sup>4</sup> In Italy, this question was translated as 'access to a healthy and balanced diet.'

**66** The problem of unequal economic justice is the disparity between the poor and the rich. Rich countries have the means to invest and have the means to change the economic imbalances within their countries, but we don't. **99**

*18-year-old boy living in the occupied Palestinian territory*

**66** Most of the economic disadvantages caused by climate change are in developing countries, so the developed countries need to look at the fact that people in faraway countries who are not doing anything wrong are suffering unreasonably and to urgently create measures to deal with the situation. **99**

*17 year-old girl living in Japan*

**66** Economic inequality is like a disease ... and it is a threat to human rights. It is a great threat to all children and youths of today... In Albania, wealth is concentrated in very few people. **99**

*17 year-old-girl, Albania*

**66** When a child is sick, he or she can't get treatment because he or she doesn't have money. **99**

*12-year-old-boy living in Madagascar*

**66** When my mother goes to buy vegetables, they're too pricey. **99**

*8-year-old girl living in Spain*



### The unequal distribution of the impacts of climate change

were widely observed across dialogues, with children suggesting those living in poverty, girls, children with disabilities and those who have been displaced are disproportionately affected. Poverty and limited access to resources were frequently cited as factors that lead to higher exposure to climate change and less capacity to adapt to the changing climate. In one hearing in Iraq, for example, participants prompted a discussion on how events such as Covid-19, climate disasters and conflict affect the rich and the poor differently, with wealthier people able to migrate to safer places and people living in poverty having no choice but to stay or become displaced.

**66** If war breaks out, or flood has occurred, then people who are better off can move or leave the affected places or countries to more safer ones. However, less affluent people will have no choice but to stay under bombardment, die, displace or become refugees. **99**

*Child living in Iraq*

**66** Rich people and factory owners do not care about climate change and economic inequality and only poor people will suffer. We need to be more careful when it comes to damaging the environment, as it is for everyone. **99**

*Child living in Türkiye*

**66** Families that have wealth are not affected by either economic inequality, nor can they feel the impact of climate change. They can afford to buy goods even when the price is high or they drive in four-wheel vehicles that will not get stuck in the muddy roads. **99**

*15-year-old-girl living in Somalia*



Vinalee, 10, playing with her sisters in Ambovombe, Madagascar

PHOTO: NARINDRA RAKOTONANAHARY / SAVE THE CHILDREN



### **Uncertainty, anxiety, and a sense of**

**urgency** was expressed among many dialogue

participants in reaction to the climate crisis. Children made direct connections between climate change and mental health, linked to the challenges they were confronting at present and concerns for the future they see themselves as inheriting. Discussions in several hearings revolved around the gravity of extreme weather events, with children expressing fear for their future, and that of the planet, because of them.

These concerns were expressed in hearings in all global regions, though some of the strongest expressions of anxiety directly linked to climate change were presented by children in higher-income countries in Europe and Latin America. Children in other regions were more likely to associate uncertainty and anxiety to proximate issues like poverty, hunger and conflict. One respondent from the occupied Palestinian territory stated, for example, that “people are thinking of survival, so these issues aren’t unimportant to them because their focus is to survive and live”. In our survey, 29% of respondents felt that children’s mental health was getting worse, with 23% seeing no change and 32% feeling it has been getting better over time.

**66** I’ve thought about whether I should even have kids, whether it was smart, if I would ever be able to go on holiday. I thought about huge, existential issues that no kid should have to deal with alone. **99**

*18-year-old young woman living in Norway*

**66** Climate change made me change my lifestyle, you put into question your future. Where will I be in one year, in two years? **99**

*24-year-old young woman living in Italy*

**66** Climate change is like a monster that destroys us. **99**

*15-year-old girl living in Colombia*

**66** The change in temperature impacts our mental health, climate change generates a lot of anxiety. **99**

*Girl living in El Salvador*



### **Limitations accessing education and the ability to learn**

was raised in many dialogues in lower-income countries, with links drawn to both climate change and inequality. Discussions related to economic inequality often referred to differences in the ability to study, either because of the costs of schooling or because of the resources needed for school (such as stationary or clothing). Children expressed the injustice of wanting to go to school but being unable due to economic inequalities. They want to go to school, and they feel this injustice keenly: “... **this can destroy the dreams of many teenagers who want to study, but cannot due to lack of (economic) resources**” argued a 15-year-old girl in Perú.

**66** Social inequality in our school presents itself when some children are unable to clear their school fees in good time and are sometimes forced to leave school. **99**

*16-year-old child, Kenya*

**66** For me, I think only the rich can afford the jerseys or warm clothing required by the school, some of us really feel cold because we cannot afford them, and they do not allow us to wear any other. I wish they could make exceptions when it’s very cold like this. **99**

*16-year-old boy, Zambia*



**Exploitation and violence** were discussed in some dialogues as children reflected on wider fragility in the social and political situation of their communities where inequality (including the uneven impacts of climate change) harmed children and society through rising violence, kidnappings, or child exploitation where children are forced to work or to marry to supplement household earnings. Conflict was discussed most often in countries where children had experienced it first hand or where they had fled conflict, such as children living in the occupied Palestinian territory and Syrian children living in Lebanon. Exploitation, particularly child labour, was a theme discussed in lower-income settings in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

**66** We have seen so many cases of exploitation against working children and adolescents, because out of necessity they have to start working, and employers are often people who are thoughtless and just take advantage of our need, and we are exploited. **99**

*15-year-old-girl, Guatemala*

**66** Lots of large-scale disasters hit our district which causes people to become impoverished, and children like us are engaged in child labour. **99**

*13-year-old-boy, Bangladesh*



Sisters Ibsan, 12, Mayra, 14, and mum Juana, 29, in their corn field in the Dry Corridor region, Guatemala

PHOTO: LUISA DÓRR/SAVE THE CHILDREN

# 4

## Calls to action

**A**cross all dialogues and surveys, children had explicit demands for action to tackle climate change and inequality. Most of these demands called upon adults – parents, teachers, policy and decision-makers and government representatives – to take more initiative to address these threats. While some calls to action involved things that children themselves could do, there was consensus that adults have the most responsibility and are not doing enough. According to the survey, 73% of respondents said that adults are not taking enough action. The most common call for more action was directed towards government (63%), followed by community leaders (56%), individual adults (52%) and the private sector (50%). Levels of dissatisfaction with adults' handling of the issues were roughly similar across countries, with children in rural areas more likely to observe adults not taking enough action compared to those living in urban areas (76% and 71% respectively), and children from wealthier families slightly more likely to make this observation compared to children from poorer families (85% and 75% respectively).

Among specific areas of intervention, of which many concrete and practical solutions were discussed, the leading areas that children called for more action on in the dialogues were tree planting and waste management. Children in all regions, in countries at different economic levels, were clear that tackling deforestation and planting more trees and gardens is a high priority. Some linked this to other positive outcomes that address inequality, such as income provision or improved nutrition. There was also a sense from respondents that these actions are relatively straightforward and can, and should, be addressed without delay. Simple requests like having rubbish bins available to avoid burning or littering waste were common. These two areas of action are also ones that children said they were already involved in and for which they requested further support.

A common theme in the dialogues was the suggestion adults educate themselves further about the impacts of climate change and economic inequality, and in doing so also educate their children. That parents must 'role model' good behaviours for their children and others was a clear ask, summed up by one girl, aged 6, from Mexico who said, “adults should know that

**66** I would like someone to plant a tree that can provide fruit to people who do not have an income to bring home and have nothing to eat. 99

*10-year-old girl living in Guatemala*

**66** If each of us take personal ownership of our own behaviour and that of those that we can influence, a lot can change. Even small steps like segregating waste, saving water, cleaning the river or hills can made a big difference. 99

*Child living in India*

**66** I want them to put rubbish bins everywhere in order to help us clean the environment and protect ourselves from diseases. 99

*Child living in Egypt*

**66** People should recycle more, create less waste, and the government should do more to introduce environmentally friendly ways of using energy and fuels. 99

*Child living in the UK*

**66** Authorities, but also citizens and people play a role, so you must have social awareness. There must be spaces for environmental education. 99

*Girl living in Perú*



they are an example for many girls and boys and should act well.”

Role modelling went beyond parents, extending to those in authority and elected positions. Many children spoke of the need for more sensitisation campaigns to alert the public of the immediate threats that climate change and inequality pose and what people can do about them. Calls for more direct actions such as protests, strikes and political change were made by children in the UK, and suggestions on interactive things that could engage more people in the discussion were frequently suggested in higher income countries such as Spain, Italy and Norway.

Dialogue participants also emphasised the need for changes to school curriculums to better reflect the challenges being confronted and to engender greater awareness among children. Incorporating lessons on climate change and inequality into the education system were also seen as an opportunity to foster children’s participation in finding solutions to address these challenges.

Many emphasised that it is everyone’s responsibility to take care of the environment and to address inequality. Collaboration was a theme that featured prominently across the dialogues. Participants spoke of the need for better collaboration between government, civil society, businesses and citizens. Some children also spoke of the need for better collaboration at international level to support efforts to tackle climate change and to eliminate poverty. These suggestions came both from children in higher income countries, who saw their governments as having a responsibility to financially support lower-income countries’ battles with climate change and inequality, and from children in lower-income countries who saw these challenges as being made by a global system that requires a unified response. Dialogues in Egypt, Iraq, Mexico and Nigeria, for example, reflected on the disproportionate role that higher income countries play in contributing to climate change, and their responsibility for supporting other countries to adapt. This was supported by respondents to the survey, 62% of which stated that wealthier countries have more responsibility to act on these issues.

In some dialogues, discussions around responsibility for these crises reflected on the need for better governance more broadly. Participants in Nigeria, for example, spoke of the need to combat corruption and bribery, which were seen to be preventing social mobility. Children in Indonesia spoke of the need to tackle corruption and to implement existing laws. Children in Kenya referred to the unequal distribution of government budgets and the impacts this has on inequality. Many children were adamant in their condemnation of perpetrators they saw as responsible for economic injustice or contributing to the climate crisis. Children called for more stringent planning restrictions (e.g. no factories within

**66** I think we should educate people on climate change...to be honest I didn’t know enough on climate change so I can imagine that they must not know. **99**

*Child living in South Africa*

**66** I think there are many actions that must be taken. One of them is to disseminate this knowledge. Starting from school, because this knowledge has to be disseminated to the younger generation. **99**

*13-year-old boy living in Indonesia*

**66** The leaders should work to protect and equip us against the climate crisis by raising awareness, securing action, and supporting children at all levels of education, by teaching climate change effects and mitigations in schools. **99**

*Child living in Nigeria*

**66** Unity is the greatest strength of all, so we need to stand together in this fight... when we stand together there is a higher chance. **99**

*Child living in India*

**66** I strongly believe in collaborating internationally, especially when dealing with a global crisis like this. Rich countries like Norway cannot continue to buy other countries’ climate quotas and should to a much larger degree find new and sustainable solutions through the partnerships that have already been established, to lift and prioritize children in vulnerable areas, especially considering education. **99**

*18-year-old-young woman living in Norway*

residential areas), stronger legislation around climate change and punitive action against those who do not follow rules or who are found to pollute or contaminate the environment.

Though there was a strong sense of the agency individuals have to affect change expressed in the hearings, many children called on businesses, industry and government to act on the climate crisis. A participant in South Africa asked why more businesses aren't investing in renewable energy, and multiple children in the UK spoke of the need for better regulations on businesses that contribute to climate change. There was a strong emphasis placed on the responsibility governments have to enact and enforce appropriate laws and to fund actions that support change. This included an emphasis on waste management, living sustainably and transportation. Where actions to address the inequality crises were discussed, this was more often in terms of actions governments should take; though some children spoke about the role that people play in treating each other with respect. Children in the UK, for example, emphasised the need to act without discrimination towards others.

**Under the theme of governance and government responsibility, across the dialogues a number of clear recommendations emerged:**

- Planning restrictions regarding building in areas prone to disaster (e.g. flooding), or restricting location of factories
- Natural resource assessments
- Balanced regional development plans to ensure equal distribution of resources to all parts of the country, and all people
- Establishing (and enforcing) environmental legislation and policies both in poorer and wealthier communities
- Ensuring fair incomes and wages
- Better employment opportunities and support to small businesses
- Subsidising farming and investing in and promoting improved agricultural practices
- Affordable and equitable access to resources and rights spanning health, housing, food, education, among others.

**66** There is a need to talk about the climate crisis every day and we want to see collaboration between institutions, civil society and the private sector to find solutions now. **99**

*22-year-old young woman, Italy*

**66** I wish the government would offer more subsidies to people in need to better tackle intergenerational poverty. **99**

*Child living in Hong Kong*

**66** We want environmental laws to be approved and citizen actions to be promoted ... to build a more equitable world, with equal opportunities for all, especially for the poorest children and adolescents in situations of vulnerability. No one should live such a difficult childhood. **99**

*16-year-old girl living in Perú*

**66** Adults should fight corruption and stop collecting bribes before they give parents jobs, because bribery and corruption causes economic inequality, parents who don't have money to pay cannot get jobs and opportunities. **99**

*13-year-old boy living in Nigeria*

**66** The community and the government must monitor each other and collaborate, because if not, nothing will change. **99**

*16-year-old girl living in Indonesia*



# Children's initiatives and requests for support

**M**any children that participated in the dialogues and the survey were already taking actions themselves in response to climate change and inequality. More than 1 in 3 respondents to the survey (35%) are campaigning on these issues or would like to start. In line with their calls for greater collaboration and their views of the common task ahead, many children were already mobilising around these issues, particularly climate change. Hearing participants had many tangible requests for further support they would like so that they might have greater impact.

## Initiatives that children are already taking include:

- A wide variety of public awareness campaigns including workshops, demonstrations, theatre, poetry, radio programming, speaking to media and government officials
- Raising awareness about harmful actions such as littering and burning waste with friends, family and other community members
- Planting trees and gardens in their communities and encouraging others to do the same
- Organising rubbish collections in their communities
- Warning people in their communities about the dangers of building in areas highly exposed to climate change
- Walking, cycling and using public transportation, and encouraging others to use sustainable means of transportation
- Organising food collections for children living in poverty
- Running child rights groups in their schools

In the dialogues, children's suggestions ranged from actions and behaviours to be adopted at the individual level, centred on personal responsibility, to more scaled-up and organised efforts including their inner circles and beyond. While children frequently recognised individual responsibility and agency, there was a strong emphasis on scaled-up and organised efforts in their calls to action. They also shared activities that sought to galvanise their peers by spreading awareness, reaching out to members of their local community, and ultimately influencing decision-makers and businesses.

**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 living in 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**  
*Boy living in Malawi*

**Some examples include:**

- Individual level: separate recycling from general waste; clear up roads, plant trees
- School-community level: participate in or establish campaigns to plant trees, clear up neighbourhoods and schools, donate items to vulnerable groups, raise awareness via meetings and school debates
- Influencing stakeholders: door-to-door campaigns, writing to/lobbying politicians

A leading request communicated across the hearings was the simple desire to be heard. Children expressed frustration at being silenced purely on the basis on their age and many felt they were being excluded from discussions that directly affect them. This request was particularly strong in lower-income settings, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where children more often referred to cultural norms of silencing children.

Some participants suggested that these hearings were a positive step in being heard and asked for more initiatives like this to allow children to come together and share their views. There were also requests to not only be heard, but also to be empowered to act on their views. Children had a wealth of ideas, ranging from the use of mushroom textiles to blue hydrogen, from drought-resistant crops to investing in research, from building dams to prevent floods to geo-thermal sensors as early warning systems. Many expressed a desire for support and resources to allow them to advocate for what matters to them, gain more understanding, and raise awareness of the impacts on their future.

Children in many dialogues discussed the need for more and better information about climate change and inequality, so that they and their communities could take more considered actions to tackle these crises. A simple request of political leaders from one participant in Italy was for “less words and more facts”. When survey respondents were asked what adults and organisations can do to support them to campaign on these issues, help in understanding the issues was the more common request, followed by amplification of their voices and training.

Dialogue participants also expressed frustration at a simple lack of support for the activities they wish to pursue – resources to mobilise their campaigns, information to ground their activities and safe spaces to have meaningful discussions. Children know this world is their future and are clearly at pains to highlight that this means their voice is essential. Despite the relatively bleak outlook underpinning so much of the discussion in the hearings – often attributed by children to a perception of apathy and indifference among political elites and adults more broadly – there is clear hope in the value of the many and varied ideas they have for how to ensure change, and their belief that change is possible if adults collaborate.

**66** The authorities are taking some actions, but they are not enough. I believe that alliances should be made with organizations, mainly children’s organizations, to know what the needs, problems and motivations are to make decisions. We are the most affected, we must be considered when making decisions. **99**

*Girl living in Perú*

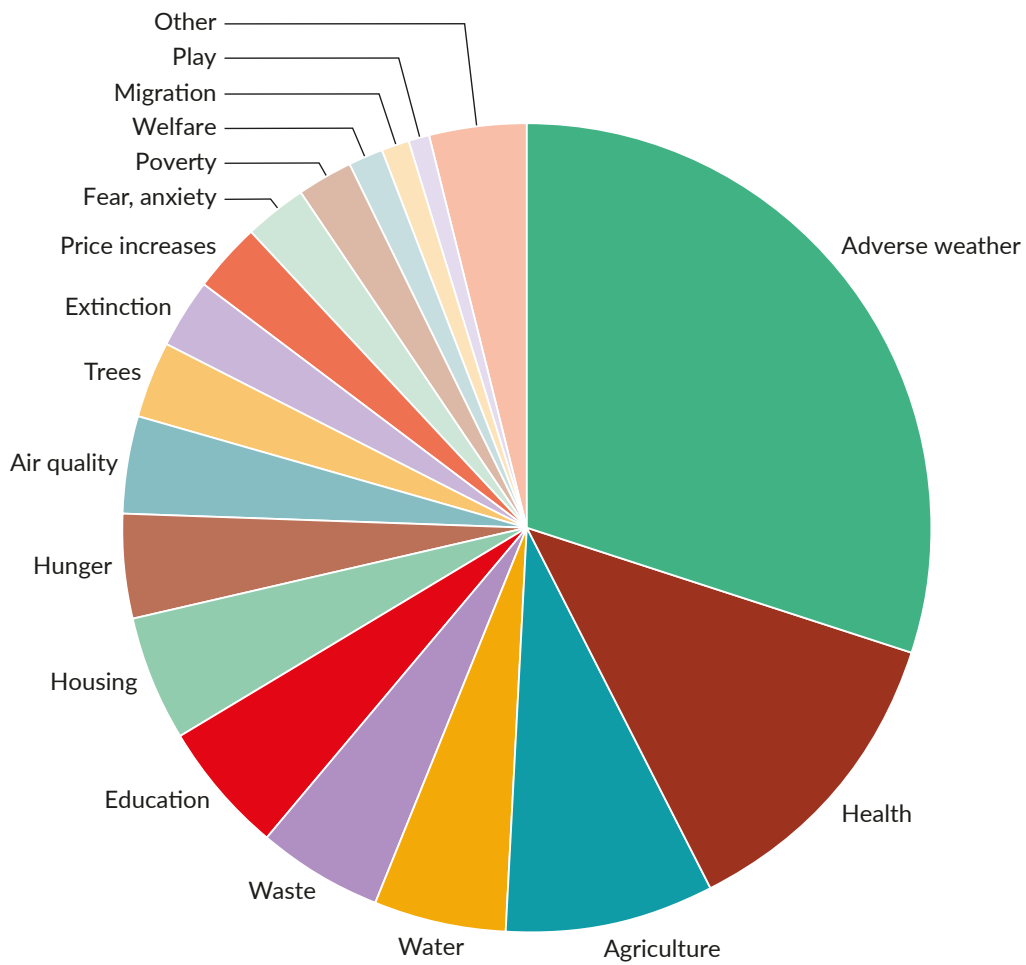
**66** I want people to learn we could do much more to save our environment just by making the decision. Sometimes people are just waiting for others to do it, but really, we just need people to make a decision to do something, because every parent wants their child to live somewhere that’s well. **99**

*12-year-old girl living in Canada*

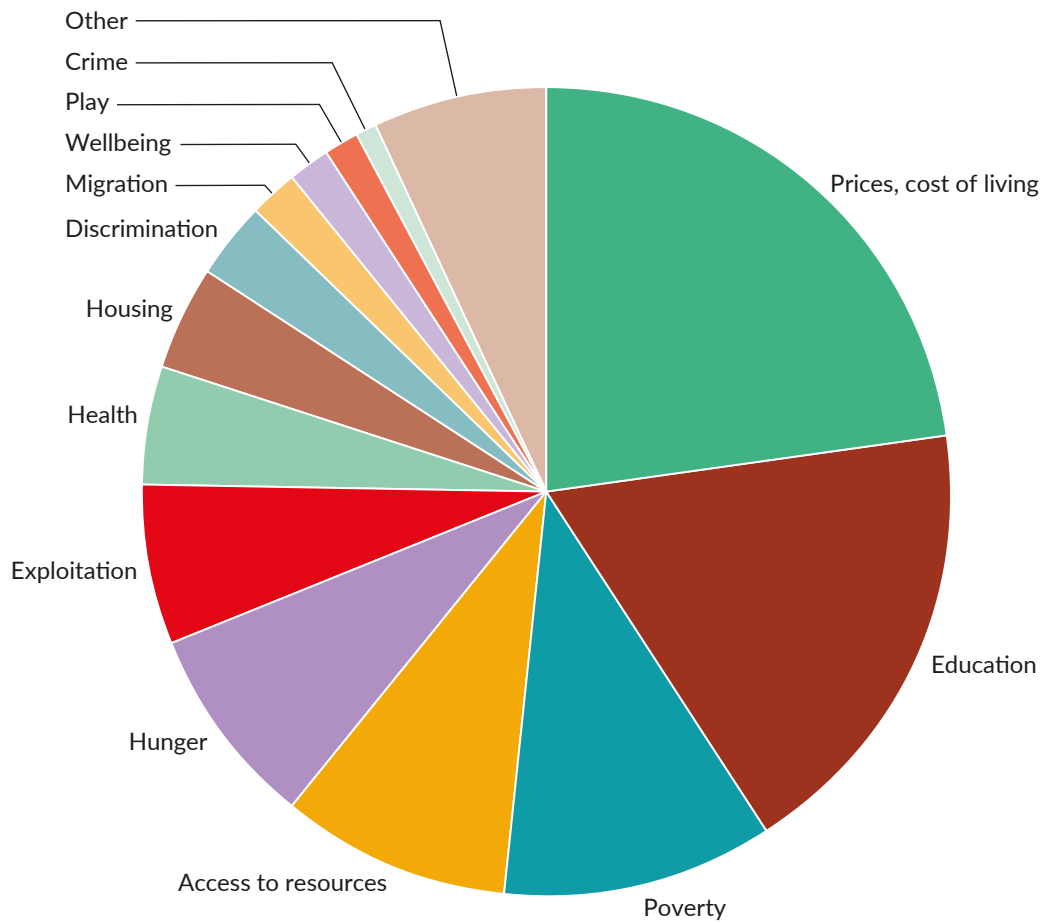
# Annex

The following figures show the frequency with which themes were raised in the dialogues. The size of the chart segment represents how often the theme came up in the hearings relative to other themes.

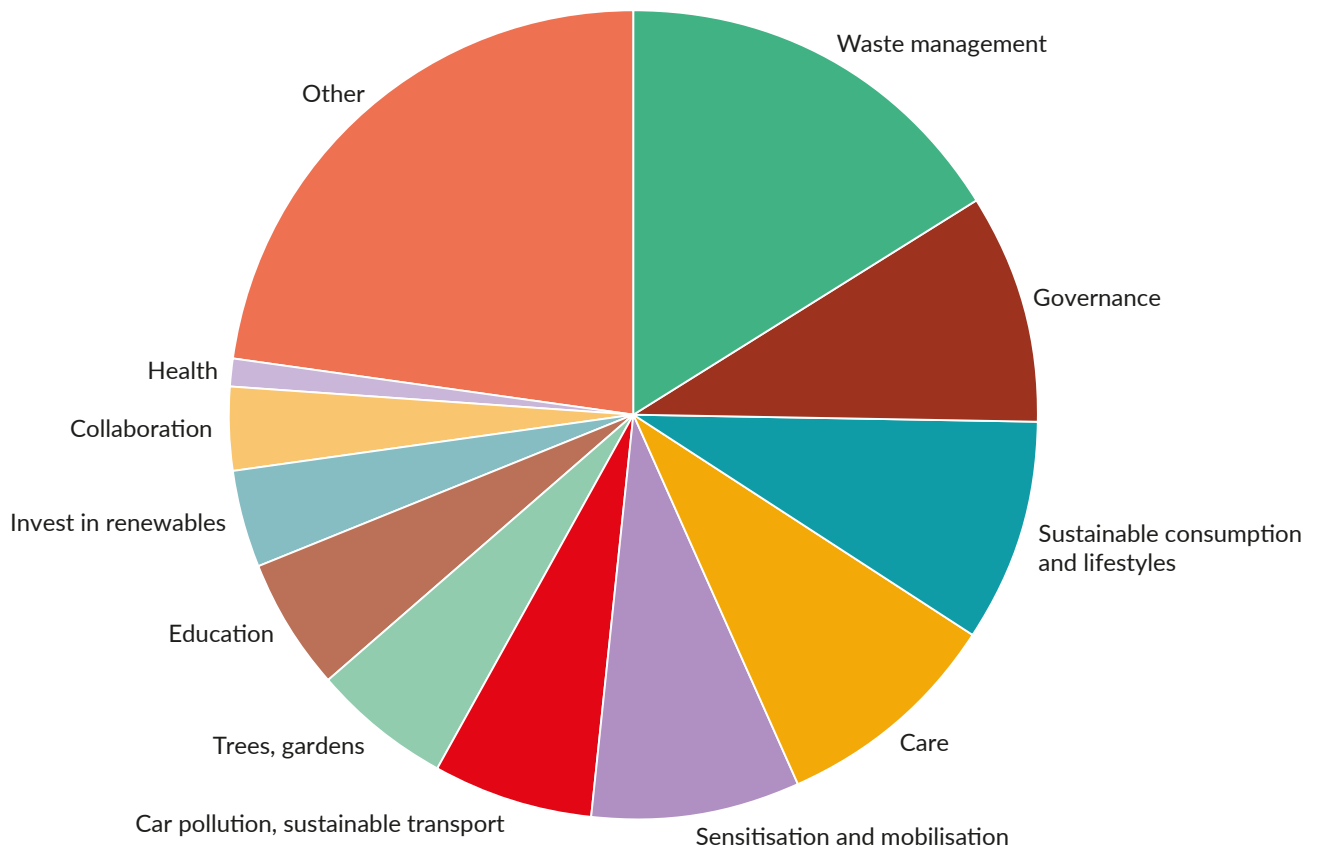
**Figure 1** Themes discussed related to the impacts of climate change



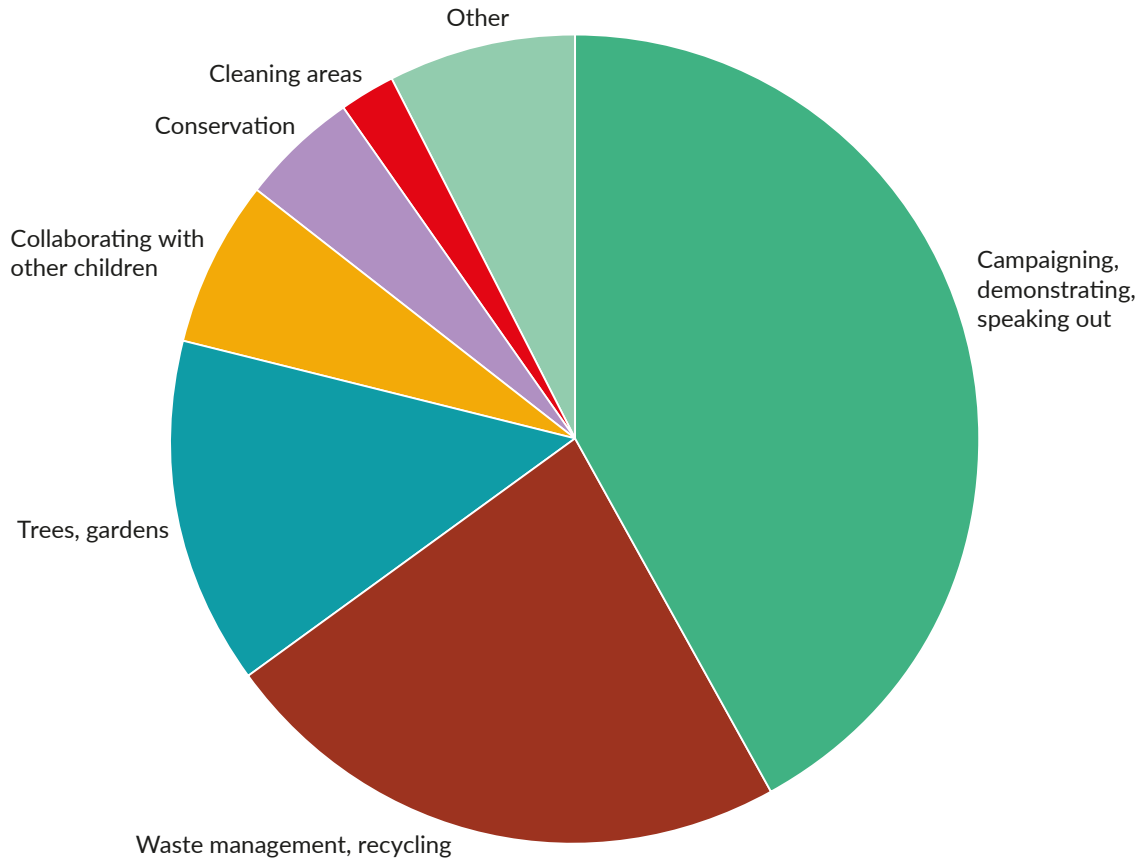
**Figure 2** Themes discussed related to the impacts of inequality



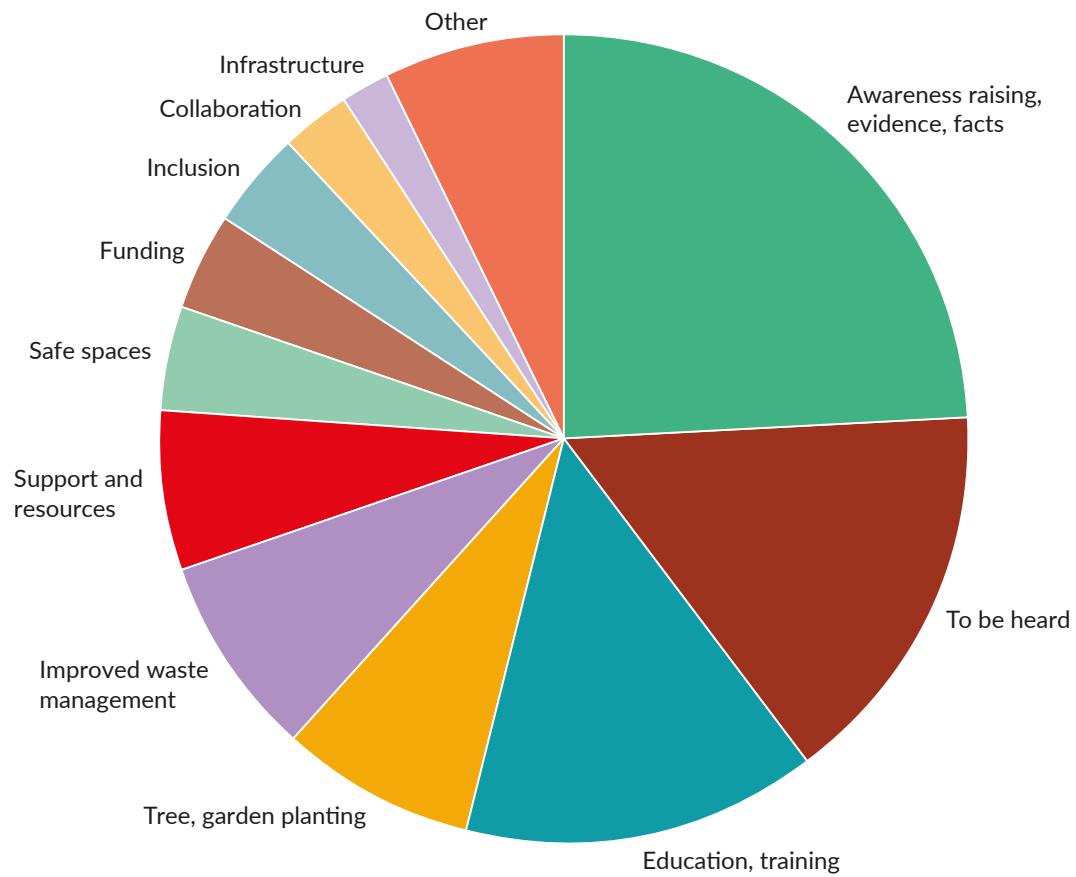
**Figure 3** What more adults can do to tackle climate change and inequality



**Figure 4** What children are already doing to address climate change and inequality



**Figure 5** Children's requests for support to tackle climate change and inequality



**Written for Save the Children by Amanda Lenhardt**

\* Throughout this report names marked \* have been changed to protect identities

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Cover photo: Oriana\*, 15, stands on top of plastic bottles she will recycle as bricks by filling them with sand in Norte de Santander, Colombia. (Photo: Pascale Mariani/Save the Children)

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