



Climate Change

What children think and say

ngoma



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Background

Children & Climate Change

Climate change presents one of the biggest threats facing us today. Major adverse impacts of climate change include: declining water resources, causing water shortages; reduced agricultural productivity, contributing to hunger; spread of diseases; and turbulent weather and climatic disasters. Direct health impacts from climate change include injury and death from more frequent extreme weather events, such as floods and hurricanes.

In Zimbabwe the climate is becoming warmer and drier as a result of climate change and variability. The annual mean surface temperature has warmed by about 0.40C from 1900 to 2000. The timing and amount of rainfall received are becoming increasingly uncertain. The last 30 years have shown a trend towards reduced rainfall or heavy rainfall and drought occurring back to back in the same season. The frequency and length of dry spells during the rainy season have increased while the frequency of rain days has been

reducing. Such a scenario has impacts on Zimbabwe's economy which is primarily based on agriculture with over 70 per cent of the population living in rural areas and dependant on climate-sensitive livelihoods such as arable farming and livestock. Climate change has the potential to undermine many of the positive developments made in meeting the country's development goals.

Children are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The specific nature of children's vulnerability is multidimensional, shaped by the physical, social and emotional changes that take place over the course of childhood. Children are often most vulnerable to adverse health effects from environmental hazards because they are not fully developed physically and psychologically. The situation and vulnerabilities of children will be exacerbated climate change which may impact on every aspect of their lives.

The Institute of Environmental Studies (IES) of the University of Zimbabwe in co-operation

with UNICEF Zimbabwe Country Office carried out a study in 2013 on children and climate change in Zimbabwe. The aim of the study was to assess the vulnerabilities of children in Zimbabwe and to identify which of these vulnerabilities will be magnified by the impacts of climate change. The study also aimed to determine the level of awareness and knowledge that children in Zimbabwe have about climate change, what their concerns are, and what can be done about it.

The study comprised of a questionnaire survey and focus group discussions with primary and secondary school children in Zimbabwe. The six study sites, purposively selected because of their vulnerability to climate change, were: Chimanimani, Chiredzi, Gweru, Harare, Hwange and Mbire. A total of 1,457 questionnaires were administered.

These are some of the voices of children regarding climate change in Zimbabwe

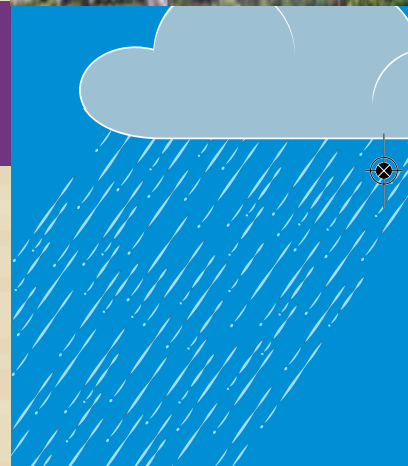


Children are experiencing changing weather patterns & climate variability

"The winters have become so unpredictable, one year it is so cold and unbearable and the other year the winter is warm we don't even put on jerseys"

A girl aged 18 from Hwange

Winter



"The way rains fall no longer has manners, five days rain can be received in two hours then it goes forever"

A girl from Gweru Rural



OCTOBER

"The rains now start late, at times they start around end of November or early December, then around late January or in February the rains go."

A boy from Mbire

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"Some of the children try and walk on the grass on very hot days because the ground is very hot and they do not have shoes."

A girl aged 17 from Gweru Rural




The study on children and climate change found that more than two thirds of the children in the sample experienced frequent droughts.

Water scarcity was one of the most serious impacts of drought that the children were concerned with.

Water scarcity affects agriculture

There are food shortages in times of drought





"Water has become so scarce that we now have to share the little available with our livestock"

A boy aged 16 from Mbire

"This area experience drought every year and a lot of families do not have food."

A boy aged 16 from Mbire

"Most of the time there is no water coming out of taps so at times our parents sleep at the borehole as water yields from the borehole is very low"

An Upper Six boy from Chiredzi

"In our village, water is a problem so we bring 20 litre containers to fetch water from school when we are dismissed"

A girl aged 18 from Mbire

"We bring our own drinking water because here at school water is a problem"

A Form 3 boy from Chitungwiza

Children's education is affected in times of drought




"In a drought year we have to drop out of school to look for food or money to buy food in Mozambique."

A 15 year old boy in Mbire




"In a drought year our parents are not able to pay our school fees and they are always angry."

A Form 3 girl from Gweru Rural



"My brother is at home because his money for school and exam fees was used to buy food."

A boy aged 17 from Gweru Rural



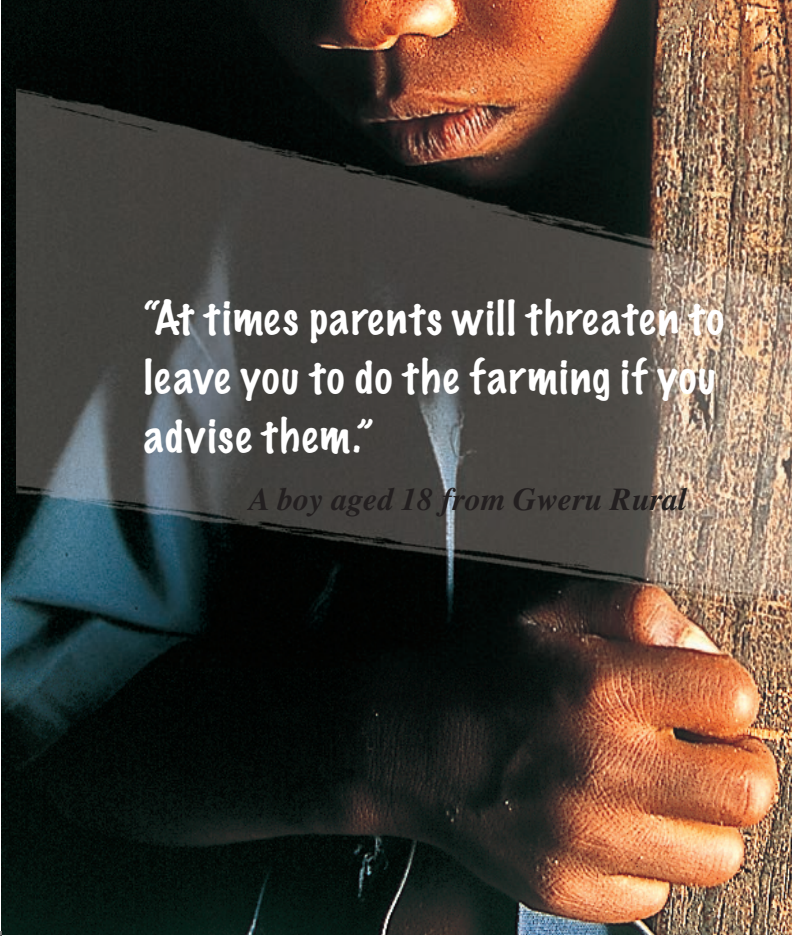
"When I am hungry I feel weak and sleepy even when the teacher is talking."

A boy from Gweru Rural



"Most of us children are staying with step fathers who rape us when our mothers are away looking for food."

A girl aged 17 from Mbire



"At times parents will threaten to leave you to do the farming if you advise them."

A boy aged 18 from Gweru Rural

Some of the
indirect impacts
of drought are

children

emotional

biological

stress

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Children

are concerned about
climate change and know
quite a lot about it.

“Climate change is the
change in rainfall and
temperature from what
they used to be in the
past.”

A Form 4 boy from Chimanimani

“Seasons have
changed; we now
receive less rains
which are
unpredictable.”

*A boy aged 17 from
Mabvuku-Tafara,
Harare*

People who are cutting
down trees are causing
climate change.”

*A Grade 7 girl from
Northern Central, Harare*

“Gases from cars
and industries are
causing climate to
change.”

*A Form 4 girl from
Tsholotsho*

Children are concerned about the impacts of climate change

"Climate change will lead to an increase of skin diseases and high HIV prevalence"

A Lower six girl from Chimanimani

"It will cause family breakups as fathers leave home and do not come back"

A boy from Gweru Rural

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"Zimbabwe is going to become a desert"

A boy aged 16 from Chiredzi

"Climate change will lead to high illiteracy as many children are forced to drop out of school"

A Form 4 girl from Chiredzi

Children have some good
ideas about how we can
cope with the negative impacts
of climate change

**"Constructing more dams and
irrigation schemes with the
help from NGOs."**

A Form 4 girl aged 18 from Chimanimani

**"As children we joined the
environmental management
association club and we are
carrying out environmental
awareness campaigns in the
community"**

A Form 5 girl Parliamentarian from Makonde




**"Communities are sinking
more boreholes."**

A Form 4 girl aged 16 from Chiredzi

**"Repairing leaking pipes
and boreholes"**

A Form 4 girl aged 17 from Gweru Urban

Children have some messages for the President, government and policy makers about what can be done about climate change



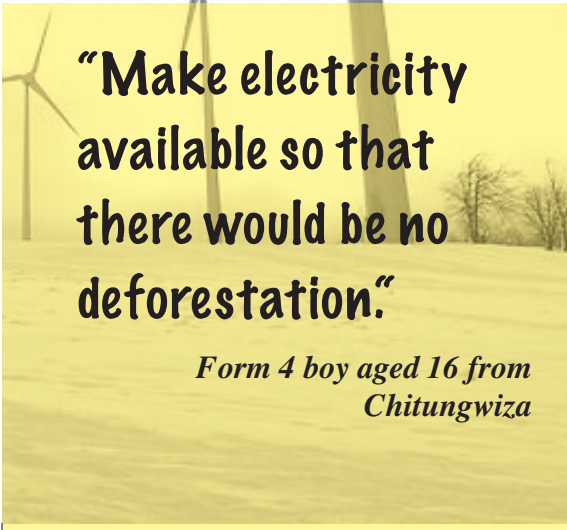
Introduce high
taxation to those
who produce
greenhouse gases.

*A Form 6 boy aged 18 from
Chimanimani*

**“Employ more scientists who know
much about the environment and see
what they can do.”**

Form 3 girl aged 15 from Gweru Urban

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**“Make electricity
available so that
there would be no
deforestation.”**

*Form 4 boy aged 16 from
Chitungwiza*

“Give people pipes for irrigation.”

A Form 4 girl aged 18 from Chimanimani









Institute of Environmental Studies, 2nd Floor, Computer Science Building,
University of Zimbabwe, PO Box MP 167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Telephone No.: +263 (0)4 302 603 Fax No.: +263 (0)4 332 853
E-mail address: secretary@ies.uz.ac.zw Website: www.ies.ac.zw