

Implementing the Global Goal on Adaptation for child-responsive climate action at COP31

Introduction

Children, defined as all persons below the age of 18, constitute nearly one-third of the global population, and a significantly higher proportion in many low and middle-income countries. They are uniquely susceptible to climate change impacts due to their distinct physiology, behavioural characteristics, developmental needs, and societal roles. While progress is being made to recognize distinct impacts on children across national climate policies, targeted responses remain systematically under-prioritized in climate finance and action.

The needs and experiences of children and youth often overlap, however both groups constitute distinct cohorts and should be specifically addressed as such. Children and youth are powerful agents of change, and with education and empowerment, can support effective and transformative climate action. The importance of embedding cross-cutting considerations within the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), including children, youth and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and disability, was underscored during COP30 and is reflected in the decisions as follows:

12/CMA.7 para 10 “recalls paragraph 10(c) of decision 3/CMA.4, paragraph 13 of decision 2/CMA.5 and paragraph 21 of decision 3/CMA.6 and emphasizes the importance of **cross-cutting considerations**, including by acknowledging **the contributions of children, youth, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, people of African descent and migrants to adaptation, and the importance of consideration of gender, human rights, intergenerational equity and social justice, and participatory and fully transparent approaches...**”

12/CMA.7 Annex para 1 and 1(a) note that “Adaptation is context-specific, and capturing progress in adaptation in a comprehensive manner requires contextual information, which may be reflected through the disaggregation of indicators, as appropriate... Indicators may be disaggregated, as appropriate, by: (a) Social categories, which may include demographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as vulnerability, **gender, age, disability**, race, socioeconomic status, status as Indigenous Peoples, status as migrants, as well as **children and young people...**”

The UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience provides a particularly relevant framework for advancing child-responsive adaptation, as children's health, development and well-being are closely linked to its thematic targets, notably those addressing water and sanitation, food and nutrition, health, ecosystems, and infrastructure and human settlements. Achieving these targets therefore requires adaptation efforts that explicitly consider and respond to children's specific needs and vulnerabilities across these interconnected areas.

Following the adoption of the Baku Adaptation Roadmap (BAR) and Belém Addis Vision (BAV) to support the implementation of the GGA, COP31 arrives at a critical junction. These workstreams provide an important platform to strengthen adaptation ambition and accountability, but further clarity is urgently needed on roles, responsibilities, and mandates for taking this work forward, especially on how it will deliver outcomes for children and young people globally.

Targeted measures that recognize and address their specific needs and rights are required to ensure that as the process advances, it upholds previously agreed commitments on child rights and established principles of intergenerational equity and inclusion. **Therefore, at COP31, Parties should take steps to:**

- Establish mechanisms to **support the development of national targets aligned with the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience and the integration of the Belém Adaptation Indicators into national monitoring systems,**

ensuring both advance child-responsive adaptation. Considerable work is required to support the implementation of the GGA and its processes, especially relating to children and child-critical social services.

- Reinforce the mandate of **data disaggregation by age, gender, and disability, and strengthen the inclusion of cross-cutting considerations** in the BAR and BAV processes, to track whether adaptation action and finance is reaching children and youth, in particular girls and those with disabilities.
- **Operationalize the COP30 adaptation finance goal** for country-led implementation of the GGA. This should include support to address the **specific vulnerabilities of children** and other groups in vulnerable situations, consistent with the New Collective Quantified Goal's specific recognition of children and its call for finance to support achievement of the UAE Framework targets (Decision [1/CMA.6](#), paras 26 and 18).
- Provide clarity on the **composition, nature and responsibilities of the technical taskforce** (Decision 12/CMA.7 paras 23-25), including membership, alignment with Constituted Body mandates, and scope of work; **ensuring cross-cutting considerations are embedded throughout.**
- Establish the **nature of the BAV policy alignment process**, including aligning the GGA with UNFCCC processes, work done by international organizations, national level action, and work of the technical taskforce.
- Establish a **clear and explicit mandate for international organizations, including custodian agencies of indicators under existing global monitoring frameworks** that directly correspond to the Belém Adaptation Indicators, including their systematic engagement in BAV.

Recommendations on the operationalization and alignment of targets and indicators:

- Ensure that sectoral adaptation efforts are guided by the targets and cross-cutting considerations of the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, including its child- and gender-responsive, participatory and inclusive dimensions, and supported by disaggregated data collected under the Belém Adaptation Indicators.
- Strengthen alignment between UAE Framework targets and the Belém Adaptation Indicators, including by identifying gaps in the indicator set and options to address them, to ensure that all components of the UAE Framework targets can be meaningfully tracked.
- Clarify if, and how, Parties with existing national policies, indicators and MEL systems aligned with the UAE Framework targets can use these to advance GGA follow-up processes, even where they do not use the exact language of the Belém Adaptation Indicators.

National planning processes, particularly in sectors critical to children and young people's wellbeing such as water and sanitation, health (physical and mental), education, nutrition, social protection and child protection, should be aligned with the UAE Framework targets and include specific measures to address the impacts of climate change on children and young people. However, **further work is needed to clarify practical implementation pathways for Parties to deliver the UAE Framework targets** across sectors, levels of government and partner systems, particularly for those most in need. This includes identifying the capacities, institutions, delivery mechanisms and financing required to translate targets into operational programmes, particularly in the systems that children and youth depend on for their survival, development, and wellbeing.

It is also important to identify **sectoral and cross-cutting gaps** in the Belém Adaptation Indicators and UAE Framework targets that are critical for adaptation efforts, **including education and human mobility**, and to consider how these relate to national planning priorities already identified in NAPs, NDCs and sector strategies. In the case of education, this includes recognizing both the need to strengthen the climate resilience and continuity of education services and the role of education in building adaptive capacities among children and young people.

Parties can build on experience integrating the UAE Framework targets into national adaptation planning, reporting, available data systems and national MEL frameworks, to selectively test indicators based on national readiness and

adaptation priorities; mapping existing national indicators and datasets against the Belém Adaptation Indicators; and strengthening alignment of NDCs, NAPs, and other climate policies with the UAE Framework targets. At COP31, Parties should clarify how progress towards the thematic and dimensional targets can be recognized, especially where such progress is not yet captured by the Belém Adaptation Indicators.

Recommendations on data disaggregation and cross-cutting considerations:

- Ensure a dedicated focus on the incorporation of cross-cutting considerations into the GGA follow up processes, including through the disaggregation of indicators where possible by age, gender, and disability, among other demographic and social characteristics (12/CMA.7 Annex para 1(a)).
- Strengthen the integration of child-responsive data and analysis into national climate impact, vulnerability and risk assessments (2/CMA.5 para 10(a)), ensuring that findings inform adaptation planning and prioritization (2/CMA.5 para 10(b)) across thematic sectors, particularly those delivering essential services for children.

Children, particularly those under the age of 5, are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and face heightened risks of physical harm compared to adults; this compounds with intersecting characteristics such as gender, disability, poverty, migration status, etc. Children and young people are also powerful agents of change, and 12/CMA.7 para 10 emphasizes the importance of their contributions. Robust data on the differentiated risks, vulnerabilities, and impacts of climate change on children and youth, including gender, age and disability considerations, is essential for tracking inclusive adaptation and **ensuring that GGA implementation responds to one of the largest and most vulnerable cohorts of the global population.**

Beyond their importance for monitoring and reporting, disaggregated data and child-specific information are essential at the earliest stages of the adaptation planning cycle. Climate impact, vulnerability and risk assessments, as reflected in Target 10a of the UAE Framework, provide a critical entry point for identifying the differentiated exposure, vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of children, including across age groups, gender, disability and socioeconomic circumstances. This evidence should inform the identification and prioritization of adaptation needs under Target 10b and guide the design and implementation of adaptation interventions across the thematic targets, particularly in essential services such as water and sanitation, health, nutrition, education, and protection. Strengthening this connection would help ensure that children's adaptation needs are systematically addressed from the outset, rather than considered only through subsequent monitoring and reporting.

However, significant technical and capacity building work is required to support the progressive implementation and monitoring of the full ambition of the UAE Framework targets and the Belém Adaptation Indicators. The current indicator set does not yet adequately capture the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children across the thematic targets. This is particularly important recalling 3/CMA.6, para 21 (f), which calls for “indicators that reflect the **unique vulnerabilities of children to climate change** impacts across the thematic targets and, potentially, **cross-cutting indicators related to education and the health of children and young people.**” Without proper disaggregation and child-sensitive methodological guidance, this will not be possible. Importantly, disaggregation of existing indicators, while essential, may not be sufficient to capture the specific adaptation needs and resilience outcomes of children. Further methodological work should therefore also consider whether complementary child-responsive indicators are needed, particularly to assess the resilience and continuity of essential services on which children depend.

Parties have expressed concern over the technical feasibility of collecting and reporting disaggregated data. Understanding the technicalities behind data disaggregation will ensure smoother operationalization of the indicators – and, more broadly, successful adaptation interventions that appropriately consider the needs and capabilities of vulnerable groups.

Including statistical and monitoring professionals in the BAV process with a focus on disaggregation could support exchange on best practice, standardization of data collection and treatment, and approaches to data quality and comparability.

This could include developing plans for Parties to incorporate data disaggregated by age, gender, disability and other relevant categories when testing the Belém Adaptation Indicators, and when integrating the UAE Framework targets and Belém Adaptation Indicators into national systems for planning, monitoring, and reporting processes (12/CMA.7 paras 11-12). Such work should help ensure that the unique vulnerabilities and needs of children and young people are reflected across GGA follow-up processes.

Recommendations on adaptation finance and means of implementation:

- Use the BAR and BAV to connect the goal of tripling adaptation finance by 2035 with implementation of the UAE Framework and the Belém Adaptation Indicators.
- Clarify how the invitation to multilateral climate funds (MCFs) (Decision 12/CMA.7, paras 17-19) can support delivery of UAE Framework targets, including gender-responsive, child-responsive, and inclusive adaptation finance.
- Build on the NCQG decision's specific commitments on children and on finance for the UAE Framework targets to strengthen support for child-responsive adaptation, including in child-critical social services (1/CMA.6, paras 18, 26). This should include supporting countries to translate identified climate risks and vulnerabilities affecting children into costed adaptation priorities and investment proposals, particularly for climate-resilient essential social services.

The direct invitation to the GEF, the GCF and the Adaptation Fund provides an important opportunity to identify concrete linkages between the implementation of the UAE Framework and access to climate finance. Parties can use the BAR and BAV to clarify the relationship between means of implementation (MOI) indicators, the invitation to MCFs, the tripling of adaptation finance, and the NCQG. Understanding how funds intend to respond to this invitation, and how this will be communicated to Parties, will also be important.

Parties may wish to consider whether updated or supplemental guidance to MCFs could help strengthen alignment with the UAE Framework, while avoiding the creation of additional access burdens for developing countries. Overall, the adaptation finance and MOI discussion should be framed not only as a question of volume, but also of quality, accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of those most affected. This includes ensuring that finance for GGA implementation reaches the social sectors and frontline systems that are essential for protecting children and young people's rights, wellbeing and resilience.

Recommendations on the Belém-Addis Vision

The BAV presents an important opportunity to strengthen coherence across the UNFCCC adaptation architecture and support alignment between global frameworks, national planning processes and country priorities. Rather than creating a new framework, the BAV can clarify how existing UNFCCC processes and workstreams contribute to implementation of the GGA, including the Baku Adaptation Roadmap. With the conclusion of the BAV set for COP32, effective policy alignment and streamlining existing work and mandates is even more critical.

Specific recommendations for the policy alignment process include:

- Clearly define the scope and expected outputs of the BAV policy alignment process, including what is meant by 'alignment', which actors should be involved, and which modalities will be used.
- Decide how global GGA follow-up processes can connect with national priorities and existing planning/reporting instruments, including NDCs 3.0, NAPs, and BTRs, particularly where these were developed or submitted prior to adoption of the Belém Adaptation Indicators.

- Identify capacity needs and support requirements, particularly for developing countries, LDCs and SIDS, to strengthen data systems, technical reporting, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and the use of indicators in national adaptation planning and implementation, including disaggregation.

The actors involved will depend on the specific element of the alignment process and should be clarified in relation to the BAV taskforce. To ensure coherence with existing **UNFCCC processes**, Parties could draw on representatives of relevant constituted bodies (CBs) to map their mandates and work programmes against GGA-related mandates and identify areas of complementarity or duplication. For alignment with **global frameworks** such as the SDGs and Sendai Framework, coordination with UN agencies and other custodian organizations responsible for data collection may be useful. To connect the GGA with **national and subnational processes**, National Statistic Offices, local practitioners, technical experts and institutions responsible for NDCs, NAPs, and BTRs will be important. Parties can further contribute by mapping their capacity for technical data collection, systems development, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), etc. at the national level. This should also include **meaningful engagement of children and young people throughout the whole process**, rather than one-off touchpoints to include their contributions to climate action as a component of GGA implementation, in line with 12/CMA.7 para 10.

The policy alignment process should also consider how the Belém Adaptation Indicators relate to national and subnational policies. Many countries developed or submitted NDCs 3.0 before the adoption of the indicators, while many NAPs have been prepared in line with the thematic and dimensional targets of the UAE Framework (2/CMA.5 paras 9 and 10) rather than the formal indicator set. It will therefore be important to clarify how existing national reporting can be drawn upon. This could include exploring the use of proxy indicators, mapping existing national MEL frameworks against the indicators, and identifying where additional technical support is needed.

Specific recommendations for the technical taskforce include:

- Ensure that the technical taskforce includes relevant CBs, international organizations and agencies, technical experts, local practitioners, and statistical experts, including representatives of National Statistic Offices, in line with Decision 12/CMA.7. Specifically, drawing on the established work and expertise of custodian agencies for international frameworks could help streamline technical work, especially where Belém Adaptation Indicators align with existing global indicators, including the SDGs, Sendai Framework and Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Define the main function of the taskforce as the development of methodologies, data standards and metadata to enable the operationalization of the Belém Adaptation Indicators, including assessment of the relevance and feasibility of data disaggregation.
- Draw, where appropriate, on knowledge products from technical agenciesⁱ and the expert group convened under the UAE-Belém work programme on indicators, including work on indicator readiness, methodologies, metadata, data sources and data availability.
- Establish modalities to ensure regular touchpoints between the technical taskforce, negotiators, and stakeholders, and meaningful consideration of feedback and reviews from stakeholders within the work of the technical taskforce, to build trust in the process, maintain transparency and ensure that outputs will be considered for adoption at COP32.

A central function of the BAV should be to assess whether the Belém Adaptation Indicators can collect the information needed to understand adaptation progress globally and assess whether or not the GGA is being achieved. Where weaknesses or gaps are identified, the BAV could provide a process for Parties to consider how these should be addressed, as well as identifying how to build the technical capacity, especially in developing countries, LDCs, and SIDS. Greater clarity is also needed on timelines, including whether information submitted on the indicators can meaningfully inform the GST.

The composition of the technical taskforce could include CBs and international organizations, in line with 12/CMA.7 paras 23-25. However, Parties could also consider including statistical experts, National Statistical Offices, and technical practitioners with experience in data systems, monitoring, evaluation and learning. It will be critical to leverage existing processes wherever possible, including by involving custodian agencies for international frameworks. This can help accelerate delivery, reduce duplication, strengthen national ownership, and ensure that adaptation action achieves both resilience and development outcomes for children and youth. Clarifying roles of agencies and other stakeholders is critical, including through formal submissions to the process.

Significant technical work is needed on methodologies, metadata, data collection, disaggregation, reporting and aggregation for the indicators. This includes clarifying and defining common terms across the indicators, including “as an outcome of adaptation actions,” “vulnerable groups” or “population vulnerable to climate change,” “at risk,” and others. Parties may also wish to consider the use of proxy indicators to support reporting against Belém Adaptation Indicators, particularly where these align with the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience. This could build on the 2024-2026 expert group’s [proposed list of indicators](#), including suggested metadata sources and data availability through existing reporting frameworks and/or data sources.

A key design consideration will be the establishment of feedback channels between the taskforce, negotiators, and other stakeholders, including children, young people, and their communities. Regular political-technical touchpoints would allow experts to respond to Party feedback while preserving the scientific and technical integrity of the process, and civil society engagement provides valuable insights and maintains trust. Learning from countries that are piloting or mapping the indicators would also strengthen the work of the taskforce and a structured feedback mechanism should be established for this purpose. Reflecting on the UAE-Belém Work Programme, regular engagement between political and technical actors could help ensure that outputs of the technical work have both the scientific integrity and political legitimacy required for successful consideration and intended adoption at COP32.

In addition to developing methodologies, data standards and metadata, the task force should make recommendations on:

- Strengthening national statistical capacity, including for data disaggregation;
- Supporting peer-to-peer learning and review;
- The specific incorporation of cross-cutting considerations; and
- Establishing mechanisms and tools for compilation, validation and aggregation of data at local, regional and global levels, in line with Decision 3/CMA.6 para 11, ensuring the participation of local communities and vulnerable groups in the collection and review of this data, to avoid ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches.

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ⁱ The UN system is collaborating to develop technical materials to support the operationalization of the Belém Adaptation Indicators. Kindly reference the below for additional details:

- ILO, FAO, UNICEF (2026). [Measuring Adaptive Social Protection for All Under the Global Goal on Adaptation: Operationalising Belém Adaptation Indicators 8\(b\) and \(c\) under Target 9\(f\)](#)
- UN Water (2026). [Operationalizing the Belém Adaptation Indicators on Water and Sanitation](#)