



## **SBC contributions to the Planetary Crisis**

### **Using people-centred strategies and insights to protect the planet and build a better tomorrow**

The global pathways to mitigate and adapt to the planetary crisis fall under the following main categories:

1. Making urgent and deep cuts in emissions to reach net zero as quickly as possible (situation where all greenhouse gases are emitted and absorbed in similar proportions) - this means

decarbonising economies and lives across the world, focusing on carbon-heavy activities and main contributing populations first.

2. Preserving and restoring natural capital and ecosystems - this includes all actions aimed at protecting nature and reversing some of the damage done to date.
3. Undertaking rapid adaptation to the inevitable impacts of Climate Change and environmental degradation and strengthening resilience of systems and communities affected.

To achieve such ambitious objectives, both people themselves and the systems that rule and influence their lives need to change.

People, as citizens and consumers, need to reach a level of ownership, understanding and inspiration such that change is widely desirable and demanded. This is key because the **above solutions call for new ways of living**, moving around, buying, eating, using energy, and fulfilling needs and desires. Programs to support the adoption of low-carbon technologies, evolve eating habits towards more plantbased diets, reduce fuel-dependent movements, improve housing and, influence overall consumption and waste patterns can have a significant impact on global land availability, greenhouse gases and biodiversity. Changes in lifestyles can bring down global emissions up to about 70% by 2050 (IPCC 6th assessment).

But **structural change is the critical foundation to encourage these lifestyle changes** and facilitate new behaviours. The core of the problem lies within larger systems, including the macro-economic system. For example, it is hard to live without a car in a world designed for cars. Or to avoid using plastic when plastic is everywhere around us, in every store and around every product. These changes require new government rules to create contexts more favourable to new practices. People won't be protected from consumerist marketing if we leave it to the private sector to self-regulate. And beyond this, individuals also have very limited power to change the way electricity is generated in a country, or what is legal for companies to sell.

**These systemic problems can only be tackled through political action and active public planning:** formulating new pro-Earth policies, developing and implementing international, regional, national and local action plans, with associated regulations and incentives. Public decision makers hold the keys to structural change, and in turn individual ones. Policies need to be created to tax, regulate, redistribute, prohibit or incentivise different decisions and activities in critical sectors of the economy. In turn, the magnitude of changes and possible impacts (including on inequities) requires consultation processes, participatory governance structures and mechanisms for civil society and underserved communities to meaningfully contribute to decisions. It also requires local collective action as part of broader social movements as expanding citizen support will enable political action and, at the end of the day, underpin the systemic change.

UNICEF, through its [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#) is committed to helping governments, communities and individuals make the changes that are necessary to protect the planet and protect the rights of children to a clean, healthy, safe and sustainable environment. Social and Behaviour Change approaches offer critical contributions to UNICEF's SCAP objectives, and the overall planetary crisis agenda, both to influence individual and systemic change. SBC contributions need to be defined nationally, based on context-specific challenges. Below is a list of possible contributions, framed alongside 4 pillars:

1. [Social and behavioural evidence generation](#)
2. [Generating public support for transformative change](#)

3. [Collective action: helping citizens value their influence from local plans to influencing International policy](#)
4. [Individual actions at scale: Behaviour Change and supportive social environment](#)

## 1. Social and Behavioural Evidence Generation

From primary behavioural studies to secondary analysis of existing evidence, insights into people's decision-making processes regarding climate and environment-related practices will help develop policies, services and interventions with higher impact. UNICEF can help governments design more effective change programmes by advocating for and technically supporting the inclusion of social and behavioural data into national strategies and systems. Quality evidence is critical to understand children, parents and their communities, the choices they make, the future they desire, the barriers to change they face, and develop relevant and efficient solutions. This includes keeping the pulse on public opinion, conducting formative research on drivers of environment-related behaviours for doers and non-doers alike, and performing scientific monitoring on behavioural science advances for climate.

Effective climate action also relies on our ability to come up with new technological solutions that are adopted and used on a massive scale. SBC specialists can help collect behavioural insights and conduct user-centric designs of new sociotechnical solutions, increasing their likelihood of adoption. Across any evidence generation effort, data sampling and disaggregation will be particularly crucial given that upper-middle- and high-income countries, as well as wealthy and high-consuming social groups across all countries, overwhelmingly contribute to carbon emissions. But also, because underserved communities are disproportionately and unfairly impacted by the crises, and will be struggling to engage in lifestyle shifts at scale: infrastructures and income have a huge bearing on people's ability to modify their behaviours (e.g., rich people have more control over their choices regarding diets).

In line with UNICEF's [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#) interventions, SBC can help:

- Suggest population segmentation for data collection to later craft more realistic solutions (based on burden / contributions, and differing needs and possibilities of adaptation) and come up with engaging narratives that speak to the interests and motivations of specific audiences, including children and young people
- Support the collection and analysis of social and behavioural insights in Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLACs) and sub-national Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI).
- Help conduct systems analysis to map and identify social, structural and environmental constraints and incentives.
- Leverage online and offline social listening mechanisms to capture, monitor and visualise public opinion trends, develop an accurate and comprehensive understanding of community perspectives, concerns and questions.
- Develop and deploy standardised tools and systems to collect time-series of climate-relevant behavioural insights across the countries (ref. CRAs/BeSD) - e.g., tracking of drivers of behaviours with significant environmental impact or adoption of new practices.
- Support primary and secondary research on the main population-level behaviours impacting the crisis, their social and cognitive determinants, and what motivates and prevents shifts in lifestyles including among children, their caregivers and communities.

- Support participatory action research, including for local innovation and usercentric solutions design.
- Develop accessible community monitoring systems, feedback and accountability mechanisms. Document and scale up good practices and share insights with partner organisations.
- Support joint evidence generation with and partake in peer-to-peer exchanges between UNICEF and international, national and local NGOs.

## 2. Generating Public Support for Transformative Change

How supportive a social environment is of individual change will sometimes condition the very possibility of change. If widespread shifts in dominant environment-related practices and consumption patterns are urgently needed, shifts in social norms may be required. Expectations (social pressure) and social proof (following the crowd) largely guide what people decide to do - e.g., recent research highlights that the strongest unique predictor of intention to take climate action is whether a person believes that other people are already taking such action. Similarly, duty bearers, including lawmakers, are strongly influenced by public opinion and social pressure: decision makers want to stay in power and won't do what overly threatens their status. Overall, influencing public opinion and expectations is key and constitutes one of the strongest levers for political action. Global and local civil societies need to demand and support the change towards more sustainable policies, economic models and lifestyles. Data and science-driven campaigning and community engagement can help create such a favourable public discourse and social environment.

In line with UNICEF's [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#) interventions, SBC can help:

- Identify and promote efficient communication and community engagement approaches to influence public opinion including approaches aimed at children and their caregivers.
- Raise awareness, publicise accurate evidence about causes of the crisis and possible mitigation measures, promote viable solutions, tell stories of hope and success.
- Leverage behavioural science to develop more efficient campaigns by factoring in climate-specific cognitive challenges.
- Monitor, analyse and limit the spread of misinformation and disinformation especially content directed at children.
- Counter greenwashing by equipping citizens and consumers with ways of detecting marketing / political manipulation and fake solutions promoted to continue business as usual, focusing in particular on products and services directed towards children.
- Use storytelling, entertainment and social marketing to positively shift the climate narrative and create a desire for something better, framing change as progress instead of sacrifice to promote environmentally sustainable lifestyles.
- Leverage public-private partnerships and the large penetration of private entertainment and big advertising industries to change the way environmental issues are depicted and communicated, especially companies marketing towards children.
- Engage with faith leaders, faith-based organisations and communities as custodians of far-reaching, value-based perspectives on environmental sustainability.
- Starting in the classroom, change norms and perceptions around social status and achievement (especially consumerism), shifting climate-related expectations, and addressing the deep-rooted ideas over-consumption originates from (including advertising and the

media's role in the normalisation and idealisation of carbon-heavy behaviours).

- Leverage SBC approaches to support MHPSS programmes addressing climate anxiety and stigma especially for children and young people.
- Contribute to greening UNICEF by supporting internal awareness raising and capacity building.

### **3. Collective action: helping citizens value their influence from local plans to influencing International policy**

The need to adapt to current and upcoming shocks created by the planetary crisis dramatically calls for more resilient public systems, and the strengthening of social contracts - which are unfortunately deteriorating in many parts of the world. Working through governance processes to increase trust and social cohesion is critical for both adaptation and mitigation. Across sectors, trust in authorities and service providers will stem from the perception of their commitment to inclusiveness and equity, their ability to act in society's best interest, and an overall higher satisfaction with their performance. This fully relies on an improved relationship and active partnership between Rights Holders and Duty Bearers, which will create the foundation of system resilience and their capacity to adapt to future shocks. The path to such improvements requires empowering communities and reinforcing community engagement mechanisms for participatory governance and social accountability, creating and strengthening platforms for children, young people and at-risk or crisis-affected populations to engage in participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and feedback from the upstream policy level to the delivery of social services and provisions - to ultimately make more collective and better decisions. This is critical to support the adoption of more environmentally sustainable behaviours by children, their families, and communities. In turn, it is a precondition to create confidence and empower decision makers to make bold changes, especially to adopt policies that could be misunderstood or seen as controversial if not properly debated and supported - e.g., regulating marketing and advertising for carbon-heavy and polluting consumer goods, setting default options on food across private and public sectors cafeterias, in schools, government institutions, etc. Strengthening UNICEF's collaboration with international, national and local NGOs in this area will bolster these efforts.

In line with UNICEF's [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#) interventions, SBC can help:

- Open spaces for dialogue with civil society organisations and spark public debate on important climate-related societal questions. Include children, young people and youth-led organisations in these discussions.
- Support the establishment of frameworks and mechanisms for community advocacy, public participation in decision-making, feedback from and accountability to citizens, especially children and their caregivers.
- Organise national and local consultation mechanisms to discuss prioritisation and trade-offs, make decisions transparently, increase their legitimacy, and get civil society to empower policy makers.
- Support the participation of populations most negatively impacted by new pro-Earth policies to help craft transition and compensation plans.
- Leverage a series of SBC approaches to develop more people-centred systems: establishment of expert behavioural units for policy advice; use of human-centred design to craft climate-adapted services that are accessible, usable and valuable; institutionalisation of social

listening mechanisms in information systems; integration of community engagement standards in pre- and in-service trainings for the social workforce; etc.

- Support the development of socially and behaviourally-informed public policies that enable parents and communities to reduce emissions and protect their environment.
- Work with communities to reframe “growth” and national progress indicators in terms of better food, better air to breathe, longer life expectancy in good health, etc.

#### 4. Individual actions at scale: Behaviour Change and supportive social environment

Social change is a critical avenue to tackle the planetary crisis considering that the incentives, assets (including banks, financing mechanisms and loans), and business models of most institutions (public and private) make them deeply reliant on fossil fuels - hence difficult to change. Large scale results will be driven by powerful social transformations. The success of any public or private climate-related effort will rely on the existence of both localised and large-scale movements demanding and organising sustainable change.

At the local level, chances of success for climate adaptation also increase with social capital and communities’ capacity to jointly recognise and collectively solve present and future problems. Supporting such dynamics relies on the strengthening of community systems, removing barriers preventing local stakeholders from working together, and actively supporting local groups, platforms and initiatives to strengthen social connections. This is the pathway to create the necessary self-efficacy and position people as central actors of risk reduction and crisis adaptation - developing resilience through collaboration. It is also a precondition for efficient collaboration with authorities and the participatory governance and social accountability processes described above. Finally, it supports individual level change and helps create contexts for children to live in families and communities where adults’ decisions and lifestyles minimise their impact on climate and environmental degradation and set more sustainable pathways for future generations. Children and adolescent participation are central throughout, as socialisation processes will set the foundation of future values, norms, and behaviours regarding the environment.

In line with UNICEF’s [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#) interventions, SBC can help:

- Catalyse civil society action and social movements by addressing challenges that hinder social mobilisation especially among children and young people, expanding the network of those who can join, supporting coalitions towards common environmental goals, and creating conspicuous and purposeful alignment with UNICEF’s actions.
- Design and support community-led programs, through which communities conduct their own appraisal and analysis of environmental challenges and engage in related action.
- Support ongoing local and community-driven change initiatives (including Green Rising). Increase the ability of the most underserved groups to participate in collective processes.
- Support youth empowerment, voices, participation and action in mitigation and adaptation.
- Support the adaptation and integration of environmentally-positive behavioural packages into existing interventions such as positive parenting, life-skills empowerment for young people, and early childhood development programmes.
- Support civil society advocacy to include environmental considerations within the education system and curriculum.
- Leverage private sector partnerships and Corporate Social Responsibility / ESG standards to

influence workers' behaviours as parents and youth.

- Strengthen collaboration, joint action and investments with NGOs in local initiatives to improve resilience to climate and conflict-related shocks and stresses.