



RESEARCH BRIEF

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ABSTRACT

Situation Analysis of Climate Change Knowledge among Children in Georgia

Save the Children

Background

At the 26th UN Climate Summit in 2021, the climate crisis was recognized as a children's rights crisis, as climate change poses a great threat to the health, education, development, survival and future of children and young people. Children have contributed the least to climate change and are at the same time most affected by it. It is therefore vital to increase access to environmental education for future generations, in particular by providing them with comprehensive and reliable information and knowledge on climate change. Without addressing the climate crisis head on, we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially for the most marginalized and vulnerable children and their families.

As the biggest independent child rights organization in the world, Save the Children (SC) has a unique role in working for the legitimacy and power of children's voices and their leadership in the climate movement. We as a global movement must empower and support children—especially the most vulnerable (marginalized) children who are disproportionately affected by climate change—to be part of the solution and influence the decisions made by world and local leaders that will affect their lives today and tomorrow.

Georgia is a lower-middle-income country located in the South Caucasus region, sharing land borders with Russia to the north, Turkey to the southwest, Armenia to the south and Azerbaijan to the east. It has highly diverse physical geography, and is comprised of mountains, plateaus, lowland plains, glaciers, wetlands, arid areas (semi-deserts), lakes, and rivers. Due to a combination of political, geographic, and social factors, Georgia is recognized as vulnerable to climate change impacts, ranked 40th out of 181 countries in the 2020 ND-GAIN Index.¹

The SC representative office in Georgia has embedded climate change issues in its new strategic priorities. To start with, in order to strengthen our advocacy initiatives with evidence-based recommendations, a situation analysis of climate change knowledge among children in Georgia has been planned and conducted. The situation analysis is based on the results of both quantitative and qualitative research.

- (1) For the quantitative research data, 1500 students aged 12-18 across the country were interviewed online. The survey was conducted in Tbilisi and 10 other regions of Georgia, both rural and urban, excluding the conflict zones. Most of the 1500 respondents surveyed were 12-year-olds (19.9%), 13-year-olds (18.2%) and 14-year-olds (19.5%), while a small fraction were 18-year-olds (1.7%). Most of the participants were boys (52.1%), and there were relatively fewer girls (47.9%). A significant percentage of students surveyed (91.3%) attend public schools and 8.7% attend private schools.
- (2) The qualitative research included 48 in-depth interviews with the following target groups: geography teachers, education and environment experts, students with special needs (hearing and sight impaired), ethnic minorities, and their teachers.

[The research report can be accessed here](#)

¹ The ND-GAIN Index ranks 181 countries using a score which calculates a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges, as well as their readiness to improve resilience. The more vulnerable a country is the lower their score, while the more ready a country is to improve its resilience the higher it will be. Norway has the highest score and is ranked 1st

Key Findings

Main Takeaway Points of the Quantitative Research

- The majority of students receive their first information on climate change at the middle level of education — *most of the students surveyed mentioned that they first heard about climate change in 7th grade (12-13 years old). There was no statistically significant difference by gender, region, or school type.*
- School subjects that include climate change content are mainly geography and biology — *There is no change in this trend by age, sex, region of residence, or school. As a result, students can name the key issues surrounding climate change and the human and natural factors causing climate change, as well as perceiving the consequences that climate change may have.*
- Students only partially agree that the school provides enough information about climate change — *students point out that schools do not hold climate change activities and politicians do not do much to protect the environment.*
- Students clearly state that they are interested in climate and environmental issues — *students aged 12-18 across the country positively assess the prospects of accessing more information on climate change. They note that information at this stage is mainly obtained from teachers, the internet and television, although it would also be desirable for them to receive additional information on a regular basis from school and non-school activities as well.*
- Students believe that personally they can do a lot to reduce environmental damage — *they note that they have a desire to make changes in their daily lives and habits and that children and young people can influence policies, too.*
- According to the survey, actions taken to protect the environment will not lead to ridicule or humiliation from peers.

Main Takeaway Points of the Qualitative Research

- There is no record of climate change education in the National Curriculum, although the topics of sustainable development and environment, which are covered, include the issue of climate change;
- The level of teaching of environmental issues in schools today does not meet modern challenges. Insufficient attention is paid to environmental issues, including climate change, in schools. Environmental issues in textbooks (geography, biology, civics) are uninformative. In general, there is no unified approach to teaching environmental issues.
- The textbook chosen by the school determines the level and quality of teaching climate change issues as the authors of school textbooks review climate change issues inconsistently. Therefore, depending on the textbooks selected by a specific school, students may have varying degrees of knowledge of climate change issues, which puts them in unequal positions.
 - There are a number of barriers and challenges that hinder the proper conduct of teaching on this subject: (a) internet access for teachers and students, both in school and out of school;

- (b) teachers' lack of knowledge of use of modern technologies, especially in the regions; (c) inaccessibility of up-to-date materials and support materials in the Georgian language as well as ethnic minority languages; (d) difficulty of obtaining reliable information on the internet with lack of internet access; (e) lack of interest on the part of teachers and students in climate change and environmental issues; (f) lack of experience in teaching interdisciplinary subjects; and (g) teachers' lack of knowledge and awareness of environmental and climate change issues
- Even though learning materials are adapted for sensory impaired students according to their needs, there are no additional teaching materials available to them.
 - NGOs, in cooperation with schools, carry out environmental awareness-raising measures and various activities in which schoolchildren participate with joy and interest, however their efforts are not sufficient and sustainable and do not cover all schools across the country.
 - Non-formal education plays an important role in gaining knowledge about climate change. The existing experience shows that students learn much more in practice by engaging in various projects than in school lessons.
 - Students are motivated to learn more about climate change and environmental issues, which is demonstrated by their high rates of participation in climate change information meetings and environmental camps, however non-formal education is not financially supported by the government;
 - The National Curriculum for the Secondary Level (grades 10-12) has been updated. Its introduction has already begun and will be completed by 2024. Under the updated plan, teaching climate change issues is believed to be sufficiently addressed.
 - The coverage of environmental issues, including climate change issues, on social media and in mass media is not favorable either. Coverage is given to the issue in general, but in-depth contemplation and discussion on this issue does not take place as the issue of climate change is not a priority for either the state or the general public.
 - Although the Georgian government has declared a commitment to constant coordination between various agencies regarding climate change teaching issues, this study demonstrates the lack of coordination and agreement between environmental and education experts.

Conclusion

Climate change is briefly mentioned in the National Curriculum but it is not a priority topic for teaching and learning. More time and attention should be paid to teaching climate change issues within the environmental context, both during lessons and extracurricular school activities **in the interests of future generations**. From 2024 onwards, climate change issues will be taught more broadly and deeply to secondary level school students as new textbooks are developed that focus on climate change. **Teaching and learning climate change at the primary level (grades 1-6) still remains a challenge.**

There is very little time and few resources devoted to teaching environmental issues in school. The need to improve textbooks, train teachers, and develop supporting literature should be on the agenda. The establishment of a unified approach to the widespread introduction of environmental education should be decided at the state level. Experts believe that it is not enough to amend curricula and textbooks to improve climate change teaching, but it is also necessary to deepen teachers' knowledge of climate change and develop other skills they need, as well as improve access to the internet and visual aids, especially in the regions.

Improving formal education on climate change is important, but no less important is enabling non-formal education for students. Students' involvement and participation in environmental activities and environmental projects in general is a very effective way to raise awareness, but not all schools in Georgia participate equally in these projects. The number of such projects is not favourable either. As for activities carried out by schools, both inside and outside the school, they are not systematic. TV coverage around this issue is quite rare.

School textbooks covering climate change are adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups, but relevant supporting materials are quite scarce and do not satisfy needs.

Accordingly, the majority of the 1500 respondents have very general information and knowledge about climate change and had never heard of it before age 12 or 13. The older a student is, the greater the interest in environment-related content and desire to receive information about climate change is. Almost every third student is interested in the effects and expected consequences of climate change in another country, the expected results in Georgia, and the mitigation measures that governments are implementing in different countries. Students are mostly willing to get information and knowledge on climate change issues in school, but in their opinion no less important are participating in non-school activities and access to climate change-oriented computer and mobile telephone games.

Recommendations

The research findings suggest that the government, education policy-makers, and education and environmental stakeholders need to further commit to education for climate change and undertake the following actions:

- Precise emphasis should be given to environmental themes in education, with a particular need to expand integration of climate change issues in various school subjects and across all education levels, especially in preschool and primary education.
- Climate change learning should be integrated across the curriculum and school textbooks, with teaching guidance that goes beyond knowing the subject and encourages action-oriented learning and participation;
- Environmental and climate change teaching and learning content which is user-friendly and tailored to different age groups should be developed and distributed;
- All climate change textbooks and additional teaching and learning materials should be translated into ethnic minority languages and adapted for special education children's needs;
- All schools' administrations and teachers should be provided with training on global trends in environmental and climate change education and suggested actions on a school level; training modules should be elaborated and cover all teaching and action topics as well as computer literacy and information gathering tools.
- Promoting and teaching climate change issues should go beyond teaching in schools. Non-formal education that aims to engage students socially and emotionally and is children's preferred form of environmental learning and actions should be equally supported by NGOs and the government;
- International (INGOs and agencies), national (LEPL Environmental Information and Education Centre of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and Ministry of Education and Science), and intergovernmental environmental and educational actors should better collaborate to raise ambitions and advocate action through regulations, policies, programmes, and events.