



OUTCOME PAPER

RAISING A GENERATION OF GREEN LEADERS

Student Climate Action Champions (SCAC)

2021 - 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STUDENT CLIMATE ACTION CHAMPIONS (SCAC)

WHAT? A Child-Led Climate Leadership Movement

The Student Climate Action Champions (SCAC) is a structured, child-led climate leadership initiative anchored within CEFRESA's *Children Environmental Stewardship Programme*. Launched in 2021 in Mombasa, SCAC empowers children aged 9-17 years to become climate advocates, environmental stewards, and contributors to the green agenda. It shifts children from passive recipients of environmental harm to informed actors influencing policy, accountability, and community-driven climate solutions.

HOW? A Model that Builds Agency, Voice & Influence

SCAC delivers impact through a multi-level, strategically layered approach:

- ▶ **School-Based Climate Clubs**
Peer learning, climate campaigns, and whole-school mobilization
- ▶ **Community Outreach & Intergenerational Dialogues**
Children influence households, markets, and faith spaces.
- ▶ **Policy & Governance Engagement**
Structured platforms connecting children with county, national, and regional decision-makers.
- ▶ **Advocacy Tools**
Manifestos, letters to ministries, placard campaigns, video testimonies, and public forums.
- ▶ **Capacity Strengthening**
Training in climate literacy, advocacy, public speaking, and civic processes.

This model ensures children *speak for themselves*, influence decisions *about themselves*, and shape climate solutions *for their today and future*.

WHO? The Champions Behind the Movement

- ▶ **Primary actors**
Children aged 9-17 years from public and private schools across Mombasa.
- ▶ **Secondary actors**
Teachers, parents, school leaders, community champions.
- ▶ **Strategic partners**
County Government, national ministries, Environment & Land Court Users Committee, climate networks, regional partners, and Media.
- ▶ **Facilitator**
CEFRESA, providing coordination, training, technical support, governance linkages, and safeguarding.

Children lead the movement; adults enable, support, and protect their participation.

WHERE? Rooted in Mombasa, Influencing Beyond

SCAC began at Light Academy International School and expanded across multiple schools and communities. Its influence now spans:

- ▶ **County level**
Shaping political debates, school practices, and community environmental actions.
- ▶ **National level**
Engagements with ministries, judiciary actors, and national climate processes.
- ▶ **Regional level**
Contribution of children's consolidated voices to the **2023 Africa Climate Summit (Nairobi)**.

- ▶ **Global level**
Inclusion of child perspectives in Kenya's preparations toward **COP29 (Azerbaijan, 2024)**.

SCAC is now recognized as a flagship model with replicability potential across Kenya and the wider region.

WHEN? A Four-Year Journey of Growth (2021-2024)

2021 - SCAC launch + waste management and dumpsite advocacy

2022 - Generation Restoration: Children's Green Agenda Priorities for Mombasa Manifesto + political interface + meeting with Environment & Land Court Users Committee

2023 - National policy monitoring (4K Clubs) + child consultations for the Africa Climate Summit

2024 - COP29 voice consolidation + child-centered advocacy poem on the El Niño impacts on Children in Kenya.

Each year, they strengthened legitimacy, visibility, and accountability.

BY WHOM? The Institutional Backbone

CEFRESA - Centre for Resilience and Sustainable Africa

With a rights-based, community-rooted approach, CEFRESA provides:

- ▶ Programme design & coordination
- ▶ Training, mentorship & technical support
- ▶ Governance and policy linkages
- ▶ Safeguarding and child protection structures
- ▶ Monitoring, learning, and documentation

CEFRESA ensures SCAC remains principled, child-led, safe, and effective.

IMPACT What SCAC Has Achieved

SCAC is an evidence-based strategy that has generated measurable and systemic shifts in how climate action is understood and delivered in Mombasa. The initiative demonstrates that meaningful child participation strengthens governance accountability, deepens climate literacy, and accelerates community-level resilience.

Key achievements include:

- ▶ Influencing political debates and county environmental priorities.
- ▶ Contributing child perspectives toward Kenya's COP29 submissions.
- ▶ Elevating Mombasa children into regional climate dialogues (Africa Climate Summit 2023).
- ▶ Advancing environmental stewardship and behaviour change across schools and households.
- ▶ Providing a scalable, rights-based, cost-effective model for embedding child leadership in climate and green-governance frameworks.

SCAC proves that when children are empowered with voice, platforms, and protection, they shape strong, just, and sustainable climate futures.

ABOUT CEFRESA

The Centre for Resilience and Sustainable Africa (CEFRESA) has established itself as a leading catalyst for child-centered climate action and environmental governance in Mombasa and the wider coastal region. Rooted in community-driven approaches and rights-based programming, CEFRESA champions the inclusion of marginalized and indigenous voices, particularly children, young people, and women, within climate decision-making processes that shape their present realities and prospects.

Through strategic programmes, school partnerships, and policy engagement, CEFRESA has created pathways that elevate children from passive participants to meaningful climate leaders. The Student Climate Action Champions (SCAC), anchored within CEFRESA's Children Environmental Stewardship Programme, represents a flagship model that equips learners with environmental knowledge, civic agency, and structured platforms to influence governance, advocate for environmental justice, co-create solutions to the climate crisis, and advance Mombasa's green agenda.

Children as Architects of Climate Justice

Climate change is no longer a distant threat; it is a lived and escalating reality shaping the present and the future of the youngest generation. Children, who will endure the longest consequences of environmental degradation, hold a moral, ethical, and practical place in the climate discourse. Yet historically, their roles have been minimized or treated symbolically.

SCAC was founded to redefine this narrative. Guided by the belief that children are not only victims of climate impacts but also agents of transformation. SCAC positioned learners aged 9–17 years as advocates, policy influencers, and custodians of the green agenda, championing nature-based solutions, sustainable practices, and ecosystem restoration as essential pathways for intergenerational resilience.

Purpose of This Outcome Paper

This outcome paper documents CEFRESA's deliberate investment in nurturing a generation of environmentally conscious child leaders. It captures child-led advocacy efforts that strengthened community environmental awareness, advanced sustainable waste management, promoted nature-based solutions, shaped political agendas, and inserted children's voices into formal climate policy spaces at county, national, and regional levels. It affirms that when child participation is well-structured and adequately supported, children transcend symbolic involvement to become powerful agents of policy reform, accountability, and equitable climate solutions.

STUDENT CLIMATE ACTION CHAMPIONS (SCAC) LAUNCH

Laying the Governance Foundation for Child-Led Climate Leadership

The Student Climate Action Champions (SCAC) was officially launched on 30 May 2021 at Light Academy International School, Mombasa, bringing together more than 300 stakeholders, students, teachers, school administrators, community representatives, and climate actors. The launch provided the first structured platform in Mombasa where children were formally positioned as partners in climate governance. It aimed at:

- 1 Introducing SCAC as a coordinated, child-led climate leadership platform
- 2 Equip children with foundational environmental and green agenda knowledge
- 3 Strengthen children's confidence in advocacy, public speaking, and intergenerational dialogue
- 4 Establish a shared identity and purpose among students from diverse schools

As part of CEFRESA's broader Children Environmental Stewardship Programme, the launch operationalized this vision at the school level, transforming it from a conceptual framework into a living, participatory movement led by children themselves.

"We have been seeing pollution all our lives, but no one ever asked us what we think. Now we know our voices can change our city."-SCAC Member.

The launch activated a movement, building the foundational architecture for structured child engagement in climate governance.



THE SCAC ADVOCACY JOURNEY

Awakening Environmental Stewardship

SCAC's first year was defined by two transformative child-led milestones that ignited collective action and established the foundation for structured climate leadership across Mombasa's schools and communities."

⇒ *Countywide Waste Management Campaign*

After witnessing the daily challenges caused by poor waste management, children launched a bold campaign calling attention to pollution at **VOK Dumpsite**, **Kongowea Market**, and surrounding neighborhoods.

They used video recordings, placards, and child-authored messages to highlight:

The health risks
children face

The overflowing
waste and plastic
pollution

The urgent need for
safer, cleaner waste
management systems

These powerful messages were addressed to county leaders, positioning children as credible voices demanding environmental accountability.

⇒ *Whole School and Community Mobilization*

Children extended their advocacy beyond classrooms through structured outreach sessions with teachers, school administrations, parents, and community groups.

Using the whole-school approach, they:

Conducted
awareness sessions

Facilitated behavior-
change discussions

Encouraged joint
clean-ups and
environmental action

This strengthened environmental literacy, created shared ownership, and firmly established SCAC's visibility and credibility across Mombasa.

STRATEGIC POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Generation Restoration: Children's Green Agenda Priorities for Mombasa

Following weeks of structured consultations with over 500 learners under the SCAC platform, CEFRESA facilitated a collaborative process where children analyzed their environmental realities, debated priority issues, and consolidated their collective demands. This process formed the basis of a unified child-led document:

Generation Restoration: Children's Green Agenda Priorities for Mombasa.

On 9 June 2022, during the Mombasa Gubernatorial Debate, this manifesto was officially presented and used to inform child-focused questions directed to the aspirants. The moment marked a significant milestone as children's environmental and green agenda priorities contributed to a political conversation in the county's electoral cycle.

The manifesto positioned children as legitimate contributors to policy dialogue and elevated their concerns beyond symbolic participation into substantive political engagement.



Children collectively articulated four priority demands:

A Cleaner, Healthier Mombasa

1

Strengthening waste management, addressing pollution hotspots such as markets and dumpsites, and enforcing environmental regulations to protect children's health and wellbeing.

Green and Safe Learning Spaces

2

Prioritize increased tree cover, safer playgrounds, and strengthened school infrastructure that can withstand heat and flooding, ensuring children learn, play, and grow in secure and supportive environments.

Access to Clean and Sustainable Energy

3

Adoption of renewable energy solutions in schools and communities to reduce pollution and enhance safety.

Institutionalized Child Participation in Environmental Governance

4

Establishment of formal, predictable platforms where children can engage decision-makers, monitor commitments, and shape county-level climate and green agenda policies.

This moment crystallized SCAC's identity as a structured, county-level platform where children influence governance and advance a shared vision for a greener, safer, and more resilient Mombasa.

Elevating Children's Voices in Environmental Justice

On 11 November 2022, CEFRESA, together with other Members of the Environment and Land Court (ELC) – Court Users Committee (CUC) Mombasa, organized a high-level Advocacy Interface Meeting at Oshwal Academy, bringing together Student Climate Action Champions (SCAC), school-based environmental clubs, teaching staff, school management, and members of the Environment and Land Court (ELC) – Court Users Committee (CUC). This engagement created a rare and strategic platform where children directly interacted with judicial actors responsible for environmental governance and climate-related justice.

The session allowed children to articulate the impact of pollution, degradation, and climate change on children, offering the judiciary a grounded, community-level perspective on environmental harm. SCAC members highlighted urgent concerns such as waste mismanagement, shrinking green spaces, and the rising effects of climate change on their learning and well-being.

In turn, the Environment and Land Court representatives provided children with insight into legal avenues, rights-based protection mechanisms, and judicial responsibilities related to environmental conservation. The interface strengthened mutual understanding and affirmed that children’s voices are not only relevant but essential to shaping equitable environmental justice systems.





STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY & AMPLIFYING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Engagement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development

In 2023, SCAC deepened its engagement with national institutions by directly interfacing with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development regarding the national rollout of the revived 4K Clubs programme. Although the Cabinet approved the revival in 2021 and a national launch followed, implementation has remained uneven and largely stalled in many areas. While the program was intended for all counties and the Mombasa County budget included allocations for initiating youth agriculture clubs, the practical implementation in Mombasa schools, as in many other regions, appears to have faced significant delays or challenges, with no clear, universally adopted roadmap provided for their effective inclusion and sustainability.

To address this gap, SCAC submitted a formally authored letter outlining children's expectations and demanding accountability for full implementation. Their recommendations included:



Full operationalization of 4K Clubs beyond ceremonial launches, ensuring active agricultural learning and climate education in schools.



Inclusion of Mombasa and coastal schools in the national rollout to address geographic disparities.



Strengthening agricultural, ecological, and climate education as key pathways for resilience, food security, and environmental stewardship.

This engagement marked a significant evolution in SCAC's advocacy, from influencing policy to **monitoring its implementation**. It demonstrated children's ability to hold ministries accountable, demand equitable delivery of national commitments, and assert their right to meaningful participation in climate-related governance processes.

Children's Voices at the Africa Climate Summit 2023

As Kenya hosted the **Africa Climate Summit (ACS) in Nairobi in 2023**, CEFRESA ensured that the perspectives of children from Mombasa were not left behind. Through **virtual consultations** with SCAC members across multiple schools, CEFRESA facilitated a structured dialogue process that allowed children to reflect on the Summit's themes and articulate their concerns and expectations for Africa's climate future.

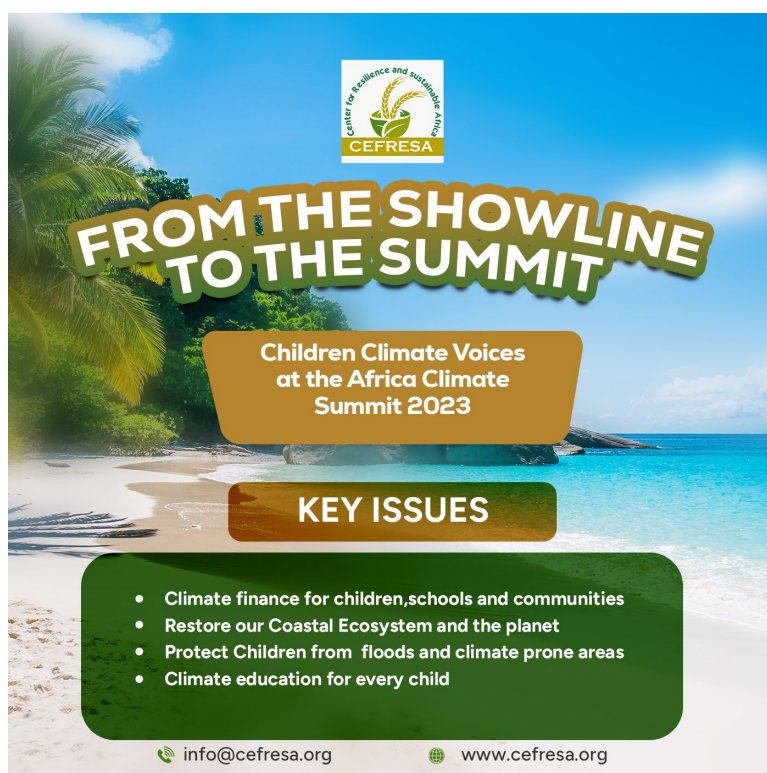
Children highlighted urgent issues such as:

- The need for inclusive climate finance that reaches children, schools, and communities.
- Strengthening nature-based solutions, especially tree growing, coastal restoration, and biodiversity protection.
- Ensuring loss and damage conversations reflect the vulnerabilities of children in urban
- Elevating the role of education, especially climate literacy, as a powerful adaptation and resilience tool.

These consolidated child perspectives were formally captured and presented by CEFRESA as part of civil society submissions surrounding the Africa Climate Summit.

This process marked a milestone in SCAC's regional visibility, showing that even when they cannot be physically present, children's voices can influence continental climate dialogue through structured platforms and intentional facilitation.

Throughout 2023, SCAC transitioned from local influence on national and regional engagement, demonstrating that child-led climate advocacy is not confined to grassroots mobilization but can meaningfully contribute to policy monitoring, continental dialogue, and accountability architecture. This year affirmed that children have both the right and capacity to shape climate governance at all levels when provided with the tools, platforms, and support they need.



ADVANCING CHILD VOICES IN KENYA'S GLOBAL CLIMATE AGENDA

Children's Voices During the 2024 El Niño

The 2024 El Niño severely affected communities across Mombasa and other parts of Kenya, with children experiencing the harshest impacts. SCAC members described flooded classrooms, days of lost learning, and constant fear as storms intensified along the coast. Many children faced the loss of familiar spaces, playgrounds, homes, and neighborhoods, while others struggled with silent emotional burdens as families and friends were displaced or harmed.

In response to these experiences, and to ensure the invisible pain is visible, and the leaders fully understand the hardships children endure during climate disasters, one SCAC member wrote a poem, "**Linda Kesho Yetu**", a direct appeal for early action, better preparedness, and a child-centered approach to disaster planning.

"LINDA KESHO YETU" – A Poem by Pius Kahingu, SCAC Member

1

When the rains came, our world trembled,
Schools turned silent, our books left behind.
We watched the waters swallow the places we loved,
And wondered, "**Who protects children when storms arrive?**"

2

We saw fear living in our classmates' eyes,
Sleepless nights, shaking hearts, quiet tears.
The news spoke of numbers, but not of our pain.
The friends we missed, the dreams washed away.

3

We ask you, leaders, to plan before the clouds grow dark,
To warn us early, to keep our schools safe,
To build a country where children do not drown in disasters
Not in water, and not in worry.

4

Listen to us now, before another storm finds our feet.
Protect our learning, our safety, our tomorrow.
For we are children
And all we ask is that you, Linda Kesho Yetu.

Influencing Kenya's Preparation for COP29 by Consolidating Child Priorities

In 2024, SCAC elevated its influence on global climate processes by contributing to Kenya's preparatory roadmap toward COP29, which was convened from 11–22 November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Recognizing that global commitments ultimately shape national and county policies, CEFRESA facilitated consultations with SCAC members in multiple schools to capture children's expectations for Kenya's participation. Their views emphasized the need for explicit recognition of children as climate stakeholders, integration of child-responsive actions in national submissions, and increased financing for school-based climate initiatives. CEFRESA consolidated these insights into a formal child perspectives brief, which was submitted through civil society partners participating in COP29, ensuring that children's voices from Mombasa informed Kenya's global climate position.

Through their contributions to COP29 preparations and their collective reflections on the 2024 El Niño experience, children demonstrated that climate governance is incomplete without acknowledging their lived realities.



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

- Formal recognition of children as climate governance actors
- Increased child presence in political and climate governance processes
- Strengthened environmental consciousness in schools and communities
- National, regional, and global policy influence through child submissions

POLICY LEARNINGS

- Structured child participation strengthens public accountability
- Capacity-building enables substantive civic contributions
- Whole school engagement ensures sustainability and scalability
- Formal participation platforms outperform ad-hoc consultations
- Children bring a unique human-centered lens to climate justice

WAY FORWARD

Generation Restoration

Expand nature-based solutions, restoration actions, and circular waste systems led by children.

Strengthen Environmental Stewardship

Cultivate long-term stewardship mindsets through continuous climate education.

Deepen Intergenerational Collaboration

Strengthen partnerships between children, families, schools, and government.

Expand Sustainable School Environments

Invest in climate-resilient, biodiversity-friendly, and green learning spaces.

Institutionalize Child Climate Leadership

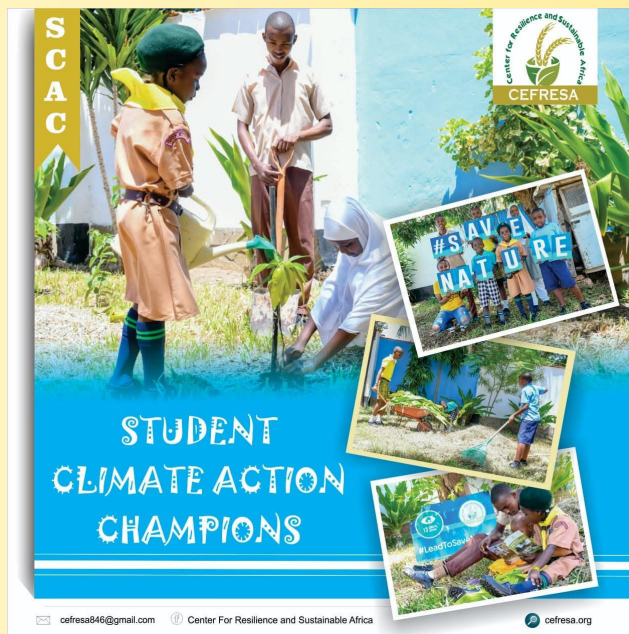
Embed SCAC into county climate strategies and secure predictable financing.

CONCLUSION

The Student Climate Action Champions have shown that children are not merely witnesses to climate change; they are critical actors shaping policy, accountability, and environmental transformation. Their voices have influenced political agendas, informed budgets, guided national commitments, and contributed to regional climate frameworks.

The SCAC movement reaffirms a powerful truth: when children are empowered, they redefine what is possible. They challenge systems that overlook them, mobilize communities, amplify climate narratives through media, and humanize climate justice by rooting it in lived experience.

GALLERY OF SCAC ENGAGEMENTS





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