



# AFRICA HUMAN CAPITAL HEADS OF STATE SUMMIT

Africa Human Capital Technical Briefs Series

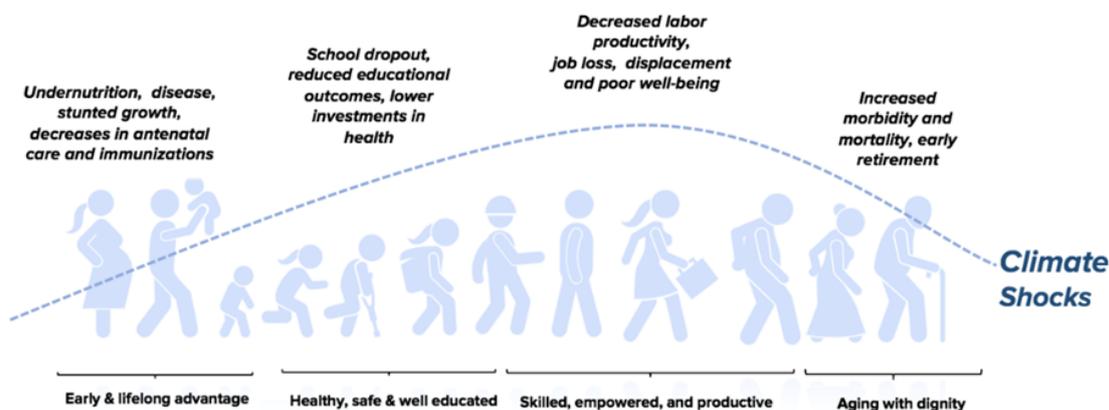
## Human Capital for a Climate-Proof Future

July 2023

### KEY MESSAGES

Climate change (CC) is one of the greatest existential threats to humanity and is a particular threat to Sub-Saharan Africa countries and undermines hard-won development gains, poverty reduction efforts, and the accumulation of Human Capital. CC is severely impacting people throughout their life cycle, especially women, girls, the poor and the vulnerable, threatening lives and livelihoods, and impacting productivity and growth.

- CC has direct and indirect health impacts (e.g., heat stroke, injury/death from floods, etc.) and changing ecologies of vector- and water-borne diseases (malaria, dengue, and cholera).
- Heat waves directly impede learning, educational attainment, and ultimately productivity.
- CC threatens crop production and food security, causing malnutrition and stunting in children which in turn affects cognitive development, learning outcomes and life-long earning potential.
- Extreme weather events also disrupt access to critical social services, including emergency health care as well as leading to children to drop out of school.
- CC as well as decarbonization efforts will drive certain groups out of work (e.g., farmers and those dependent on fossil fuel production) making them vulnerable and poor.



A central pillar for the advancement of global and national climate commitments is to enhance the overall resilience and preparedness of people to deal with the challenges of CC:

- Action is needed to **protect people** from CC, which is eroding Human Capital across the lifecycle, constraining people's productive potential – a key driver of growth.
- **Building adaptive systems and resilience** requires investments in healthy, educated, and skilled people protected by a safety net that can prepare them to cope with and adapt to CC.
- People will determine the success of climate-focused policies. Therefore, investments in Human Capital will **harness people's skills to meet the demands of the green transition**.

## WHY IT MATTERS FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

CC is affecting all countries, but the greatest impacts are borne by the most vulnerable. According to the combined Human Capital Index and NDGAIN Index, of the 192 countries, the **top 30 most vulnerable countries to CC are all in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)**. The IPCC's *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* report underscores the severity of climate change and its impacts for SSA and reaffirms the critical and urgent need to take immediate and sweeping actions to combat CC in the region. Key development sectors have already witnessed severe loss, including water shortages, reduced food production, biodiversity loss, reduced economic growth and the loss of lives. These impacts are very likely to become more widespread and damaging between 1.5C and 2C at the sub-national, national, and regional levels.

SSA countries in particular are expected to experience unprecedented high temperature climates within the next couple of decades, much earlier in the 21st century than wealthier and higher latitude countries. Vulnerability and exposure of SSA to CC is multi-dimensional due to the intersecting nature of environmental, socioeconomic, and political factors. As such, cross-sectoral coordination, and engagement at local and national levels of government in SSA will be critical for developing robust adaptation and mitigation solutions throughout the region to prevent total climate collapse from compounding risks that are guaranteed to escalate over time.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The timeframe for transformative, at-scale climate action to prevent global climate catastrophe is rapidly shrinking. SSA countries must **invest in people** who are the backbone of future economic prosperity and resilience to CC. The following are some critical recommendations:

**1. Nationally Determined Contributions** documents should more centrally include education, health, social protection and jobs sectors, as well as gender dimensions as related to CC.

- **Strengthen education systems** to raise awareness about CC, change behavior of communities, nurture skills for green jobs, promote green research and development, and decarbonize education delivery.
- **Build health system preparedness** to respond and cope with disasters, heat and extreme weather events, address vector-borne diseases, improve water and sanitation, and raise overall CC awareness. The health sector must reduce carbon emissions by investing in climate-smart health systems (energy efficient health centers & equipment).
- **Expand coverage to adaptive social protection systems** to enable people to recover from CC shocks, promote public works for green transition, facilitate transitions to green jobs (re-skilling workers) and support Just Transitions.
- **Prevent climate related gender gaps** (e.g., women being at risk of being excluded from green jobs because of their unequal access to green economy training/skills). Actively boost women's leadership and participation in climate adaptation as it is associated with better outcomes (e.g., better disaster preparedness, conservation, natural resource management).

**2. Strengthen CC policies and institutional capacity** through better planning, delivery and management of human, natural and physical assets. This includes building enhanced climate information systems for early warning.

**3. Establish clear coordination mechanisms** with the Climate & Environment Ministries to ensure that Human Development sectors are central in the national climate change action plans. Establish dedicated climate change focal points in relevant Human Development ministries and agencies.

## Relevant Data That Policymakers Must Have Handy

- CC could lead to **GDP losses** ranging between 2% and 12% by 2050, and drive 132 million people into poverty (WB, 2021) of which 43 million are in Africa. The extreme poor in Africa could see an 8% reduction in their incomes due to CC, constraining their ability to respond to shocks.
- **Women make up 70% of the world's poor** (IUNC, 2015) and hence are much more vulnerable to CC.
- Global warming is projected to lead to **global productivity losses equivalent to 80 million** full-time jobs in the year 2030. (ILO, 2019). In Africa, work-hour losses due to heat could result in Annual GDP losses up to 6%.
- **86 million people are projected to be internally displaced** by a slow onset of CC by 2050 across Sub-Saharan Africa (Groundswell 2018).
- The **direct damage costs to health are estimated to be between US\$2–4 billion** per year by 2030 (WHO 2021).
- **Extreme heat impacts on learning** - a child who experiences temperatures 2 degrees above average is predicted to attain 1.5 fewer years of schooling than one who experiences average temperatures (PNAS, 2019). Any loss in educational access and learning contributes to the vicious cycle of learning poverty and a generation of foregone future earnings.
- SSA global CO2 emissions are the smallest in the world (48 countries responsible for an estimated 0.55% of total CO2 emissions in 2020). Hence, **CC adaptation should be a major focus of SSA policies** as well as leveraging opportunities to avoid carbon lock-in through climate-smart investments.

## Definition

The growth of Human Capital as well as gender-sensitive, resilient and inclusive development are intrinsically dependent on how well people adapt to CC risks and how effective they are at mitigating against increasing green-house gas emissions.



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