

BORN INTO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

WHY
WE MUST ACT **NOW**
TO SECURE
CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS



Save the Children

Acknowledgements

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Cover: At the time this photo was taken in 2019, Paula, then 8, lived with her mother and siblings in a temporary camp for people displaced by cyclone Idai. Her house was flooded and destroyed by the cyclone. She left with her mum and siblings to shelter under a table in a market before making it to Sofala province of Mozambique. Her father was receiving treatment after getting trapped by falling debris whilst protecting their belongings during the storm. Paula attends a tented Save the Children temporary learning centre and child friendly space.

Cover design:
Kristoffer Nilsen

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Hanna Adcock/Save the Children
Stripes adapted from Hawkins, E. *Show Your Stripes*. 2018–2019. <https://showyourstripes.info/> to show years 1960–2020 only.

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John F McGill



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Child participation statement

This report has been developed with the support of a dedicated Child Reference Group, comprised of 12 children aged between 12–17 years old from Albania, Bangladesh, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kosovo, Norway, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the United States, and Zambia, to lay out how the intergenerational impacts of climate change are infringing on children's rights to life, education, and protection. We thank these children – and all child advocates for climate action globally – for their time, their thoughtful recommendations, and their continued commitment to defending the rights of children in the face of a climate crisis not of their own making.



Poem on Climate Change

Justina

15 year-old-girl, Zambia

My soul is so grieved

My heart is so hurt,

Because of the change, obstruction, destruction known as “Climate change”.

*Oh! Climate Change how sweet and lovely is the melody and sound it has,
yet the negative impact it has brought on the environment.*

*I [as] a child of this generation,
I want to voice out on the impact climate change has brought.*

This has given children less participation in this nation,

*Excessive rains causing floods, which bring about diseases such as cholera,
by the affected water which is untreated.*

*Poor rains causing drought, leading to food shortage which is causing hunger on children
as a result leads to less concentration on lessons on their education.*

Excess rains leading to poor attendance on school going children.

*Poor rains leading to load shedding giving people no option but to
practice deforestation for charcoal use all in the name supplementing electricity.*

Huh! My words are failing to come out

My tears are failing to drop because of the condition and situation.

If we can be the causers, we can be the solvers.

Out Loud I Appeal

All decision makers take afforestation into consideration.

I appeal and cry again.

*To all decision makers to raise awareness on climate change and
children’s participation to the nation, because it states an (Africa fit for children.)*



Nohelia Talavera/Save the Children

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

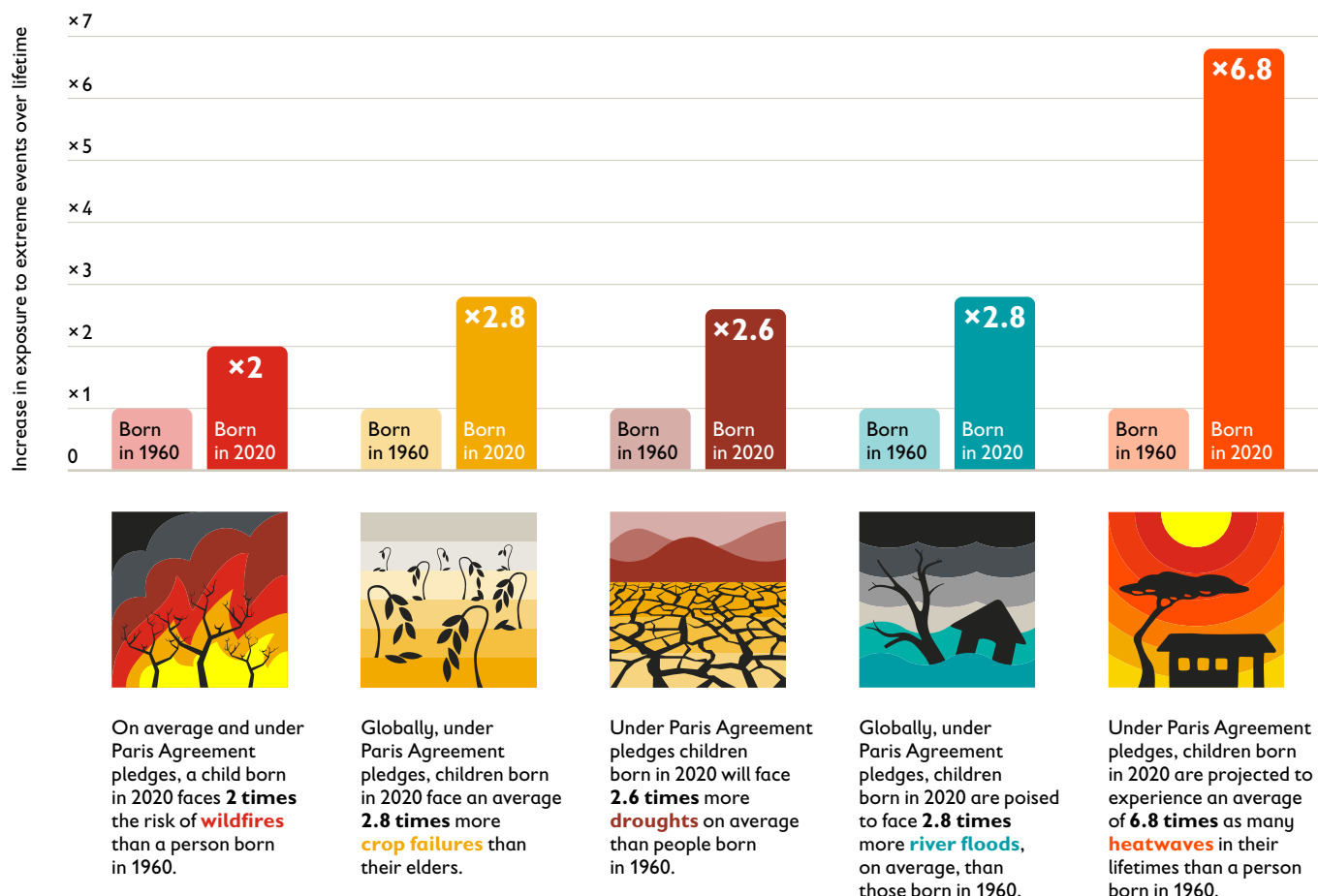
The climate crisis is fundamentally and irreparably reshaping our world, with grave implications for the rights of current and future generations of children. When ranked by income, the top 50% of states are responsible for 86% of cumulative global CO₂ emissions, while the lower half are responsible for just 14%¹. Despite this, it is the children of low- and middle-income countries that bear the brunt of losses and damage to health and human capital, land, cultural heritage, indigenous and local knowledge, and biodiversity as a result of climate change². Without drastic mitigation action to reduce emissions and limit warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, led by high-income and high-emitting countries and informed by children's best interests and identified priorities, **the children of these low- and middle-income countries will be burdened with the most dangerous impacts of the climate crisis. They have inherited a problem not of their own making.**

As confirmed in the August 2021 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the physical science basis of climate change, unsustainable human activity is unequivocally responsible for rapid warming of the planet³. Already, many of the planet’s vital signs – such as greenhouse gas concentrations, oceanic heating, and ice mass loss – have reached critical levels, leading to an unprecedented surge in extreme events directly related to climate change. Sustained by the vested interests of fossil fuel and other environmentally destructive industries, and magnified by inaction on the part of the high-income governments most responsible for climate impacts, climate change is giving rise to an intergenerational child rights crisis.

The inadequacy of most of the climate pledges outlined in each state’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) following the Paris Agreement will have serious consequences for children and future generations. New modelling developed by an international team of climate researchers, led by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, finds that under Paris Agreement pledges, a child born in 2020 will experience on average twice as many wildfires, 2.8 times the exposure to crop failure, 2.6 times as many drought events, 2.8 times as many river floods, and 6.8 times more heatwaves across their lifetimes, compared to a person born in 1960.

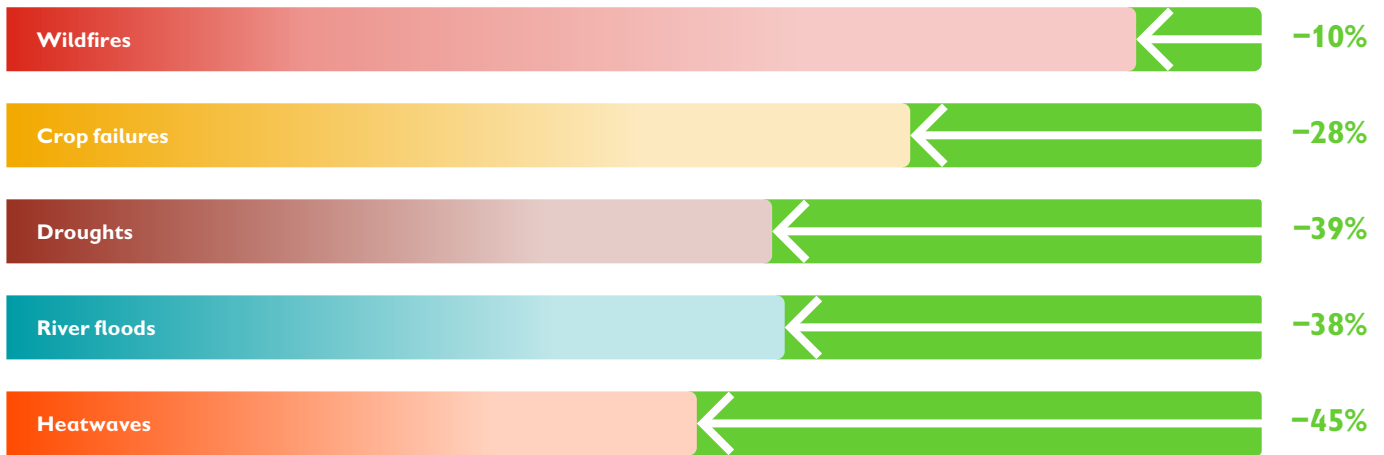
The data shows that it is the children of many low- and middle-income countries who will continue to bear the brunt of worsening climate change. This will be compounded for some children – particularly those exposed to multiple hazards; those living through conflict; those most profoundly impacted by COVID-19; and those experiencing inequality and discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, indigeneity, displacement or other, often intersecting factors. Climate change is inextricably linked to wider issues of inequality and failures to uphold children’s basic rights. The future for children already suffering the worst impacts of climate change is looking increasingly dire.

Figure 1
Lifetime exposure to extreme events under Paris Agreement pledges for children born in 2020 compared to that of a person born in 1960.



This same modelling, however, finds that there is an opportunity, as well as an urgent need, to act: compared to Paris Agreement pledges, limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels will reduce the additional lifetime exposure of newborns to heatwaves by 45%, droughts by 39%, river floods by 38%, crop failures by 28%, and wildfire by 10%. These differences will allow more children to access their rights to services, to meet basic needs, to participation, and to a future. Leadership in climate action on the part of the high-income countries most responsible for climate change, particularly for financing and adaptation, will also yield multiple social, environmental, and economic returns: investment of \$1.8 trillion globally in five key areas of adaptation over a period of ten years could generate \$7.1 trillion in total net benefits⁴.

Figure 2
Potential reduction of additional lifetime exposure to extreme events of children born in 2020 by limiting warming to 1.5°C instead of higher temperature under Paris Agreement pledges.



Locally-led and child-sensitive action on climate change is increasingly becoming an economic necessity, as the costs of responding to humanitarian crises resulting from extreme weather events rise. In addition, low- and middle-income countries are accruing disproportionate losses and damages as a result of climate change, and productivity in key sectors, such as agriculture, is being lost. Despite this, and in the face of now-overwhelming scientific evidence that the world’s window of opportunity to act is quickly closing, commitments to climate action, finance, and children’s participation in decision-making, remain dangerously inadequate.



Mohamed Osman/Save the Children



Pablo Barnes / Save the Children

Key recommendations

To address climate injustice head on, deliver on the promises made to children in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, governments, donors, the private sector, and multilateral agencies must:

- **Take ambitious and urgent action now to limit warming to a maximum of 1.5°C** above pre-industrial levels, including by rapidly phasing out the use and subsidy of fossil fuels.
- **Increase commitments to climate finance** for both mitigation and adaptation in recognition that the climate crisis is a child rights issue that affects children first and worst. This includes fulfilling the unmet pledge to mobilise at least \$100 billion annually, with at least 50% contributing to adaptation measures that support low- and middle-income countries in managing the unavoidable impacts of climate change, in addition to pursuing green development pathways.
- **Recognise children as equal stakeholders and key agents of change** in addressing the climate and environmental crisis, including by establishing child-friendly mechanisms and platforms to facilitate children's formal engagement in climate policy making.
- **Scale up social protection systems** to address the increasing impacts of climate shocks on children and their families, with the ambition to move to universal child benefits over time as a way to improve child well-being and build resilience.

As governments prepare to meet, assess progress, and accelerate their commitments to the next five-year cycle of the Paris Agreement, they must recall not only their obligations to act in the best interests of children, but the agency and capacities of children themselves. The world's children – particularly those in low- and middle-income countries and those experiencing inequality and discrimination wherever they live – have contributed the least to the climate emergency but have the most to lose if this crisis continues unabated. It is imperative that children are present at this critical juncture – not as inspiration, but as rights-holders, as the most acutely-affected, and as agents of urgent, necessary, and transformative change.



Eduardo Soteras Jaill / Save The Children

THE FUTURE FOR CHILDREN WHAT THE DATA SAYS

The threat posed to children and their rights by climate change is not theoretical: it is real, and it is urgent. As stated by the August 2021 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the physical science basis of climate change, the climate crisis is already affecting weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe⁵. Save the Children has partnered with an international team of leading climate researchers led by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel to quantify the extent to which children will experience extreme weather events as a manifestation of climate change, the disparities between generations, and the widening inequality between high-income and low- and middle-income countries⁶.

The climate crisis is already affecting weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe.

As a means of implementing the Paris Agreement at a national level, signatories have developed their own Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that outline localised climate actions, targets, policies, and other measures. The content of these NDCs varies, but represents the most tangible pathway for protecting children's futures from the impact of climate change. The following section therefore uses the NDC commitments submitted by states following the development of the Paris Agreement⁷ to model lifetime exposure to extreme events – namely wildfires, crop failures, droughts, river floods, and heatwaves – for a newborn in 2020 compared to a person born in 1960.

Although both generations will face increasingly frequent and intense weather events as a result of climate change, the life and prospects of a child look dramatically, irreversibly different. They are poised to flee more wildfires, face food shortages as a result of crop failure, experience increasing floods, and brace for rolling, relentless heatwaves around the world. Many adverse outcomes will be heightened for children in low- and middle-income countries.

The combination of increasingly frequent extreme events and deepening poverty as a result of climate change is projected to push more than 100 million people in low- and middle-income countries below the poverty line by 2030,⁸ and see the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance almost double by 2050. The cost of this assistance is set to balloon from between USD\$3.5 and USD\$12 billion today, to USD\$20 billion annually by 2030⁹. Acting as a threat multiplier, the climate crisis will both exacerbate existing conflict and reduce people's capacity to cope with its effects. Increased exposure to shocks also widens inequalities within communities, suppresses economic growth, and compromises the impact of long-term poverty reduction efforts¹⁰.

The data below presents exposure to extreme climate events for children in different locations. While examining this, it is crucial to bear in mind that these geographical vulnerabilities intersect in significant ways with children's exposure to poverty, inequality, and lack of access to key services such as universal health care, or social protection. This emphasises the need and responsibility for high-income states, who are often more responsible for but less exposed to the impacts of the climate crisis, to dramatically increase their financial support and policy ambition in climate action. Renewed efforts to limit global warming to below 1.5 °C will have a real impact for current and future generations of children, reducing their lifetime exposure to all forms of extreme weather events. This corroborates what children around the world have already said: that immediate climate action is a matter of intergenerational justice.

Methodology

The following findings draw on five sources of data including newly-generated simulations of climate impacts across five extreme event categories, the United Nations World Population Prospects, global mean temperature scenarios compiled in support of the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C; population reconstructions and projections, and country-scale cohort size data provided by the Wittgenstein Centre's Human Capital Data Explorer¹¹. The research calculates the exposure of an average person to climate impacts across their lifetime in 178 countries, 11 regions, and globally, under climate action commitments originally announced by governments in NDCs developed after the introduction of the Paris Agreement. It then compares different age groups to calculate conservative estimates of lifetime extreme event occurrence as a consequence of climate change, while controlling for changes in life expectancy.

Extreme events



Increase in exposure to **wildfires** over lifetime

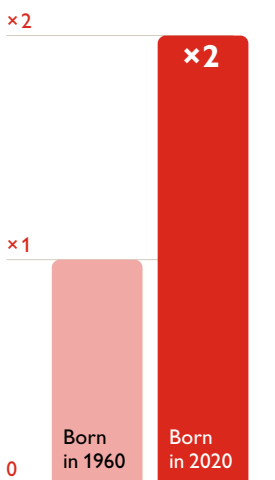


Figure 3
On average and under Paris Agreement pledges, a child born in 2020 faces **2 times** the risk of **wildfires** than a person born in 1960.

WILDFIRE

Few images evoke the encroaching danger of global warming like blazing fires, burning homes and schools, and smoke blackening the daylight sky. IPCC assessments have determined that factors tied to anthropogenic climate change, including higher temperatures, lower precipitation and the impact of increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere on vegetation, are leading to higher risks of fire¹². New simulations, modelling climate change-related wildfires over time, have further quantified the risk to children. On average, and under Paris Agreement pledges, a child born in 2020 faces 2 times the risk of wildfire than a person born in 1960.

This risk is particularly acute for children in fragile contexts, such as Palestine, Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea, who all face around double the lifetime risk of wildfire compared to previous generations. In Jordan and Turkey – two of the top refugee-hosting countries in recent years – the risk to vulnerable children is not only heightened, but concentrated to potentially deadly effect. The devastation caused by wildfires in Turkey and its neighbouring countries, which burned over 1,600 square kilometres throughout July and August 2021, demonstrates the severity of the risk. The extreme density of populations and infrastructure in refugee settlements already creates the conditions for fire to spread rapidly, and the disproportionate numbers of children living in these environments are the ones at risk: recent reports estimate that 44% of Syrian refugees in Turkey¹³ and 48% in Jordan are children¹⁴.

The heightened risk of wildfire and its implications for children’s rights have already been articulated in child-led climate litigation; in the case of *Duarte Agostinho & 5 Others v Portugal & 32 Others* before the European Court of Human Rights, children from fire-affected communities in Portugal outline the loss of life, ongoing psychosocial distress, and disrupted education that resulted from wildfires in 2017¹⁵. The experiences that led to this ground-breaking litigation are unlikely to be these children’s last: newborns in Portugal are poised to face 1.8 times the lifetime exposure to wildfire than previous generations.

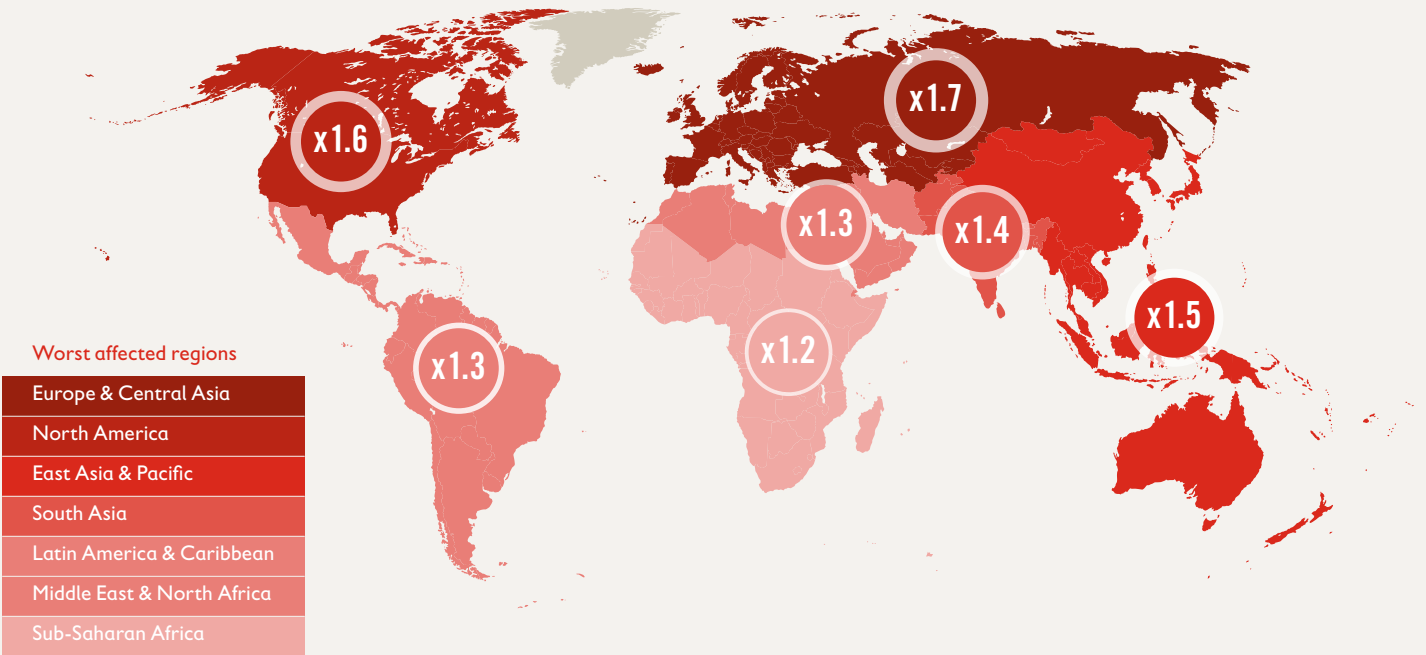


Figure 4
Regional increase in lifetime exposure to wildfires for children born in 2020

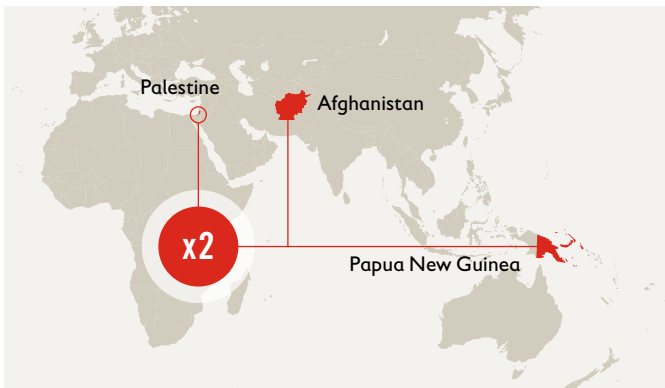
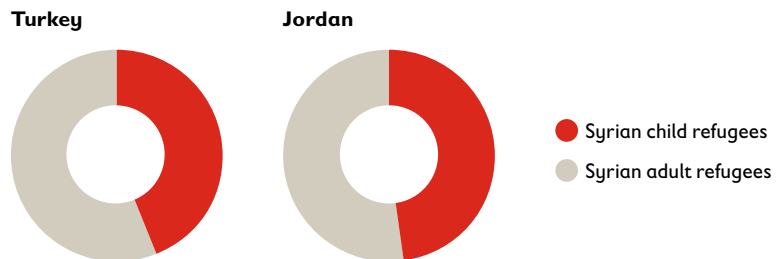


Figure 5
For children born in 2020 in a number of fragile contexts, including Palestine, Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea, lifetime risk of wildfire is about doubled compared to previous generations.



Figure 6
In Jordan and Turkey – two of the top refugee-hosting countries, lifetime risk of wildfire is about doubled compared to previous generations.

Figure 7
Recent reports estimate that 44% of Syrian refugees in Turkey and 48% in Jordan are children. In refugee settings, the risk to vulnerable children is not only heightened, but concentrated, to potentially deadly effect and the disproportionate numbers of children living in these environments places them at risk.





Increase in exposure to **crop failures** over lifetime

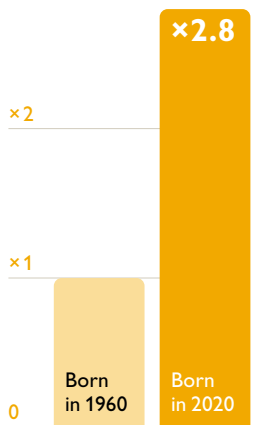


Figure 8
Globally, under Paris Agreement pledges, children born in 2020 face an average **2.8 times** more **crop failures** than their elders.

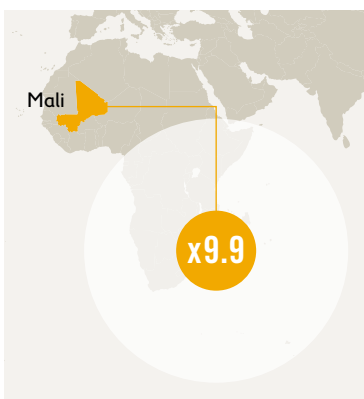


Figure 9
In Mali, newborns face the prospect of **9.9 times** more crop failures.



Sachia Myers/Save the Children

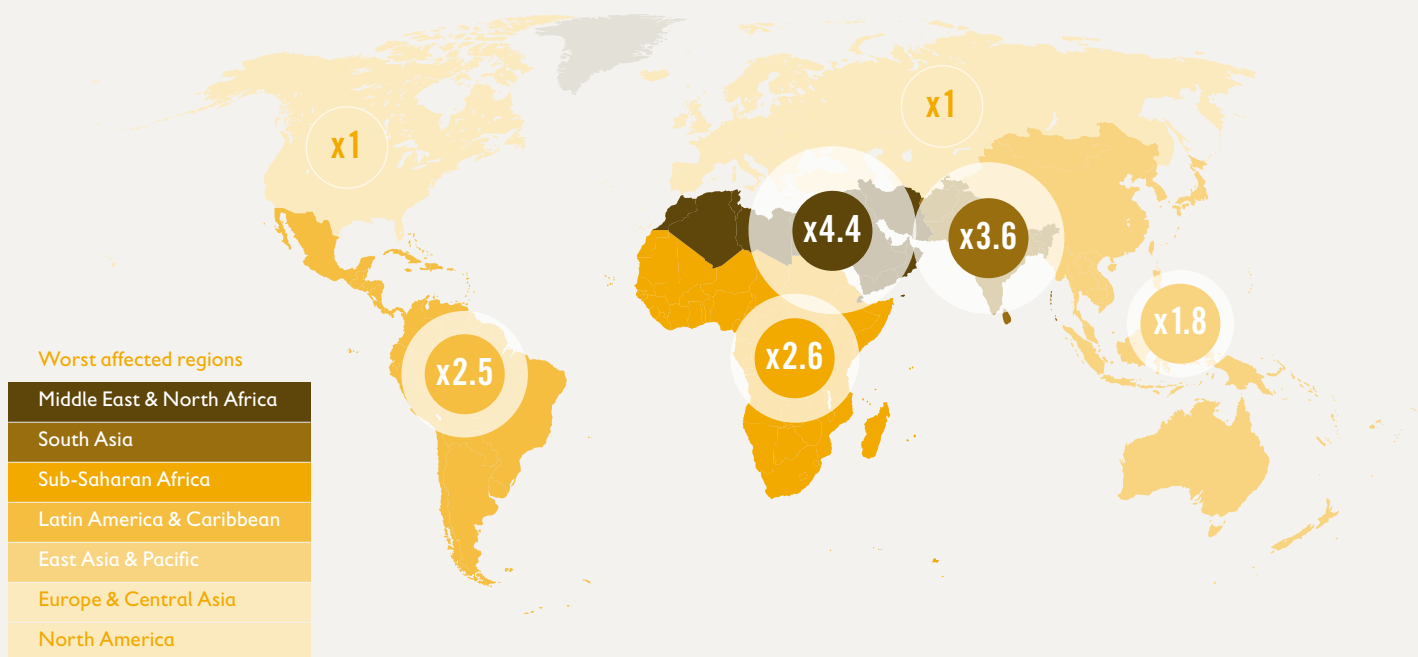
CROP FAILURE

Global food systems sustain and nourish children during critical phases of their physical and mental development. We cannot afford their disruption, but a combination of large-scale land use changes, such as deforestation and land degradation, rising temperatures, and changing precipitation patterns driven by climate change are threatening these systems and increasing the risk of crop failure in lower-latitude regions of the world¹⁶. This is borne out by new modelling, which shows that Paris Agreement pledges will see newborns globally face on average 2.8 times more crop failure than their elders, with the risk increasing dramatically in many low- and middle-income countries.

We estimate that the climate crisis has already contributed to at least 33 million people in East and Southern Africa being at emergency levels of food insecurity or worse¹⁷. Over 16 million of these are estimated to be children¹⁸. This crisis is only set to worsen. In Sub-Saharan Africa, newborns in 2020 will face 2.6 times more crop failures over their lifetimes than a person born in 1960. In South Asia, this rate increases to 3.6 times, and in the Middle East and North Africa, it rises to 4.4 times. This poses a compounded threat to children's rights in situations of armed conflict, particularly where parties use hunger as a weapon of war.

In Mali, where newborns face the prospect of 9.9 times more crop failures than their elders under Paris Agreement pledges, the loss could be incalculable. While stunting rates in Mali have steadily decreased by 36% since 2000,¹⁹ the nutritional situation of populations and notably of children is once again threatened by a combination of factors exacerbated by climate change. Insecurity, population displacements, disruptions in the cultural calendar caused by violence, and the impacts of climate change on agricultural production and the availability of nutritionally adequate food, threaten to further reverse this curve, deepen persistent inequalities, and leave a new generation on the sidelines.

Children in the United States or Germany are far from protected from the impacts of climate change, but in contrast to those in the countries named above, they face little risk of increased crop failure. This affirms that while the climate crisis is a global child rights crisis, it is also a crisis marked by geographical inequalities.



Worst affected regions

Middle East & North Africa

South Asia

Sub-Saharan Africa

Latin America & Caribbean

East Asia & Pacific

Europe & Central Asia

North America

Figure 10
Regional increase in lifetime exposure to crop failures for children born in 2020.

Mirna's story

Nicaragua

"The day of the hurricane, I was afraid," shares Mirna (12), one of the millions of people affected by hurricanes Eta and Iota, which ravaged multiple countries in just a two-week period. Mirna – who is in the fifth grade – lives in Nicaragua's Raití town, nestled along the Río Coco, with her mother, four siblings, and grandparents. Both hurricanes made landfall in Nicaragua as powerful Category 4 storms, and left a trail of damage and destruction in their wakes.

Mirna says she feels scared, sad, and worried. "The saddest thing is that [the storms] destroyed my house and left us with no place to sleep," Mirna explains. "Although my house is very small and in poor condition, at least I had a house to live in."

The hurricanes not only partially destroyed Mirna's home, they also thrust her family's livelihood into jeopardy. Her family grows many crops – rice, beans, bananas, cassava, taro, and corn – to make a living. However, Mirna explains that the hurricanes have severely damaged or destroyed her family's crops, leaving the family wondering how they will earn an income. "Now, I am worried about my home and my family."

Although the road ahead is long and daunting, Mirna still has hope for the future. She hopes to study to be a teacher or a nurse someday.



Noheila Talavera/Save the Children



Increase in exposure to droughts over lifetime

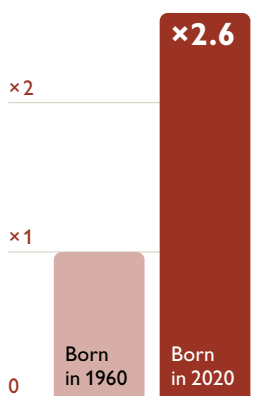


Figure 11
Under Paris Agreement pledges children born in 2020 will face **2.6 times** more droughts on average than people born in 1960.

DROUGHT

Closely linked and causally related to crop failure, prolonged drought is a risk factor for child malnutrition and is tied to price hikes that compound household financial stress and poverty. Under Paris Agreement pledges however, children around the world will face 2.6 times more drought on average than people born in 1960.

Like crop failure, the risk is significantly higher in many low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Asia and Africa. Compared to 60-year-olds, newborns in Afghanistan will confront 5.3 times more drought in their lifetimes. In Tanzania and Kenya, children will face 2.8 and 4.6 times the exposure to drought, respectively. In the Sahel, where temperatures are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average, agricultural yields are projected to fall by 20% per decade by the end of the 21st century²⁰. For many families reliant on the land, this loss of income means that they will be unable to afford a nutritious diet, keep their children in school, or pay for healthcare should a child fall ill. It can also mean adopting negative coping mechanisms like early or forced marriage, and child labour that can increase children’s risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Following droughts in Côte d’Ivoire, school enrolment rates declined by 20%²¹. Similar impacts have been found across the African continent, as well as in Asia and Latin America²².

No one is safe from the impacts of the climate crisis, but by comparison a child in Western Europe is projected to experience roughly similar exposure to droughts to past generations. While the climate crisis is an intergenerational crisis uniquely affecting children’s rights to survive, learn and be protected, it is also one that intersects with existing inequalities and discrimination.

Displaced by drought

Child perspectives on climate change and child protection in the drylands of Iraq²³

With over 90% of the country characterised as drylands and at risk from desertification, Iraq is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the Middle East. Rising temperatures and declining precipitation have led to severe and prolonged drought, which has caused water insecurity, crop failure, loss of agricultural livelihoods and child health consequences ranging from dehydration and malnutrition to respiratory disease resulting from dust storms, to death. For Iraq’s children, this already dire situation is only set to worsen: newborns are projected to face 3.1 times more drought and 4 times more crop failure in their lifetimes than their elders.

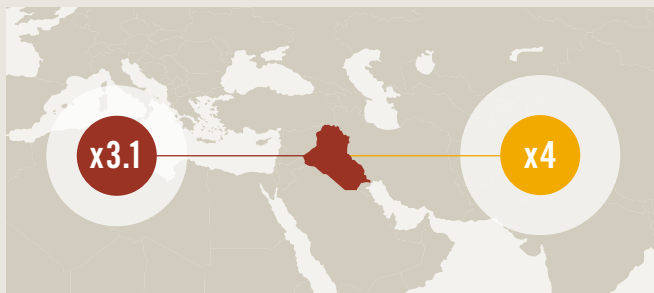


Figure 12
Children born in Iraq in 2020 are projected to face 3.1 times more droughts and 4 times more crop failures in their lifetimes than a person born in 1960.

- Droughts
- Crop failures

Children participating in interviews and focus group discussions with Save the Children emphasised the role of climate change in driving displacement, with many families uprooting their children and moving to urban centres as livelihoods collapse and water scarcity threatens stability and security in Iraq’s fragile post-conflict setting. Children in Latifiyah, Iraq reported girls and boys being affected in different ways:

“Many boys have left for the cities looking for work to support their families.”

Child (aged 8–12)

“We heard from our relatives and also saw that many young girls are forced to get married.”

Girl (aged 13–17)

Children with disabilities were also identified as having been uniquely and disproportionately affected:

“Children with disabilities are the most vulnerable children. We see many of them in the market and the streets working as beggars. There they are exposed to humiliation and exploitation.”

Child (aged 8–12)

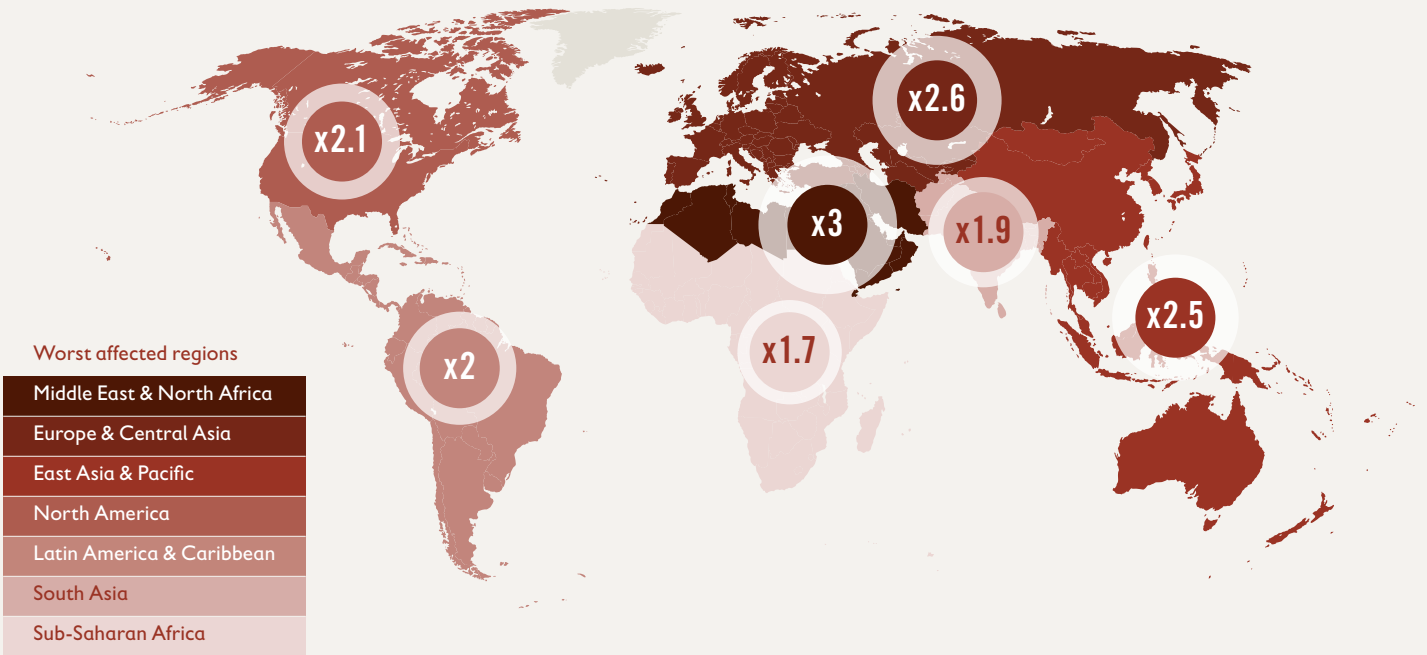


Figure 13
Regional increase in lifetime exposure to droughts for children born in 2020.

Figure 14
Compared to sixty-year-olds, Children born in Afghanistan in 2020 will confront 5.3 times more droughts in their lifetimes. In Tanzania and Kenya, children will face 2.8 and 4.6 times the exposure to droughts respectively. In comparison, a child in Western Europe is projected to experience roughly similar exposure to droughts to past generations.

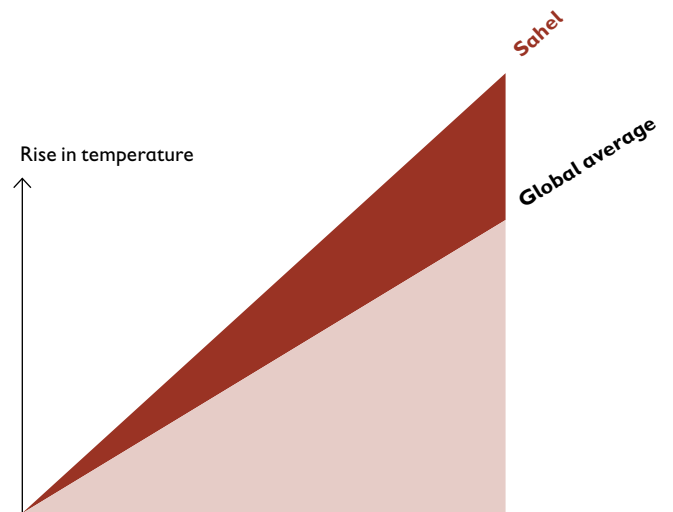
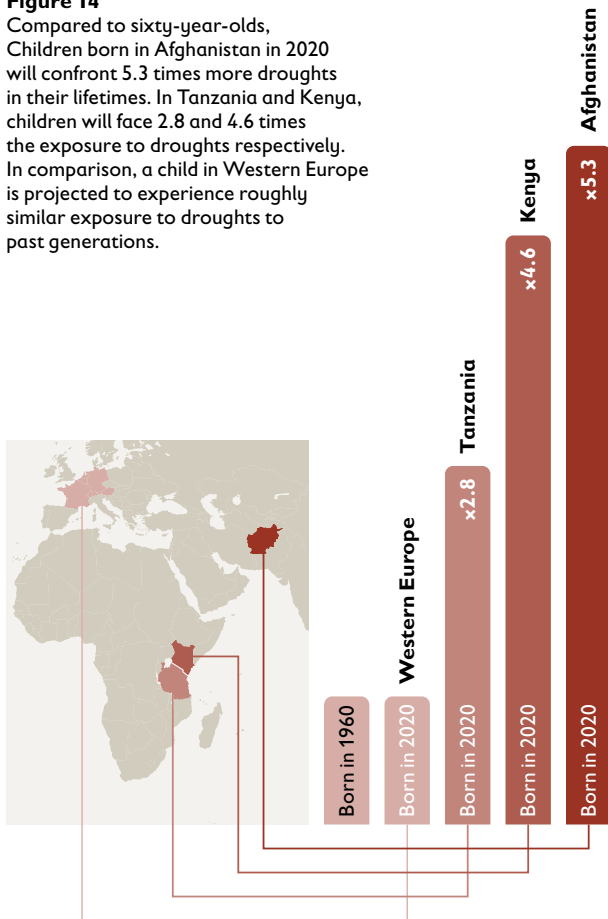


Figure 15
In the Sahel, temperatures are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average.



Figure 16
By the end of the 21st century agricultural yields in the Sahel are projected to fall by 20% per decade.

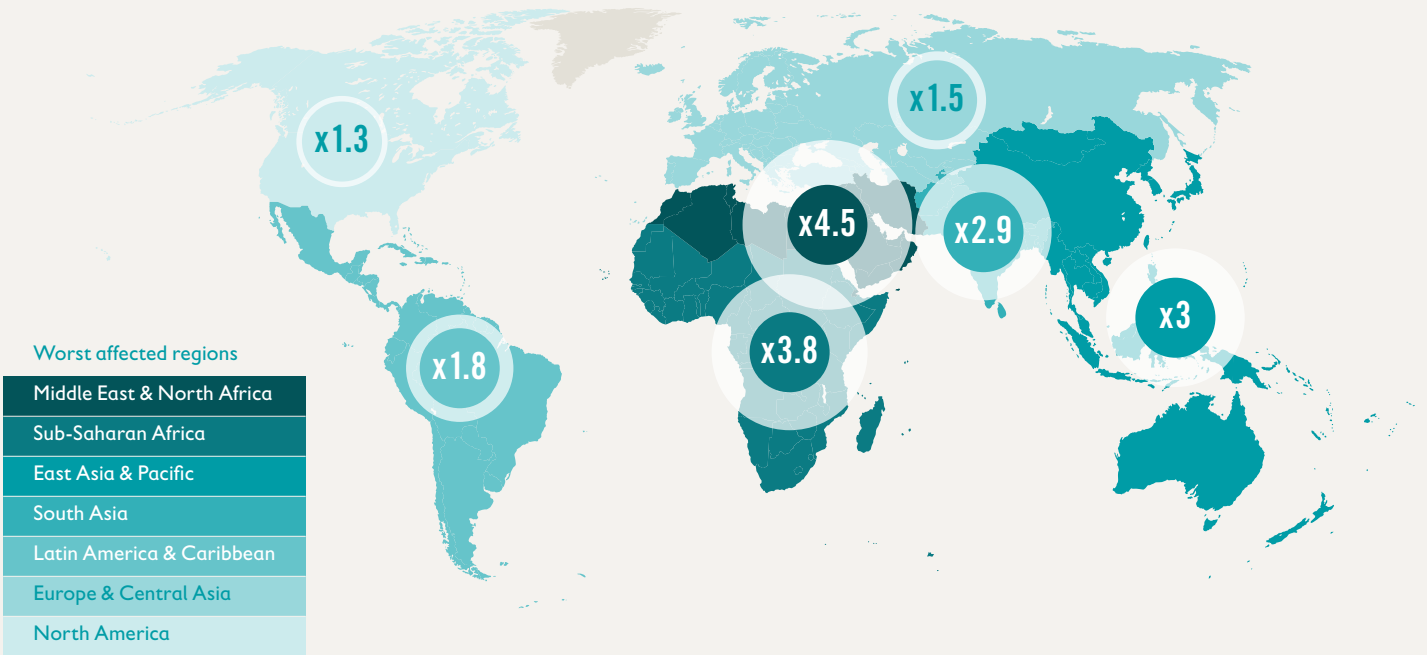


Figure 17
Regional increase in lifetime exposure to river floods for children born in 2020.

RIVER FLOODS



Increase in exposure to **river floods** over lifetime

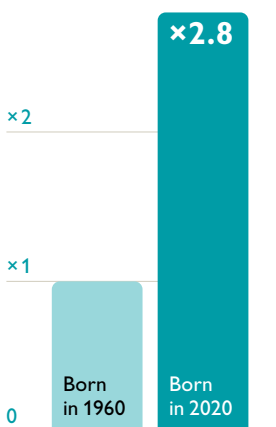


Figure 18
Globally, under Paris Agreement pledges, children born in 2020 are poised to face **2.8 times** more **river floods**, on average, than those born in 1960.

While higher temperatures are closely linked to the drying of many parts of the earth, they are also linked to other hydrological extremes: namely more frequent and intense floods as precipitation patterns change and glaciers melt. Over a 20 year period, flooding was the most commonly recorded climate change-related disaster, accounting for 43% of all extreme events²⁴. Globally, this rate is set to rise even further, with newborns in 2020 poised to face 2.8 times more river floods, on average, than those born in 1960. Under Paris Agreement pledges, the lifetime exposure for newborns rises to 3.8 times that of older generations in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 4.5 times in the Middle East and North Africa.

In low- and middle-income contexts in particular, river floods are a devastating hazard that cause widespread destruction of homes and services, submersion of agriculture, spread of waterborne disease, displacement, and death. Their impact on school closures and educational continuity mean that the impact of floods can last long after waters recede. In South Asia alone, 18,000 schools were closed in 2017 following damage or destruction in the region’s worst flooding in years²⁵.

Many communities in these high-risk areas are familiar with river floods: Somalia’s Shebelle River typically floods annually, and South East Asia’s Mekong flows into floodplains with the monsoon. But climate change is reducing this predictability, causing more frequent and severe floods, and the devastating loss of crops, agriculture and fisheries. After 2018’s river floods, communities in Somalia found themselves fleeing and losing cash crops,²⁶ while Cambodian and Vietnamese children and their families have been forced to migrate as repeated floods and the lack of alternative livelihoods make their farms unrecognisable and unprofitable²⁷. Across many contexts, families relocate to informal urban settlements, with this movement increasing children’s risk of exposure to violence, abuse, and exploitation, including child labour, extreme poverty, and reduced access to critical health and psychosocial support services and education.





Increase in exposure to **heatwaves** over lifetime

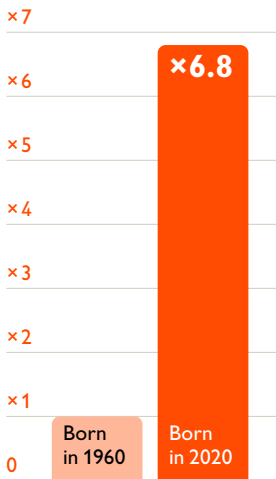


Figure 19
Under Paris Agreement pledges, children born in 2020 are projected to experience an average of **6.8 times** as many **heatwaves** in their lifetimes than a person born in 1960.

HEATWAVES

As the planet warms, temperatures are rising both steadily and in bursts, with heatwaves making headlines and leading to hospitalisations and increased mortality around the world. Increased exposure to heatwaves is by far the most striking and severe climate-related change facing children compared to previous generations: under Paris Agreement pledges, newborns are projected to experience an average of 6.8 times as many heatwaves in their lifetimes than a person born in 1960.

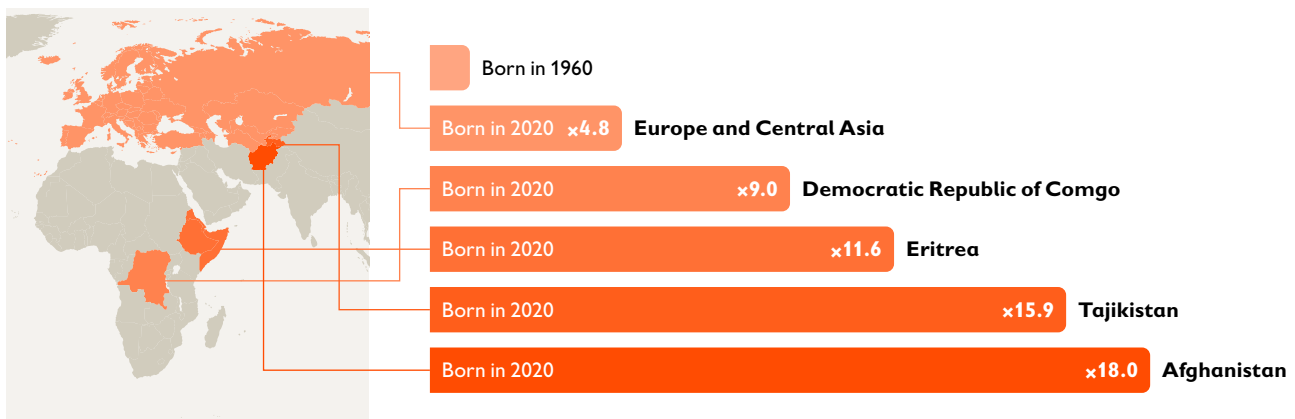
The risk to young children is acute, due to their ongoing physical development and lower capacity for body temperature regulation. During heatwaves, children are at a high risk of electrolyte imbalance, fever, respiratory disease, and kidney disease²⁸. Children’s learning is also undermined by high temperatures, with extreme heat being particularly damaging. Children affected by inequality, discrimination and conflict are particularly vulnerable, as they are most likely to lack access to quality healthcare, and to have underlying health conditions or be malnourished in the critical first 1000 days.

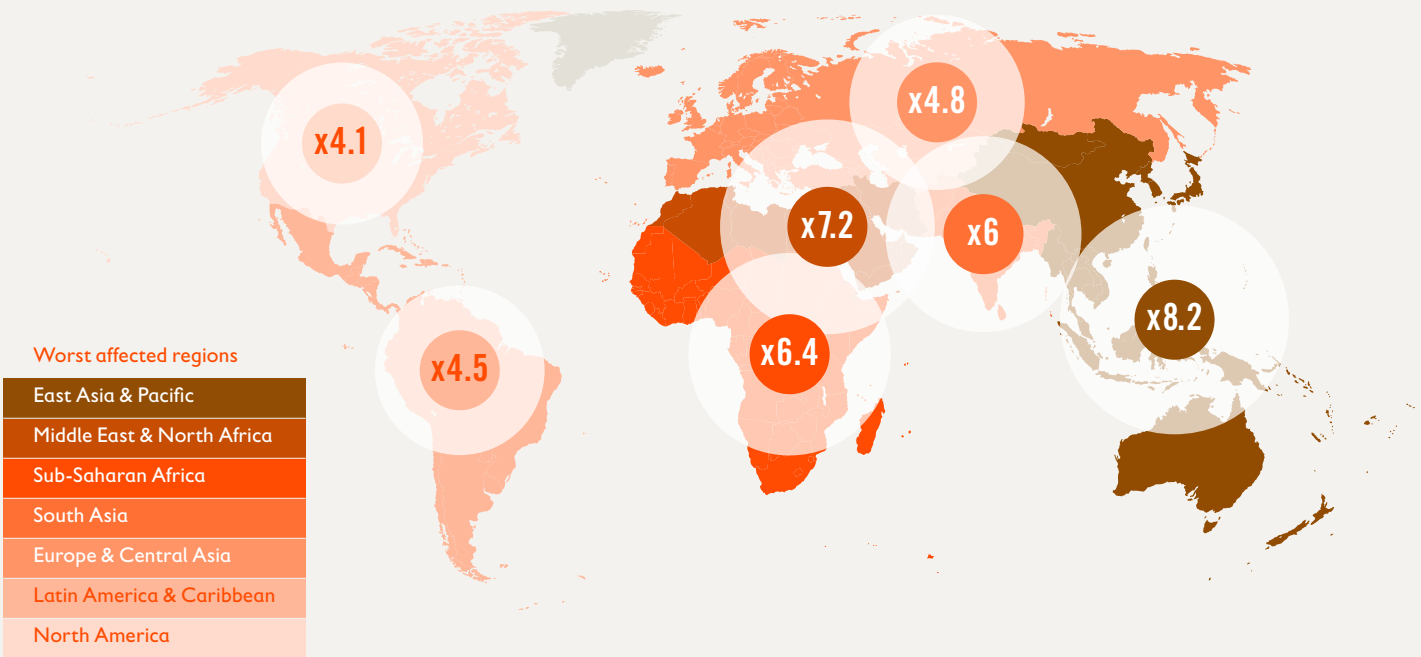
In addition to becoming more frequent, heatwaves are also becoming longer in duration and more intense as a result of climate change. This increase is set to be felt around the world to varying extents. Children in Europe and Central Asia will experience 4.8 times as many heatwaves as their grandparents’ generation. In most parts of Africa, today’s newborns will experience exposure increases reaching as high as 9 times in the Democratic Republic of Congo and 11.6 times in Eritrea. In South and Central Asia, exposure rises even further, reaching 15.9 times as many heatwaves as a person born in 1960 in Tajikistan, and 18 times as many in Afghanistan. In contexts such as Afghanistan, which is dually affected by conflict and climate change, many children and their families live in facilities for displaced people on the outskirts of urban areas where they face relentless heat, low water stores, and inadequate shelter from the sun²⁹. Here, infants and young children may need specialised care just to survive into an adulthood marked by further climbing temperatures.



Getty Images / iStockphoto

Figure 20
The experience of heatwaves of children born in 2020 compared to someone born in 1960





Worst affected regions

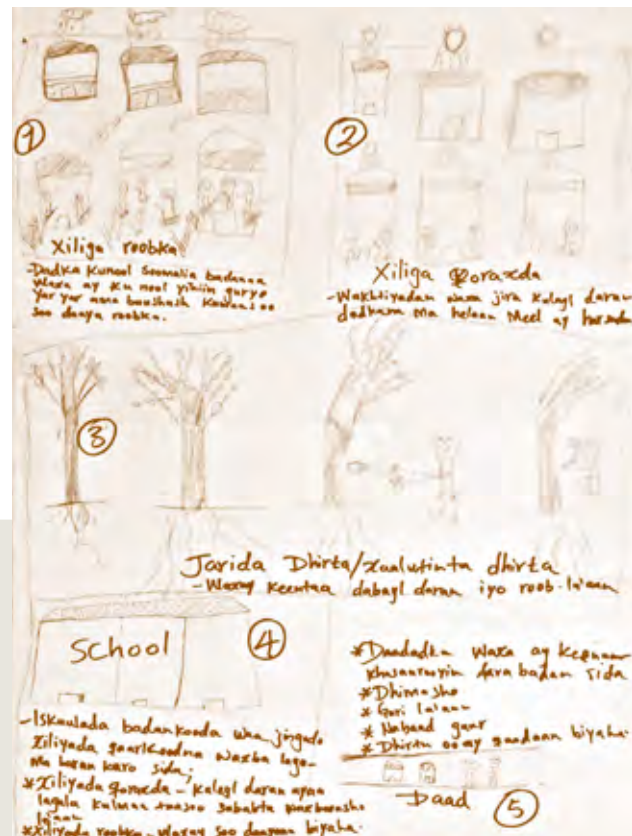
East Asia & Pacific
Middle East & North Africa
Sub-Saharan Africa
South Asia
Europe & Central Asia
Latin America & Caribbean
North America

Figure 21
Regional increase in lifetime exposure to heatwaves for children born in 2020.

‘It is very hard to learn when the sun is hot’

Mohamed
14-year-old boy, and
Shukri
14-year-old girl
both from Somalia

Artwork
by Mohamed
and Shukri



Climate changes causes many negative impacts to us and the entire community. For example, when the sun is too hot as a result of cutting down trees and clearance bushes. Furthermore, our houses are made of make-shifts or semi-permanent buildings that doesn't protect us from the hot sun.

During the cold and rainy seasons there is lots of obstacles we face. Many towns of Somalia have impassable roads making it very hard for us to attend schools, visit health centres and the price of food goes up making it hard for our families to buy food. Also, our houses can't withstand the heavy rains and anytime might be flooded.

Our temporary learning space releases rainwater and during the hot and dry season it is very hot and hard to stay in it which might cause our learning to stop.

We would like Save the Children to work together with the government and ensure that our environment is preserved so that we children can have a better place to live and play in.

Translation

- 1 – Rainy seasons: Most of Somali's live in makeshift and semi-permanent houses which leaks during heavy rains
- 2 – Hot and dry season: The sun is very hot and people do not have a better place for them to shelter on.
- 3 – Cutting of trees and clearance of bushes brings a lot of heavy winds and takes away rainy clouds

- 4 – Many of the schools are built of iron-sheets; it is very hard to learn when the sun is hot and sometimes we might not go to school. On rainy days the school roof/windows releases rain drops.
- 5 – Flood causes a lot of devastations such as death, houses being swept away, soil erosion and destruction of plants and trees.



Compounded injustice: the rights of children experiencing inequality and discrimination

The climate crisis is harming the children most affected by inequalities and discrimination first and worst.

The data presented here is indicative of increasing threats to the rights and wellbeing of children around the world, and the disproportionate impact on children in low- and middle-income contexts. However, it is unable to fully incorporate the impact of inequality and discrimination within countries and communities. The data also does not take into account the overlaying of each risk, and how the effects of multiple hazards, happening in quick succession, will increase pressure on lives and livelihoods.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) applies to all children, everywhere, yet the climate crisis is harming the children most affected by inequalities and discrimination first and worst. Children's identities are as diverse, complex and intersecting as their experiences of climate change. It is essential that decision-makers recognise their unique and heightened experiences of the climate crisis and act to support the equal and inclusive participation of all children. This includes, but is not limited to, girls and children discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientations, gender identities and expression (SOGIE), indigenous children, children with disabilities, displaced children, and those who experience intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

Girls and children discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientations, gender identities and expression

As families struggle to cope with the environmental and economic impacts of climate change, girls are too often the first to suffer. They are removed from school at higher rates than boys, often to take up unpaid care duties within the home; they are more likely to experience food insecurity; they face higher risks of violence, exploitation and abuse when evacuated to unsafe shelter facilities;³⁰ and they are pushed into marriage as a perceived means of coping with shocks, particularly household economic strain following extreme events or crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic³¹. Many girls face gender-specific threats and violence in response to their climate and environmental advocacy, which is seen as challenging gender norms.

Children experiencing SOGIE-based discrimination are additionally at higher risk of poverty and homelessness, as well as sexual violence, compared to heterosexual children and youth³². This places them at greater risk of harm in the event of humanitarian crises as a result of extreme weather, as well as potential exclusion from emergency shelters and services.

Threat multiplier

The climate crisis and child marriage in the Sahel

In the Sahel – the region of Africa stretching from Senegal to Sudan – communities are facing both slow-onset temperature rises and sudden-onset disasters such as floods. The climate crisis has acted as a ‘threat multiplier’, exacerbating already-high levels of insecurity caused by conflict, widespread displacement, and food shortages. For the region’s girls, climate change is also increasing their exposure to sexual violence and child marriage.

In the Lake Chad Basin and the Liptako Gourma, where drought is intensifying water scarcity, women and girls are walking longer distances to obtain safe drinking water, and are facing increasing risks of assault while far from home. As families struggle to make ends meet, incidences of child marriage as an economic coping mechanism are increasing³³. Save the Children is working to strengthen households’ resilience by securing necessary food and water supplies.

In this complex humanitarian situation, climate change is amplifying pre-existing gender inequalities and exacerbating discrimination experienced by girls. Amidst these pressures, it is essential that girls’ rights to safety, security and self-determination be both protected and prioritised.

Indigenous children

For many indigenous children, climate change poses an existential threat to both their land and traditions, and systemic exclusion from decision-making extends their experience of historical dispossession. Indigenous children have been key participants in climate change litigation, including most notably in *Sacchi et al. v. Argentina et al.*; the first such case before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Here, Sami and Yupiaq child petitioners argue that global heating is making it impossible to practice their subsistence traditions. Elsewhere, a group of Marshallese youth outline how sea level rise, intensifying storms and ocean acidification are wiping out not only islands, but Pasifika cultural practices³⁴. The climate crisis poses both an immediate and intergenerational threat not only to indigenous children’s lives, but their very ways of life as handed down over millennia.



Collin Leafasia/Daily Mirror

Children with disabilities

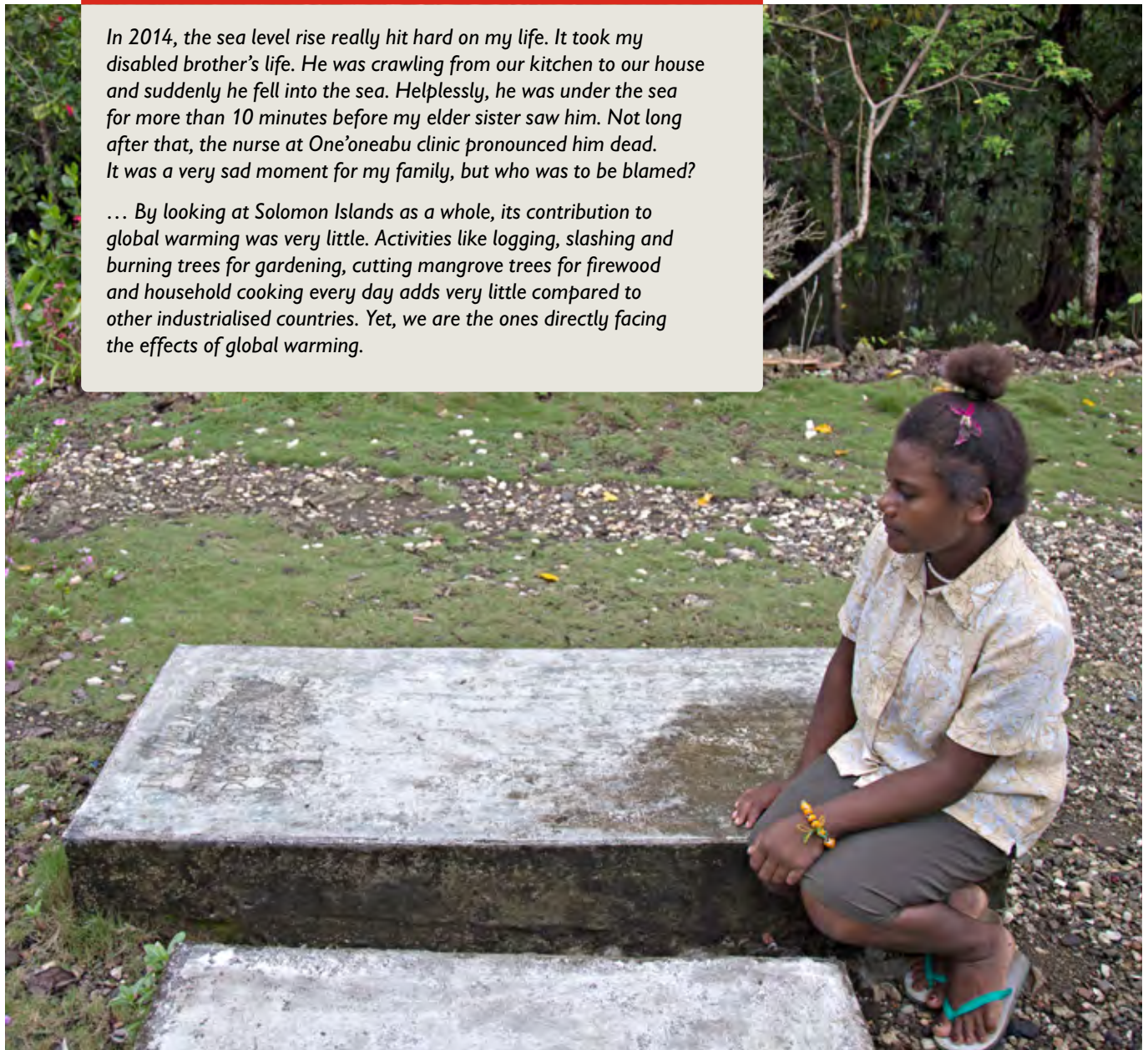
Climate change exacerbates the barriers experienced by children with disabilities, as well as children living with parents with disabilities. They are already more likely to be excluded from evacuations or other disaster response measures; they experience exclusion and adverse outcomes from disruptions to health, rehabilitation, and other disability-specific services; they are often unlikely to be housed in appropriately accessible emergency accommodation; they may not be able to use inaccessible WASH facilities and services; and many may have lost or experienced damage to important assistive technologies and devices. As climate change increases the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, more children with disabilities will be endangered more often. Despite this, people with disabilities and their representative organisations face systemic barriers to participation in decision-making. The failure to meaningfully identify risk reduction and adaptation measures that could be effective for, and carried out by, people with disabilities, further perpetuates this exclusion³⁵.

Jerma's story

Oibola, Solomon Islands³⁶

In 2014, the sea level rise really hit hard on my life. It took my disabled brother's life. He was crawling from our kitchen to our house and suddenly he fell into the sea. Helplessly, he was under the sea for more than 10 minutes before my elder sister saw him. Not long after that, the nurse at One'oneabu clinic pronounced him dead. It was a very sad moment for my family, but who was to be blamed?

... By looking at Solomon Islands as a whole, its contribution to global warming was very little. Activities like logging, slashing and burning trees for gardening, cutting mangrove trees for firewood and household cooking every day adds very little compared to other industrialised countries. Yet, we are the ones directly facing the effects of global warming.



Collin Leafasta/Daily Mirror



GMB Akash / Panos Pictures / Save the Children

Displaced children

Climate change is driving the movement of people by triggering weather events that have caused more than twice as many new displacements in 2020 as conflict and violence³⁷ and compounding the risk to the rights of children on the move and living in internal displacement and refugee settlements. The World Bank has estimated that without meaningful climate action including a reduction in emissions over 216 million people could move within their countries by 2050 across six regions³⁸. In the Pacific, where entire islands are becoming uninhabitable, at least 50,000 people per year are already at risk of being displaced by increasingly frequent and severe climate-related weather events³⁹. Children and families who migrate, including due to climate change impacts, often find themselves equally or more exposed to hazards and extreme weather events in their new locations, with fewer resources and support structures to manage impacts. In these precarious environments, children face immediate threats to their health, protection and wellbeing, the threat of family separation, and the ongoing risk of falling out of education and into child marriage, child labour or other forms of exploitation and abuse.

Drought and displacement in Lebanon

With prolonged conflict and crisis raging across its border with Syria, Lebanon hosts more refugees relative to its population than any country in the world. Of these refugees, 56.1% are children⁴⁰. As Lebanon plummets into near economic collapse, the climate crisis is an often-overlooked area of growing concern, with Lebanon's complex socio-political environment giving rise to simultaneous crises.

Increasingly frequent and lengthening droughts are causing not only reduced rainfall, but a decrease in snow levels, compromising vital water sources. Rising sea levels are further causing saltwater intrusion into coastal groundwater. These climate change-induced strains combine with policy bottlenecks to negatively impact Lebanon's water supply⁴¹. High demand of water for irrigation is already causing social tensions. As climate change intersects with other crises in Lebanon, it cannot be treated as a standalone issue but rather understood in the context of a deep economic crisis and protracted refugee crisis that is disproportionately impacting the region's children.



Jasec Moreno / Save the Children Colombia

No time to lose: limiting warming to secure children's futures

The above modelling of extreme event exposure draws on Paris Agreement climate action pledges made by governments. It is estimated that these underwhelming pledges will see warming limited to between 2.6 and 3.1°C; some distance from what is needed to protect children and their rights from the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

However, the same data plainly demonstrates the enormous positive impacts for children that could take place if governments drastically accelerate their efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C. The additional lifetime exposure of newborns to heatwaves could be reduced by 45%, droughts by 39%, river floods by 38%, crop failures by 28%, and wildfires by 10%. These differences are not just percentages. They represent the lives of real people, and real children. The need to both strengthen commitments and hold governments accountable to more ambitious targets is unambiguous. The impact of reducing the frequency of extreme weather events through cutting emissions will help keep more children in school, avoid increases in malnutrition, and ultimately save the lives of many of the world's most vulnerable children.

'Reduce pollution in the environment so that future generations can have life options.'

G. Jesus
12-year-old boy
RENAES/REDNNyAs
El Salvador

In order to create a more favorable and acceptable environment for the development of girls, boys and adolescents of the present generation and of the near future, I mention some problems that affect us:

- 1 Children and adolescents are affected by the contamination of transport by the emission of gases and unpleasant odor, which causes us respiratory diseases.*
- 2 In addition, unfavorable access to water, where there are households where they still do not have that vital service for life and personal, family and community development and that directly affects children and adolescents.*
- 3 In addition, mentioning heat waves, droughts, forest fires, poor harvests, endangered species, floods, cyclones and storms all affect health, housing and Education.*

In conclusion, seek to reduce pollution in the environment so that future generations can have life options and basic conditions for development itself.

Urgent climate action from states is necessary to reduce these lifetime risks, particularly from high-income states and notable emitters. Actions should include scaled-up financing for adaptation and support to the most-affected low- and middle-income countries already working to manage the impacts of climate change. It will also lay the economic foundations for prosperous futures for children. Global leadership in funding adaptation will yield a triple dividend, with benefits including avoided losses and damages through funding climate-resilience infrastructure and early warning mechanisms, economic benefits through adaptation measures that improve productivity and sustainability in sectors like agriculture, and crucially, ongoing social and environmental benefits to human habitats, capital and lives⁴². Investment in nature-based solutions – including the management, protection and restoration of natural ecosystems – offers a real opportunity to reduce emissions through the increase of carbon sinks. Simultaneously, this can build resilience against extreme events, preserve biodiversity and crucial ecosystem functions and services, and protect the goods and services these ecosystems provide to humanity⁴³.

These findings also validate the roles and leadership of children in climate action and emphasise the legitimacy of their arguments and activism. The data is clear that climate change affects the lives and trajectories of generations in dramatically different ways, and that while today's newborns cannot avoid the impact of a changing climate, there is scope for ambitious mitigation and adaptation efforts to substantially reduce the intergenerational impact.

To avert catastrophic warming of the earth and to safeguard children's futures, governments must redouble efforts to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, including by significantly increasing the ambition of current pledges in line with the best available science.

'Alone we will not be able to achieve it.'

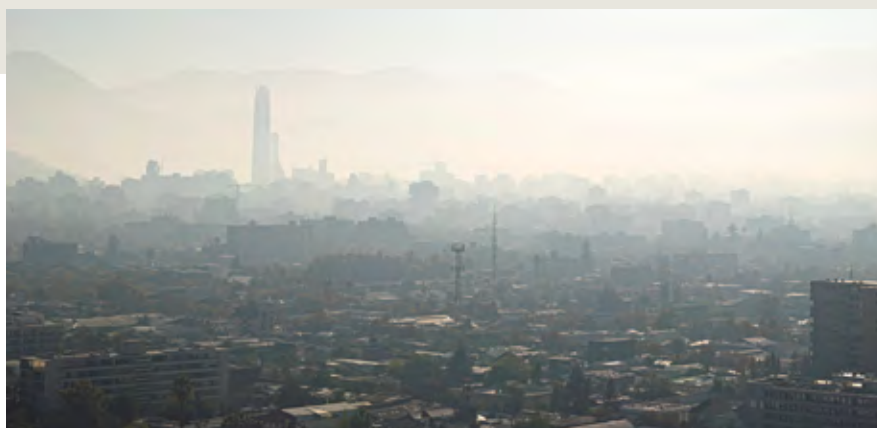
Laura
16-year-old girl
OPCION/REDNNyAs
Chile

When you go out and appreciate the outside, you face a grey scale, and an air full of pollution, you come home, and if you are part of that underprivileged "1 in 3 in the world", who do not have drinking water to recover from daily fatigue, your situation is risky, we are assured of a pollution-free environment, but where is it?

Global warming: Born as a result of little or no ecological awareness in current laws, that has us here, that is why we get involved, and that is why children and adolescents want to make themselves heard.

Raise awareness and educate from the beginning of school, raise renewable energies, take care of water and make it accessible to all, inspect factories and transport: Our air is damaged! And establish control of garbage, through the 3Rs.

We will do our part, raising awareness among our peers, and mainly, close adults so that they recognise the problem and become aware of it, because alone we will not be able to achieve it, we need joint work and real support from adults, even more so you, the decision makers, because today we are at risk, we have problems and ideas. We are today and without action we will not have tomorrow.



Getty Images/Stockphoto



Daphinee Cook/Save the Children

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE WHAT THE DATA MEANS FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world has made a promise to leave no one behind. But without urgent action – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, end the production, use and subsidy of fossil fuels and other practices that destroy or disrupt necessary ecosystems; fund adaptation and climate justice measures; and avert catastrophic warming of the earth – entire generations of children, present and future, are at risk of being left behind as their planet is reshaped by climate change. Children's increasing exposure to extreme events caused by the climate crisis has serious implications for both their rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the development trajectories of states as articulated in the SDGs.

'Children need to learn from the first years of school about their rights.'

Izelda

17-year-old girl

Albania

Children have their own legal identities and interests – separate from their parents' – worthy of protection. The well-being of children affects not only them and their families but society as a whole. Children who flourish in the early years are more likely to become productive citizens and contribute to a prosperous economy and participatory democracy. An investment in a child's well-being generates returns over the long term and affects the prosperity and viability of society well into the future. Above all I think the government should make a law that in schools there should be special treatment of this so important topic. Children need to learn from the first years of school about their rights.

Participation includes different kinds of involvement, contribution, assistance and co-determination. They differ in quality and have to be distinguished in participation initiated and controlled by adults, equal decision-making, and children's self-determined and initiated participation.

So, in my opinion, the first action that governments around the world should take is to formalise the teaching of children's rights and their participation in decision-making as the main school subject.

The right to health and nutrition

It is estimated that half a billion children live in flood-prone areas, and 920 million children are exposed to water scarcity, including drought⁴⁴. Increases in disease related to climate change are projected to have deadly implications for children, including vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever,⁴⁵ as well as water-borne diarrhoeal disease caused by the contamination of drinking water after heavy rains and floods⁴⁶.

Air pollution, which is a symptom of our addiction to fossil fuels, and exacerbates the impacts of climate change, poses an additional threat to children's health and wellbeing. Research collated following the 2020 Australian bushfires, which saw smoke blanketing major cities and air quality driven to unprecedented lows, found that even short-term exposure during pregnancy to severe air pollution following extreme events like bushfires and dust storms can have lifelong impacts on children, increasing the risk of pre-term birth and growth restriction⁴⁷. This exposure, however, is not limited to extreme events: more than 90% of children globally are exposed to fine particulate matter every day in concentrations that are above the WHO guidelines⁴⁸. This can lead to increased risk of lung damage, impaired lung growth, and pneumonia – one of the biggest killers of children.

Extreme weather conditions, droughts and deforestation will also detrimentally impact food systems, leading to reduced harvests, a lack of food diversification, and scarcity of staple crops, in turn leading to market price inflation. Soil depletion caused by the loss of agricultural biodiversity, excessive use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, and monocropping, all compound the challenge for children. Young children are highly vulnerable to the lifelong impacts of food insecurity, like dietary imbalance, vitamin deficiency, increased susceptibility to disease, malnutrition including wasting and stunting, and poor cognitive development. It has been conservatively estimated that unless fossil fuel reliance decreases, nearly 95,000 additional deaths will occur annually due to climate change-related malnutrition in children aged 5 by 2050⁴⁹.

‘Decision makers should focus more on activities that would reduce the risks of climate change.’

Vasilija
14-year-old girl
Kosovo

Decision makers in my community should focus more on activities that would reduce the risks of climate change. Since I live in a municipality that is surrounded by forests, the municipality as an institution should start with activities to promote the importance of forests for our health, but also for the health of children in our municipality.

First of all, the world should raise awareness among the public on how much forests protect the territory where we live and how they contribute to cleaner air, then the next action should be raising awareness among young people about volunteer activities that can repair the damage that has already been done.

Local authorities should strive to implement the environmental laws that have been enacted in cooperation with other institutions. These are just some of the activities that the local government could carry out.

Responding to the challenge: Child-sensitive climate financing

With children's right to a safe and healthy future under threat, substantial funding increases – particularly from those most responsible for the climate crisis – are needed to reduce health risks, support resilience initiatives, and foster locally-led adaptation.

For low- and middle-income countries, the human and financial costs of adapting to a changing climate are rising. It is estimated that annual adaptation costs currently total USD\$70 billion and are expected to reach USD\$140–300 billion by 2030⁵⁰. Current public funding for adaptation measures, however, is falling far short of estimated needs at around USD\$30 billion annually⁵¹. This is a significant gap, but the alternative is not cost-neutral: with humanitarian response costs compounding, each day of inaction is costing governments and donors more as they struggle to keep pace with increasingly frequent and intense extreme weather events, and the infrastructure, health and human capital costs they incur.

Increasing climate finance flows to lower- and middle- income countries is not just an increasingly urgent necessity when compared to the cost of inaction, but an investment in long-term planning to build the resilience of communities to the slow-onset impacts of climate change, and safeguarding economies from more sudden shocks. Climate policies can and should also be designed to complement investments and maximise benefit for the most-affected communities: for example, emissions reduction policies can include growing fiscal resources from environmental taxes, and channelling this revenue towards improving social protection can build community resilience to climate-related shocks and their long-term economic impacts⁵². Research has found that investing \$1.8 trillion globally in five areas of adaptation from 2020 to 2030 – namely strengthening early warning systems, making new infrastructure climate-resilient, improving crop production, protecting mangroves and improving the resilience of water resources management – could generate \$7.1 trillion in total net benefits⁵³.

Within adaptation funding, prioritisation of locally-led initiatives can also ensure that immediate needs are met and that investments contribute to building the decision-making power and social capital of communities on the frontlines of climate change⁵⁴. Scaling up climate finance is therefore not only a matter of spending more, but spending better and more justly to reduce the financial inequalities between those who have contributed most to climate change and those who have contributed least.

Children and their needs must be at the centre of climate action. In line with the CRC obligation to ensure the best interests of the child, increases in climate finance should be accompanied by assessments of the impact of climate change on diverse groups of children, and utilise specific criteria to ensure child-sensitive investment. These criteria should prioritise investments that ensure children's voices are listened to and considered, and that set out specific measures to protect the rights of children, such as climate-sensitive investments in education, health and child protection. Measures that specifically benefit the children most affected by inequality and discrimination should be prioritised.



Case study The role of climate resilience technology in ending the cycle of undernutrition in Bangladesh

In the Sylhet and Moulvibazar districts of Bangladesh, climate shocks and extreme events like heavy rainfall, droughts and flash flooding are affecting households' food production and children's nutrition. In order to improve resilience and nutritional outcomes, and with support from the European Union and UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Save the Children is implementing the Suchana initiative to scale up climate resilient interventions and make them accessible to the poorest communities and households.

Suchana's disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation interventions involve small-scale farming innovations, including low-cost technologies like sac bags and tower gardens, which both maximise land use and lessen the risk of losing crops to floods. These measures have supported households to grow fresh produce for their own consumption, diversify sources of nutrition, and sell excess produce in local markets. By participating in the program, families have also been provided with training in disaster management and preparedness for climate shocks, and have been connected to formal government safety nets.

As a result, 98% of participating households are currently growing nutrition-rich vegetables, 63% of households made a profit and increased productive assets from income generating activities, and 84.7% of households have adopted climate-resilient practices.

The right to education

Climate and environmental threats, including disasters and disease outbreaks, are responsible for disruptions in the education of over 37 million children each year – this accounts for nearly half of the 75 million children and youth who will have their education disrupted due to an emergency or crisis⁵⁵. Disrupted learning is also more likely to affect girls, and for longer. In Pakistan after the 2010 floods (which were made worse by climate change⁵⁶), 24% of girls in Grade 6 dropped out of school, compared with 6% of boys⁵⁷. If current trends continue, by 2025 the climate emergency will contribute to preventing at least 12.5 million girls from completing their education each year⁵⁸.



Mohamed Osman/Save the Children

Climate change not only disrupts access to education services but can also affect a child's ability to learn. Heat can have a significant impact on educational attainment, with students showing lower learning outcomes during hot school years compared to cooler school years: research suggests that each degree Fahrenheit increase in temperature throughout a school year reduces the amount learned that year by 1%⁵⁹. Heat exposure can exacerbate inequalities, with students from lower-income homes more likely to live in areas impacted by heat, and less likely to benefit from mitigations such as air-conditioning. Air pollution from fuel burning and other emissions also has immediate impacts. Students moving into schools downwind of highways experience decreases in test scores, more behavioural incidents, and more absences relative to those transitioning upwind of the same pollution source⁶⁰. Modelling also suggests that working memory development of children exposed to 20% more nitrogen dioxide than their peers would be delayed by around three weeks per year⁶¹. In times of crisis, schools can also provide a critical platform for delivering health services, information, psychosocial support and protection from increased risks of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

'A child must have their right to education.'

Dilmani
15-year-old girl
Sri Lanka

Climate change is a huge crisis in Sri Lanka. The most frequent disasters that we face in our country are floods, droughts and earth slips. The people who are mainly impacted from these are farmers. They will be deprived of their basic requirements. Moreover, many rural areas are frequently affected by floods. Therefore, the education of the children in the affected areas get disrupted. Our government allocates mere 3% or less of their annual budget for education. A child must have their right to education because it's the only way they can pave their future. Therefore, the government should focus more on how to help these affected children and to ensure continuous education without disruption. If the decision makers take action to provide these children with devices and ensure continuous access to internet, they can continue their studies even during disastrous periods. Government can provide the public with dedicated locations with free Internet access continuous education for children can be ensured. The Government should allocate increased spend for children and their education from the annual budget. Furthermore, Government must take effective steps to eradicate malnutrition among the underprivileged children as health and education of the future generation will ensure the progress of a country.

Responding to the challenge: strengthening resilient education systems

In order to address these risks, every country needs a crisis-sensitive education plan. Institutionalising risk management and anticipatory action in the education sector is crucial to building resilient education systems,⁶² to reducing the risks to education that children face before, during and after a crisis, and promoting education policies and programmes that will help prevent future crises⁶³.

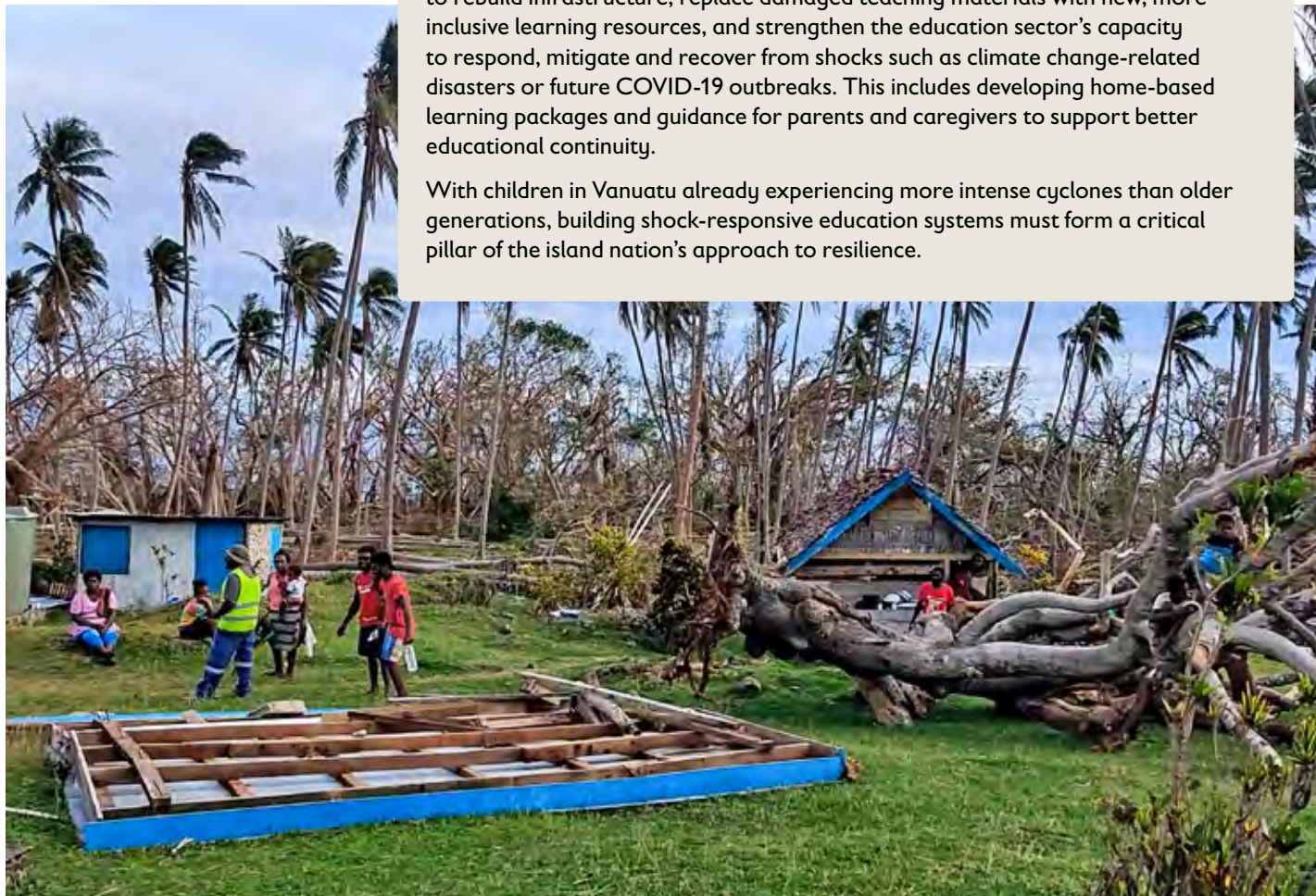
As governments scale up climate financing for low- and middle-income countries, it is essential that this is informed by gender and power analyses, takes place in dialogue with the most-affected communities and children, and is complemented by sustained investments in building ongoing resilience in key service sectors, including education. This will support disaster-affected communities not only in maintaining services throughout and in the aftermath of extreme events, but in weathering potential economic and health shocks wrought in the days and weeks that follow.

Case study Building educational resilience after Tropical Cyclone Harold

Tropical Cyclone Harold was the second-most powerful cyclone to strike Vanuatu in recorded history, making landfall in April 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic was sweeping across the globe. In Penama province, the cyclone left 30% of schools with extensive damage, and in Sanma province 70% of schools lost between 50% and 100% of their school resources and materials.

With support from the Global Partnership for Education and in partnership with Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training, Save the Children are working to rebuild infrastructure, replace damaged teaching materials with new, more inclusive learning resources, and strengthen the education sector's capacity to respond, mitigate and recover from shocks such as climate change-related disasters or future COVID-19 outbreaks. This includes developing home-based learning packages and guidance for parents and caregivers to support better educational continuity.

With children in Vanuatu already experiencing more intense cyclones than older generations, building shock-responsive education systems must form a critical pillar of the island nation's approach to resilience.



The right to protection

Extreme weather events are increasing children's exposure to violence and exploitation in a number of ways. Stressors on families stemming from uncertainty, shocks, and life-changes can increase violence in the home. Pressure on livelihoods can lead to negative coping strategies such as children's removal from school, involvement in child labour, and child marriage.

In the wake of extreme weather events, increased food insecurity and massive movements of people result in additional risks to children. Forced displacement disrupts children's access to basic services but also puts them at risk of separation, with unaccompanied and separated children made vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation, or recruitment and use by armed groups in conflict.

Human security and children's safety and wellbeing will also be threatened as environmental degradation worsens and climatic conditions become more unpredictable and extreme, adding to the complex interplay of socio-economic and political factors that lead to conflict⁶⁴. The ongoing insecurity as a result of conflict and climate shocks in the Sahel has seen 8 in 10 children experiencing violence, with many fleeing and becoming exposed to increased risks of exploitation and abuse⁶⁵.

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, limited access to services is one of many threats to children's rights and wellbeing, yet this is also where the need for protection services can be highest. With the drivers of conflict heightened, more children will be exposed to risk of death, injury, displacement, violence, attacks on education and long-term impairments. Girls are typically at far higher risk of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, while boys are more likely to be exposed to killing and maiming, abductions and recruitment to armed groups⁶⁶. Children with disabilities also face particular risks of being deprioritised and excluded, abandoned or trafficked.

All these situations can have long-term effects on children's health, development, safety and psychological well-being. Without access to adequate social and emotional support services, exposure to such strong and often prolonged adverse experiences can trigger a 'toxic stress response'⁶⁷ that can have immediate, detrimental effects on children and adolescents, and create the risk of lifelong mental health conditions.

Responding to the challenge: increasing family and community engagement, understanding and promotion of children's protection

Experience from the early phase of COVID-19, which evolved from a health crisis to a socio-economic and protection crisis, underlines the critical importance of strengthening existing early warning systems for protection risks. These should include investment in analysis and forecasting of child protection risks, the inclusion of children's protection in preparedness planning, and agreements on thresholds for early action to prevent and respond to protection risks before they become overwhelming. Investments should be made to build up community child protection mechanisms and staffing when risks such as gender-based violence, child labour, child marriage and violence against children are identified.

There is a vital link to be made with shock-responsive social protection programmes, particularly those adopting 'cash-plus'⁶⁸ methodologies that deliver cash alongside interventions that support families to overcome violence and exploitation.

With the drivers of conflict heightened, more children will be exposed to risk of death, injury, displacement, violence, attacks on education and long-term impairments.

The right to social protection

In many countries on the frontlines of climate change, absent or weak government social protection measures are leaving children and their families vulnerable to deeper poverty as livelihoods and services are disrupted by climate-related events. While the COVID-19 pandemic has escalated progress in strengthening social protection around the world, there are still gaps in providing support to families for child-rearing, as well as adequate coverage for children and adults with disabilities⁶⁹. This leaves many children inadequately supported at the best of times, and at severe risk of having their basic needs unfulfilled during times of crisis, such as in the aftermath of extreme events, in turn made more frequent and severe by the climate crisis.

Despite the negative impact of the climate crisis on human security, funding allocations for disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response continue to be insufficient to build climate resilience at scale and across sectors. With climate change substantially increasing disaster risk over time, these meagre allocations will only grow more inadequate, placing more people in harm's way, and without humanitarian support in times of crisis. At the same time, conflict is also undermining communities' and governments' ability to invest in climate resilience, leaving children and their families more vulnerable to shocks that undermine financial security and put their basic needs at risk.

In order to help at-risk countries and communities better manage the unavoidable impacts of the climate emergency and protect children's most fundamental needs and rights in times of crisis, significant increases in humanitarian and climate finance are urgently needed, alongside increased attention to empowering local and national disaster and climate risk management and supporting local humanitarian action to build resilience ahead of potential crises.

Responding to the challenge: shock-responsive or adaptive social protection

In countries affected by climate-induced disasters, cash transfers, particularly when provided alongside access to basic services and complementary interventions, can be transformational in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, fulfilling children's rights, and helping families to better manage climate change-related and other shocks that would otherwise push them deeper into poverty⁷⁰. In addition to providing immediate support in the case of extreme weather events, the presence of existing government social protection measures reduces vulnerability to shocks by reducing poverty and enhancing resilience. They also help improve human development outcomes by increasing access to health, education, violence prevention, child protection, and other services. If designed appropriately, they can even incentivise activities that help manage climate change, such as promoting afforestation or climate-smart livelihoods. Social protection may also have a role to play in supporting a just transition to cleaner energy by compensating and supporting workers affected by the transition⁷¹.

Working towards universal coverage of social protection for certain groups, such as universal child benefits (UCBs), offers a particularly powerful means for governments to respond to climate-related shocks. If, as in a number of countries, all children below a certain age were registered for their caregivers to receive monthly payments to help meet their needs, the administrative burden associated with scaling up support in the event of shocks, such as climate-related disasters, would be significantly reduced⁷². If UCBs had been in place prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would have been possible to rapidly reach two-thirds of households globally with critical financial support and links to services⁷³. Shock-responsive social protection systems should therefore be viewed as a central component for resilience, climate adaptation, and justice.

Cash transfers can be transformational in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, fulfilling children's rights, and helping families to better manage climate change-related and other shocks that would otherwise push them deeper into poverty.

As governments, donors, and multilateral institutions revisit their climate finance commitments in the midst of the unprecedented opportunity to 'build back better' from the COVID-19 pandemic, they should recognise the role of social protection in managing the increasing impacts of climate shocks on children and their families. This requires a commitment to scaling up inclusive and child-sensitive social protection systems, with the ambition to move over time to UCBs as way of improving child protection and well-being, and building enduring household and community resilience.



Sachin Myers/Save the Children

Case study Piloting shock-responsive social protection in Somalia

Somalia is a country coming out of decades of conflict and insecurity, layered on top of cyclical and increasingly severe climate shocks, including recurring droughts and floods. After recent extreme flood events, Fatun*, 7, told us *“the flood took away our goats. Now we have three but before we had more. I used to help the goats.”* Overall, 49% of Somalis are unable to meet their food requirements even if they spend all their money on food.

Save the Children has been an early adopter of the Early Action model, which draws on climate-focused data to respond early to indicators that a shock is about to hit, instead of reacting to emergencies after they happen, to mitigate a full-scale humanitarian crisis in the wake of a climate event⁷⁴. Part of this adoption has involved four shock-responsive safety net pilots in Somalia. Each pilot relies on agreed early warning indicators that are triggered through a consultative process with local actors. By having systems in place before shocks hit, we have been able to deliver cash to people in need just six days after triggering a response, reducing their need to engage in harmful negative coping strategies.

There is growing evidence that providing early support – such as cash – saves lives and livelihoods, and is more cost effective. These shock-responsive mechanisms can help to form the bridge between longer-term development initiatives that aim to build government-owned and -led social protection schemes, and humanitarian cash that responds to crises.

*Name changed to protect identity.

'We children are maybe not climate-scientist, but we know something important. We must act now!'

Emanuel
14-year-old girl
Norway

The right to participation

Listen to us children and act now!

Global warming, heatwaves, flood and all the other catastrophic consequences of climate change is something children today must live with for a long time, together with all the coming generations. But there is one problem, the climate-changes are something we can't live with. It can be a little rough to say it, but if we don't do something, it will be our doom. In 2019, young people from all over the world participated in demonstrations due to Thunberg's 'Fridays for future'. On March 15th, 1.4 million pupils and students from 125 different countries said loud and clear they want change, they want a future. As the situation is today, what we are doing to stop the climate change is not enough at all. We must change drastically and start taking the climate crisis seriously, we must act now to have a chance of reaching our goals and save the future. We children are maybe not climate-scientist, but we know something important. We must act now! Before it's too late, then we will regret. The leaders today have the future of mankind on their shoulders, our future.

Listen to us and the scientists, act now!

Despite the direct and disproportionate threat to their rights now and in the future, and their demonstrated, brave leadership in defending these rights in the face of crisis, children are routinely excluded from and overlooked in decision-making: children were only directly mentioned in 20% of all Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) developed after the introduction of the Paris Agreement⁷⁵. States and intergovernmental bodies have a responsibility to recognise the current and future lived experiences of children under Article 3 of the CRC, which asserts that 'in all actions concerning children... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'⁷⁶.

Around the world, children are taking bold action to stand up for their rights and for the climate, organising strikes, petitions, and campaigns to demand recognition and action from their governments. Growing numbers are complementing this highly visible action by using the courts to defend their rights and demand a voice in defining their interests, drawing on the CRC to assert the negligence of ministers who approve projects that increase emissions,⁷⁷ to argue discrimination on the basis of different generations' experiences of climate change,⁷⁸ and to articulate climate action as a matter of intergenerational justice⁷⁹.

The agency and capacities of children and youth climate activists, however, are poorly understood, frequently disrespected, and actively undermined by governments. In a striking example, Australia's then-Minister for Finance and now Secretary-General of the OECD described child climate activists as having been 'used and abused'⁸⁰ by adult-led campaigning organisations and asserted that children belong in school. As children exercise their rights to campaign and influence change, they deserve the respect and support of adults, particularly those duty-bearers tasked with protecting their freedoms of expression, assembly, peaceful association, and access to information.

Encouraging and facilitating an active role for children in defining their best interests fulfils an intrinsic human right, as further defined in the 2020 Human Rights Council resolution on realising the rights of the child through a healthy environment,⁸¹ 'every child capable of forming his or her views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child, including in environmental decision-making processes that may be relevant to his or her life'⁸².

Red Alert Climate Activist: Shreya from Nepal/Nepalese Youth for Climate Action



Sacha Mijers / Save the Children



‘It is in our hands to do something. If we won’t soon, it may be too late’

Shivangi
17-year-old girl
United States

Responding to the challenge: creating meaningful opportunities for children in climate policy

The COVID-19 pandemic has restricted the ability of civil society organisations and activists – including children – to organise events and share their concerns publicly. Where these voices can no longer be heard in public spaces, politicians and policy makers must listen in other ways and recognise that public concern, particularly that of children, about the climate crisis has not diminished. Children, particularly those most affected by inequality and discrimination, must have real and safe opportunities to exercise their civil rights and freedoms, including the right to be heard in climate policy development at all levels.

States, intergovernmental organisations, the private sector, civil society actors, and the wider public must respect and protect children’s rights to expression, association, and peaceful assembly and their right to act as human rights defenders in law and practice. As a measure of this respect, decision-makers must establish child-friendly mechanisms and platforms (both on- and offline) to facilitate children’s engagement, create mechanisms for meaningful consultation with children to guarantee their safe and effective participation, and address and speak out against violations of children’s civil rights and freedoms.

Children’s participation must not be limited to a point in time determined by those in power. To support their participation, children should have ongoing access to age-, gender- and ability-appropriate information, and education on the climate and environmental crisis through formal and informal education. Investments in access to information are essential to ensure that children have the necessary skills and knowledge to build resilience and adaptive capacity, and to empower children to influence, promote, and create a more sustainable future.

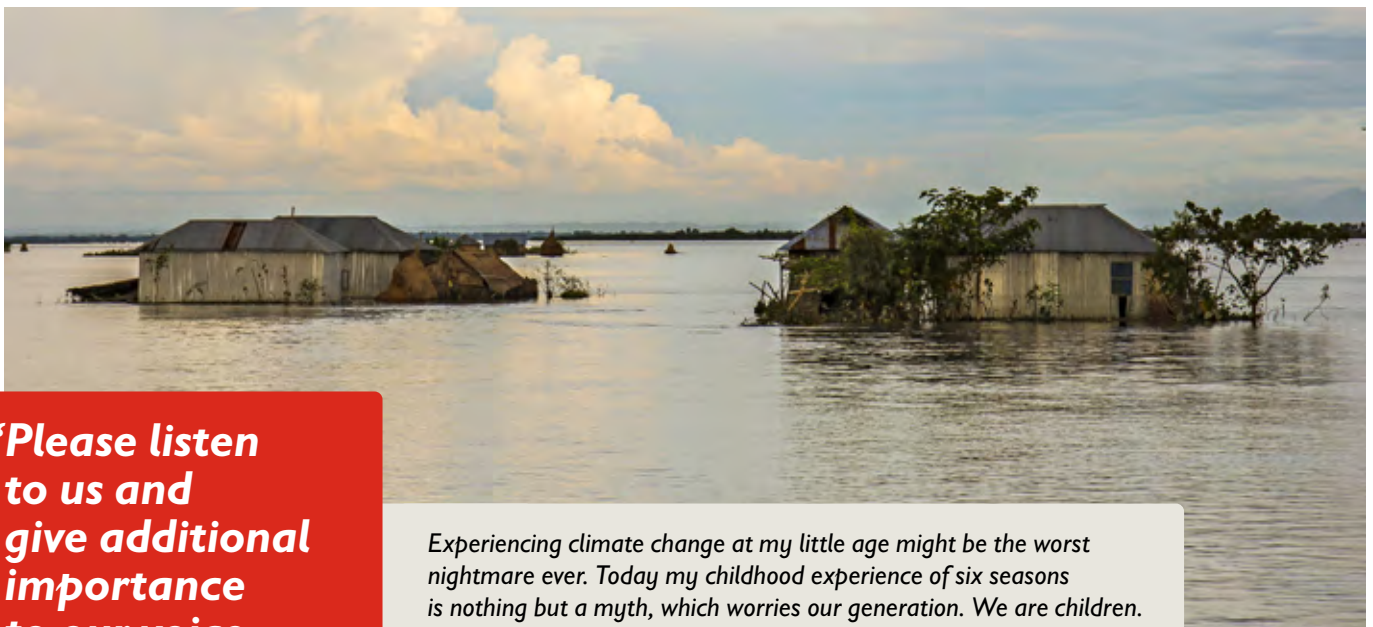
Everyone knows about the disastrous effects of climate change on the planet. However, what many may not realise is how heavy the toll is on children and future generations. Children are particularly vulnerable because they are still growing and unable to protect themselves against the increased effects of climate change.

What makes matters worse is that they are not listened to. With rising temperatures, problems many are already facing worsen. Because of this, I urge you to listen to children and consider our opinions when making policies concerning climate change. Children should be encouraged to advocate for their thoughts and lobby. This would show our opinions on climate change and have a crucial impact on the decision-making process.

Getting back into the Paris Climate Deal is not enough. We should be creating new ways to take care of the future regarding plastic, waste, etc. We should also be providing amenities and resources to those who are most affected by climate change, especially children. It is in our hands to do something. If we won’t soon, it may be too late. We must take care of the earth and those residing on it. After all, if we don’t, who will?

For civil society organisations, supporting child-led campaigning such as Save the Children’s multi-country *Red Alert* initiative in Asia, enables those with the most at risk to influence decision-makers. To date, *Red Alert* has supported child campaigners to raise public awareness and advocate to decision-makers across the Asia-Pacific, including through high-level meetings, budget advocacy, and the production of short films with messages for world leaders⁸³.

Governments have a major role to play in mandating, establishing, and effectively resourcing accessible platforms for children to raise concerns and hold governments to account for existing climate commitments, as well as demanding more ambitious ones to come. Law and policy should provide guidance on the format, structure, operation, and evaluation of all child participatory mechanisms. Sufficient financial and other resources must also be made available to ensure sustainable and effective mechanisms are introduced and maintained. Other key measures include establishing children's citizens' assemblies and taking steps to facilitate accountability including ratifying the third Optional Protocol to the CRC, which allows children to bring complaints directly to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. While these measures are first and foremost necessary for ensuring children's rights, they can also contribute to building a values-based sense of global citizenship among children, foster greater social cohesion within and between communities, deliver more targeted and informed policy outcomes, and play a significant role in creating and sustaining stable democracies⁸⁴.



Save the Children Bangladesh

‘Please listen to us and give additional importance to our voice. We promise you to become part of the solution.’

Diya
16-year-old girl
Bangladesh

Experiencing climate change at my little age might be the worst nightmare ever. Today my childhood experience of six seasons is nothing but a myth, which worries our generation. We are children. We have limited abilities and scopes compared to adults. We cannot make many decisions, we can tell our problems and pressure adults to find solutions. We are young, but we have the rights to be heard. We have the right to have a safe and better future.

Global warming is rising day by day. Children of our generation are approaching a future with huge risks. We are facing the most impact of it when we are least responsible for it. Notably, children of the coastal regions are more exposed to disasters. If we do not take any solution early and work together to reduce climate change, countries like Bangladesh will be under the sea within the next 50 years.

As a child representative from a disaster-prone country, I am requesting that the leaders and decision-makers please listen to us and give additional importance to our voice. We promise you to become part of the solution.



Pablo Barnes / Save the Children

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the international community now considers its development trajectories in a post-pandemic world, the climate crisis must remain central in order to build more resilient communities. We cannot ‘build back better’ by re-assembling the building blocks of economies that have failed the most vulnerable, safety nets that have allowed those in need to fall through the gaps, and industries that continue to harm our planet and people. COVID-19 recovery efforts provide an opportunity to move beyond a limited ambition to restore ‘business as usual’ to an ambition of building forward toward a better, greener and more equal future for children. We must question the foundations of the systems that have proven to be so fragile in the face of such disruption, and recognise that this crisis is an opportunity for hope and positive change.

It is also critical that children of current and future generations are not only at the heart of all decisions, but at the table. In developing our recommendations, the Child Reference Group who supported the development of this report identified their own recommendations. The views of these children and climate change technical specialists converge to highlight the urgent need for ambitious climate action and financing, shock-responsive social protection, and inclusive decision-making. Together, these recommendations provide a crucial blueprint for decision-makers responsible for realising children’s rights and protecting the best interests of children.

It is critical that children of current and future generations are not only at the heart of all decisions, but at the table.

Urgent, comprehensive, and transformative climate action

Governments have been far too slow to recognise that the climate crisis represents a grave intergenerational injustice and acute threat to children's rights, wellbeing, and opportunities, both now and in the future. Without urgent and concerted action on climate change taken in the rapidly closing window that scientists say we have to act, the future for children will be significantly bleaker. Save the Children is calling on governments – particularly those of high-income countries who have benefitted from exploitation of the environment – donors, the private sector, and multilateral agencies, to acknowledge that the climate crisis affects children first and worst, to declare a climate emergency, and to take urgent and tangible steps towards scaling up climate action and emissions reduction efforts. These efforts include:

- **Taking ambitious and urgent action now to limit warming to a maximum of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.** Without immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach. To avert catastrophic warming of the earth, governments must redouble efforts to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. This should involve increasing the ambition articulated in NDCs to include committing to the urgent and drastic reduction of emissions and necessary climate change mitigation commitments to limit warming to 1.5°C, in line with best available science.
- **Rapidly phasing out the use and subsidy of fossil fuels and other environmentally destructive practices, moving towards renewable and green energy as quickly as possible,** and providing incentives to ensure the families most affected by inequality and discrimination are supported to access new economic opportunities driven by the green economy. The burning of coal, oil, and natural gas are the main drivers of the climate crisis⁸⁵. High-income countries, which have a unique responsibility for the problem, must lead the way towards a just transition from investment in fossil fuels towards green jobs, and ensure that low- and middle-income countries are supported to transition to net-zero carbon economies and adapt to the now-unavoidable impacts of climate change.
- **Implementing commitments made in the UN Human Rights Council resolution on realising the rights of the child through a healthy environment.** This includes, but is not limited to, recognising a right to a healthy environment in national legislation in order to promote justiciability, strengthen accountability, and facilitate greater participation of children; strengthening regulatory agencies and ministries responsible for overseeing standards relevant to the rights of the child implicated by climate change; and strengthening efforts to monitor childhood exposure to the impacts of climate change by collecting information on the impact of environmental harm on children⁸⁶. This commitment to children's rights should be strengthened by establishing a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change.
- **Signing and implementing the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action⁸⁷ to accelerate inclusive, child and youth-centered climate policies and action at national and global levels.** Developed by representatives of the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative, UNICEF, and the Children and Youth constituency to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Declaration is based in priorities and inputs identified by children around the world through online and in-person consultation.



Alex Ellinghausen/Sydney Morning Herald

Kate Stanworthy/Save the Children



- **Systematically assessing the impact of climate related laws, policies, financing, and programmes on different groups of children, and make these assessments publicly available.** Child rights impact assessments help make the impact on children visible, inform more effective and child-sensitive policy-making, and ensure that policies and other actions do not harm children.
- **Taking an equitable approach to policy planning and implementation, including by analysing existing inequalities and disaggregating data, at a minimum by age, gender, and disability status,** in order to capture the specific impact of the climate crisis on different groups of children. Weaknesses in data collection and over-reliance on averages fail to capture the impact on children, particularly girls and other groups affected by inequality and discrimination.
- **Ensuring integrated preparedness plans are in place to respond to future crises that impact children’s learning and wellbeing via sustained investments in key sectors such as education, health, social protection, and child protection. This includes flexible, accessible, inclusive, and gender-responsive distance learning programmes** that can be scaled up rapidly in the event of future school closures and prevent disruptions to learning in the event of crises. These must be developed and implemented in consultation with children, parents, education authorities, school leaders, teachers, and school staff. Over the longer-term, construction or improvement of physical education facilities should draw on the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Guidance on Safer School Construction to make schools more resilient to disasters and shocks.
- **Affirming that the private sector has a crucial role to play in combating the climate crisis.** Actors in the private sector should be a key part of leading the just transition to sustainable carbon-neutral economies that will safeguard our planet and the future of children, including by divesting from fossil fuels and creating greener jobs. Through their activities, products, or business relationships, the private sector should identify, prevent, and mitigate exposure of children to toxicants and environmental degradation. They should also carry out environmental and human rights impact assessments that examine the effects of proposed action on children in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Children’s Rights and Business Principles. The private sector is also in a position to contribute to closing the climate finance gap and raise greater awareness about the climate crisis.



Children’s recommendations

- Decision-makers should take all information that they receive about climate change into account.
- Reduce fossil fuels and move towards renewable and green energy.
- Governments should give more support to communities to cut pollution and fossil fuel use, and make sure that green and renewable energy alternatives are accessible for all people to use.
- Promote public transportation as a way to cut emissions. This could also make it easier for people to continue to access work and school even during extreme weather events.

High-income countries, who have historically contributed the most to climate change, must fulfil their financial pledges to low- and middle-income countries who have contributed far less.



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Rapid scale up of climate finance for mitigation, adaptation and anticipatory action

Without substantial increases in financing, climate commitments and policies will remain empty promises to the millions of children that are affected by the climate crisis on a daily basis. High-income countries, who have historically contributed the most to climate change, must fulfil their financial pledges to low- and middle-income countries who have contributed far less, but who are now suffering the consequences. Save the Children is calling on governments and donors to adopt an intergenerationally just approach to climate finance and adaptation. This includes:

- **Increasing climate financing to fulfil the unmet pledge to mobilise at least \$100 billion annually by 2020, and help lower- and middle- income countries transition to clean development and manage unavoidable impacts, using specified metrics to ensure child-sensitive investment.** This includes new and additional financial support, given as grants and based on principles of predictability, transparency, and being locally-led, as articulated in the Global Commission on Adaptation's Principles for Locally Led Adaptation⁸⁸. Countries with the highest levels of historic responsibility must address their carbon debt for causing climate change and climate damage by contributing their fair share of climate finance flows.
- **Allocating at least 50% of investment to adaptation, resilience, and disaster risk reduction measures, particularly those that specifically benefit the children most affected by inequalities and discrimination.** Without a significant scaling-up of investment in adaptation – only constituting 11% of global public climate finance in 2017–18 – millions of children will suffer from the irreversible impacts that have already been set in motion⁸⁹. National approaches to climate and disaster risk reduction should also ensure coherence between the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which promises to leave no one behind.
- **Creating a new climate finance mechanism to address loss and damage by 2023.** In climate vulnerable communities across the world, the irreversible impacts of the climate crisis are costing children their rights, particularly those who are suffering because of inequality and discrimination. Governments need to support the development of new and additional climate finance to urgently address rapidly escalating loss and damage, as well as the creation of a new climate finance mechanism for loss and damage by 2023. Governments should agree the operational entity to mobilise this technical assistance in the form of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage, which must be inclusive, gender-sensitive, fit-for-purpose, and enabled to deliver real technical assistance to the countries, communities, and children on the frontlines of the climate crisis.
- **Prioritising anticipatory actions to save lives and livelihoods,** with investment in analytics, pre-agreed financing, and action plans to rapidly support communities before disasters occur, helping avert full scale humanitarian crises. Evidence is growing that robust forecast-based finance (FbF) is a highly cost-effective way to protect communities from predictable climate change risks. More investment is needed to ensure the right analytics are in place, that conflict and child-sensitive action plans are agreed, and that financing is available. This will ensure payouts are timely and actions appropriate to protect communities and children.

- **Ensuring a comprehensive focus on children, especially those most impacted by inequalities and discrimination, in international and national climate related commitments, policies, and frameworks.** To address this, governments must ensure that children and their rights are explicitly included in revised national climate plans, including the Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans. The specific needs and situation of vulnerability experienced by girls, indigenous children, children with disabilities, refugee, migrant and displaced children, and other groups impacted by inequality and discrimination, must be given due attention. UNFCCC decision-making processes must integrate a stronger focus on children's rights and those furthest behind as a cross-cutting priority, and to ensure safe and meaningful opportunities for children to influence these processes.



Children's recommendation

- Governments should give more support to communities to cut pollution and fossil fuel use, and make sure that green and renewable energy alternatives are accessible for all people to use.

Supporting children's meaningful engagement and agency in climate policy

Policymakers and the wider public must recognise children as equal stakeholders and key agents of change in the climate and environmental crisis. They must respect and protect children's rights to expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and their right to act as environmental human rights defenders in law and practice. Save the Children is calling on governments, intergovernmental organisations, the private sector, and civil society actors to take tangible steps towards supporting and respecting children's engagement and agency in climate policy by:

- **Empowering and supporting children to take action on climate issues that are important to them.** In particular, the children most affected by inequality and discrimination must have real opportunities to exercise their right to speak out, mobilise, campaign, demand accountability, and participate fully in climate and environmental discussions and policy development at all levels.
- **Enacting laws that guarantee the rights of children to participate in all matters affecting them, including public decision-making processes with implications for the climate and environment.** Law and policy should be specific and provide guidance on the format, structure, operation, and evaluation of all child participatory mechanisms. Sufficient financial and other resources must be made available to ensure sustainable and effective mechanisms are introduced and maintained.
- **Establishing child-friendly mechanisms and platforms on- and off-line to facilitate children's safe and effective formal engagement in climate policy making.** Violations of children's rights must be addressed, including gender-based violence and threats experienced by girls.
- **Ensuring that laws restricting civil society activities of child and adult climate activists must be necessary, reasonable, and proportionate to a legitimate purpose,** and never limit those rights which are absolute or non-derogable.



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- **Ensuring that children have access to justice, including effective remedies and reparation of violations due to environmental harm and climate related child rights violations, through child-friendly and gender-responsive complaints mechanisms at all levels**, including by ratifying the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.
- **Ensuring that children have access to age-, gender- and ability-appropriate information and education on the climate and environmental crisis through formal and informal education** to ensure that children have the necessary skills and knowledge to build resilience and adaptive capacity, and to empower children to influence, promote, and create a more sustainable future. Governments must ensure that all children access safe learning environments where school safety, risk reduction, and resilience are mainstreamed.



Children's recommendations

- We need to make sure that every child can reach their rights at all times.
- Children are the future leaders of tomorrow, and so children's voices always need to be respected, taken seriously, and included in decisions on climate.
- Everyone, including parents, teachers, and leaders, needs to understand how climate is impacting children's rights, and children's right to participate in decisions on climate.
- Child participation needs to be inclusive for all children, including children who may need additional support to participate.
- All children should be given good information to participate in decision-making processes on climate that makes sense to them.

Fulfilling children's right to social protection

In addition to increasing climate finance, particularly for locally led adaptation, governments must explore other means of shoring up community resilience to shocks. Save the Children is calling on governments and donors to:

- **Scale up social protection systems to mitigate the increasing impacts of climate shocks on children and their families**, with the ambition to move to universal child benefits over time to improve child well-being and build resilience. Social protection systems must be child-sensitive, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, linked to child protection systems, and include children experiencing inequalities and discrimination. These systems must also be shock-responsive – allowing for efficient and effective additional payments to help families cope before, during, or after climate related and other shocks – and complemented by children's access to quality education, child protection services, and primary health care services that are free at the point of use, as part of Universal Health Coverage.



Children's recommendation

- People who work in fossil fuels industries need to have access to social protection as they could lose their job when we move to green and renewable energy sources.

Endnotes

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