

# THE COP29 UNICEF POLICY BRIEF

CHILD- AND YOUTH-FRIENDLY  
VERSION



# THE COP29 UNICEF POLICY BRIEF (CHILD AND YOUTH-FRIENDLY VERSION)

## WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?



This policy brief helps countries understand UNICEF's key priorities for protecting children during climate discussions at the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29).



It highlights the key areas where UNICEF is advocating for action to prioritize children's rights and needs in climate decision-making.

By following this guide, countries can work together to create a safer, healthier future for children all around the world, while also fighting climate change.

You can also find at the following link the full [COP29 UNICEF Policy Brief](#).

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## KEY TERMS

BEFORE WE START, HERE ARE IMPORTANT TERMS WE NEED TO LEARN BEFORE WE READ THIS DOCUMENT:



**The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** It is an international agreement established in 1992, where countries agreed to collaborate in preventing dangerous human activities from impacting the climate.



**Conference of Parties (COP):** It is an annual meeting where leaders from various countries meet to address climate change. They develop strategies to mitigate its impacts and protect both people and nature. Each year, the focus shifts to innovative solutions aimed at creating a safer and healthier planet for all.



**Paris Agreement:** A global climate agreement established in 2015, where countries committed to limiting global warming to well below 2°C, with a target of 1.5°C. Each country sets its own targets, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O)—and adapt to climate change. These targets are updated every five years to increase ambition. The agreement also offers support to developing countries in addressing climate change.



**Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE):** Established by the UNFCCC, it focuses on empowering individuals and communities to engage in climate action through education, public awareness, and participation.



**Adaptation:** It is the process of making changes to how we live and manage our environment to handle the current or future impacts of climate change.



**Climate Finance:** It refers to funds from local, national, or international sources, including public entities like governments and private entities like businesses, used to support efforts to mitigate climate change and help people adapt to its impacts.



**Gender- Sensitive Approach:** It highlights the need for women and girls, who are more vulnerable to climate change because of inequality, to be fully involved in climate action, planning, and implementation.



**Global Stocktake (GST):** It's a process under the Paris Agreement to monitor how the world is doing in the fight against climate change. Every five years, countries and experts come together to look at how much progress has been made in reducing harmful emissions, adapting to climate impacts, and making sure the support and money needed to keep going are available.



**Just Transition:** It ensures that the shift from an economy that extracts natural resources (extractive) to one that restores and regenerates them (regenerative) is fair and inclusive, providing support for workers, communities, and the environment during the change.



**Loss and Damage:** It refers to the harmful effects of climate change that people cannot cope with or adapt to, encompassing both economic and non-economic impacts. Economic impacts include income loss from farming due to droughts, property damage from floods, and rebuilding costs after extreme weather events. Non-economic impacts involve the loss of cultural heritage, damage to ecosystems, and adverse effects on health and well-being, such as stress from natural disasters.



**Mitigation:** It refers to actions people take to reduce greenhouse gases, and to enhance natural systems, like forests, that absorb these gases.



**National Adaptation Plans (NAPs):** NAPs are strategies developed by countries to identify medium- and long-term adaptation needs, and outline approaches to address the impacts of climate change, as part of their broader national climate action plans.





**Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** NDCs are commitments made by countries under the Paris Agreement to help achieve global climate goals, aiming to limit temperature increases and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.



**Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) 3.0:** It refers to the next version of NDCs where countries are expected to enhance their commitments and actions based on updated science and progress, typically after 2025.



**New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG):** It refers to a new goal under the UNFCCC to set a collective target for climate finance to be raised after 2025, building on a previous commitment to mobilize \$100 billion per year by 2020.





**Subsidiary Bodies:** It refers to groups within the UNFCCC, such as the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), that support the UNFCCC by providing advice and overseeing climate action efforts.



**SB60 Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate:** Held in June 2024, it was the first UNFCCC dialogue focused on how climate change affects children and their rights. It addressed the unique challenges children face in a changing climate, following the results of the first Global Stocktake.



**The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:** This is a group of experts responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ensuring that countries respect and protect the rights of children globally.





# HOW DOES CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT CHILDREN?

Children are affected by climate change because of their unique physical and developmental needs. The impacts on their health, growth, and education can be lifelong and permanent, especially for young children, girls, and those from vulnerable communities.

## What happened at the first Global Stocktake?

The outcome of the first Global Stocktake requested the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) to hold an expert dialogue on children and climate change to discuss the impacts of climate change on children and relevant policy solutions, engaging relevant key entities, and organizations.

### Check the following toolkits for more information:



[A Young Person's Guide to Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#)



[Toolkit for Young Climate Activists | UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean](#)



[The Young Climate Activists Toolkit | UNICEF Middle East and North Africa](#)







## **This expert dialogue included recommendations on how to make climate policies and actions better for children, which include:**

- ☀ Making sure children's issues are included in all climate work and national policies.
- ☀ Creating special funds to help children, especially the most vulnerable, and tracking progress.
- ☀ Focus more on how climate change affects children, especially in the next Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, which is an international body that assesses the science of climate change, its impacts, and potential strategies for adaptation and mitigation.
- ☀ Collect and use detailed data on children's age, gender, and disabilities to create better policies for their needs.
- ☀ Make sure children can help with climate action by creating spaces that are inclusive and accessible, overcoming language barriers, and ensuring they can safely and meaningfully participate in climate decisions at all levels.
- ☀ Keep focusing on children's rights by sharing good practices and building the ability of countries to include these rights, using global child rights framework to guide them.





## INCLUDING CHILDREN IN CLIMATE ACTION AT COP29

For COP29, based on the expert dialogue recommendations, UNICEF suggests that the COP29 Cover Decision, which is an important document that will summarize the agreements made during the conference and outline the next steps for addressing climate change, should include the following:

-  **Recognize the Dialogue's Outcomes:** Welcome the results of the expert dialogue on children and climate change. Encourage countries to consider how climate change affects children more and use the suggested solutions to improve their actions and support. Ask the relevant programs and groups under the Paris Agreement to include these ideas in their future work.
-  **Hold a Workshop:** Ask the leaders of the Subsidiary Bodies to organize a workshop during the session to review progress and plan future work on how climate change affects children. This will help provide useful information for the next global check-up on climate progress.

## CLIMATE FINANCE FOR CHILDREN

Only 2.4% of climate finance from Multilateral Climate Funds, which are financial resources provided by multiple countries working together under the UNFCCC, in the past 17 years has been directed to projects for children. Some funds, like the Green Climate Fund, are working to change this by focusing on health and education. At COP29, countries can propose that the NCQG:

-  **Prioritize Human Rights:** Make human rights, including children's rights, a key principle.
-  **Set Goals for Gender and Age:** Ensure climate finance addresses the specific impacts on children and empowers them through targeted measures.

- ☀️ **Focus on Adaptation:** Respond to the funding needs to strengthen resilience to climate change, with a focus on areas such as health, education, and clean water, among others.
- ☀️ **Address Loss and Damage:** Set aside priority funds for rebuilding essential services, such as healthcare, education, clean water, and sanitation, and supporting recovery of children and their communities after climate disasters.
- ☀️ **Detailed Reporting:** Reports should include results broken down by gender, age, and disability, including information on children.
- ☀️ **Provide More Funds:** Provide more climate funding to support the most vulnerable communities, with a focus on grants for adaptation and loss and damage.



## ADAPTATION FOR CHILDREN

Cutting emissions is important, but children are already facing problems because of climate change and need help and action to be taken right now. This means making sure they always have access to services like health care, education, food, clean water, sanitation, protection, and social support, even during climate disasters.

To make this happen at COP29, countries can suggest:

- ☀️ **Focus on Children's Needs:** Implement measures that prioritize children's needs, particularly in essential services such as health and education. Additionally, it is crucial to consider the impacts of forced relocation on children, including the challenges they face in adapting to a new place and the potential mental health effects resulting from these experience.





-  **Collect Detailed Data:** Gather and include detailed information about children, including their age, gender, and disabilities, when developing plans to support their adaptation to climate change. This data should also inform reports on how countries are addressing these challenges.
-  **Include Children's Voices:** Ensure that children, particularly those from marginalized communities, have a voice in how we adapt to climate change. This involves creating platforms and spaces for them to express their views and actively including them in the decision-making process.



## ADDRESSING LOSS AND DAMAGE FOR CHILDREN

Climate change causes loss and damage that is particularly unfair to children. This includes increased death rates and lasting effects on their growth, mental health, education, and safety.

To address this, At COP29, countries can suggest:

-  **Focus on Children's Loss and Damage:** Pay more attention to how climate change affects children, such as increasing health issues from extreme heat or air pollution, loss of education due to school closures from natural disasters, or emotional trauma from displacement or loss of home.
-  **Engage Children:** Involve children from all backgrounds in planning and monitoring responses to loss and damage.







-  **Allocate Funds for Children:** Provide money to help children and their communities, particularly for planning, preparing, and recovering from disasters in fragile and conflict-affected areas.
-  **Develop Safeguards:** Create safeguards to protect social, environmental, and human rights when using loss and damage funds. Also, check how these funds affect children's rights.

## JUST TRANSITION FOR CHILDREN

A just transition for children means making changes to fight climate change in a way that is fair to everyone, especially children. It should help improve children's lives and rights. Caregivers, including parents who care for children, should also be recognized.

To address this, at COP29, countries can suggest to:

-  **Protect Children's Rights:** Make sure children's rights are protected when developing climate policies, especially for those from vulnerable communities, such as indigenous children who may be forced to move because of climate change, or children from low-income families who are more impacted by extreme weather and don't have access to essential services.
-  **Help Families:** Support families during job transitions and protect children from child labor.
-  **Invest in Education:** Invest in children's education, including teaching them about climate change and helping them develop skills for green jobs.
-  **Include Everyone:** Make sure children, youth, families, and community members have access and are included in the discussions about these changes.

## ACTION FOR CLIMATE EMPOWERMENT

Climate change affects children's education in many ways, like damaging schools, making it hard to concentrate during heatwaves, or causing them to drop out because their families are struggling. At the same time, children's rights to education, information, and participation are crucial for protecting and empowering them to face climate change. Strong education systems can better protect children from climate impacts.

To address this, at COP29, countries can:



**Integrate Climate Education:** Include climate change education in all school curricula and teacher training to ensure children understand and are better prepared to deal with climate change.




**Share Good Practices:** Promote guidelines and good practices for child education and empowerment in climate action, with special attention to gender equality and inclusion of children with disabilities.

## GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH

Climate change makes existing gender inequalities worse, especially for vulnerable communities. Women and girls often have to do more work at home, like collecting water and fuel, which gets harder due to climate impacts. Girls' education and safety are at risk during climate disasters, leading to more school dropouts, early marriages, child labour, and violence.





At COP29, countries can recommend:

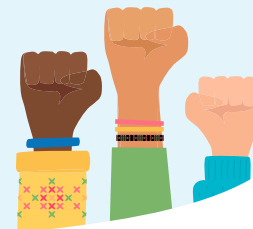
-  **Focus on Girls:** Pay more attention to the unique challenges faced by girls, adolescent girls, and young women, especially young mothers.

## NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS (NDCs) 3.0 AND NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLANS (NAPs)

Switching to renewable energy is urgent and important for children's health and development. Air pollution from fossil fuels, like oil and coal, causes serious health problems for children. Less than half of current NDCs include child-sensitive content, which weakens efforts to protect children from climate impacts. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child asks countries to focus on children's rights in their climate plans.

By 2025, countries should:

-  **Address Children's Needs:** Consider how climate change affects children at all stages of policy-making, using detailed data on age, gender, and disabilities.
-  **Commit to Ambitious Goals:** Include strong commitments to provide low-carbon, climate-resilient services for children and their communities.
-  **Involve Children:** Use a participatory approach that includes children's perspectives, especially from marginalized groups.
-  **Consult Experts:** Involve child rights experts in creating and updating climate plans.



## THE DECLARATION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH & CLIMATE ACTION

In 2019, at the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25) in Madrid, world leaders and youth activists came together to sign an important agreement called the Intergovernmental Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action. This was the first time leaders committed to making climate policies that focus on children and young people at both national and global levels.

UNICEF, one of the organizations responsible for this declaration, works with governments to help put these promises into action. All countries should commit to child- and youth-centered climate policies by joining the Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action.

Read more about it here

[Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action | UNICEF](#)





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