PLAN INTERNATIONAL POLICY MESSAGES FOR COP24

CLIMATE CHANGE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY GIRLS

Climate change is an intergenerational equity issue. Those who have contributed least to climate change are bearing the brunt of its impacts and will face the huge task of finding future solutions to adapting to and mitigating climate change impacts. Climate-related disasters often have disproportionate impacts on children and serious implications for their rights. Future generations, not even born yet, will have fewer rights to education, a healthy life, nutrition, water, protection, because of our actions.

Children from the poorest communities are most severely impacted by climate change despite being least responsible for its causes, and have the fewest resources to cope with the resulting impacts. Climate change is already impacting children through increases in malnutrition, disease, poverty, dropout from school, child protection issues, and increased risks from intense climate-induced hazards. Moreover, increasing pressures on natural resources are also increasing conflict risk which again has the biggest impact on children.

Climate change is also a threat to gender equality. Climate change is causing rising temperatures, sea level rise and increasing the frequency and intensity of disasters. As a result of these impacts, girls, and especially adolescent girls, face unique needs; the threats that girls face can be compounded by their age, and evidence shows that adolescent girls are particularly susceptible to violence and exploitation – including rape, sexual and gender-based violence and abuse, child, early and forced marriage and trafficking. This provides additional gender-based obstacles to accessing education and remaining in school. Lack of access to education – a denial of their rights – compounds their vulnerability as they have limited information about climate change, what to do in a disaster and access to timely and life-saving information. Many girls feel they do not have enough information on disaster and climate change impacts - “If disaster or emergency occurs, I don’t know what to do and I must ask my father”!

Plan International and the Stockholm Environment Institute’s (SEI) research in Thailand found that girls are also more likely to go hungry. Decreased food production and loss of livelihoods as a result of climate change can cause hunger and malnutrition “Children, whose development depends on a healthy and balanced diet, stand to lose out as a result of this trend as families seek additional support to make ends meet. Girls remain particularly vulnerable as they are often the last member of the household to eat and the first to go hungry when food is in short supply”. Changing rainfall patterns may cause increase in water-borne and vector-borne diseases, which may affect girls more than boys if they are already suffering from malnutrition. The health impact of malnutrition is likely to have an increased impact on young pregnant women and girls and/or young mothers at different lactation stages.

Plan International’s research in the Pacific highlighted the restrictions women and girls face in terms of mobility and low involvement in decision making. This has a detrimental influence on policy and programme design for climate change adaptation. Although women often take primary responsibility for particular sectors such as food security and clean water supplies, they are often excluded from consultation on policy and programmes in those domains due to gendered cultural norms which exclude women and girls from decision making, especially at the village level.

Despite the risks that children are facing, girls and boys also have the right to participation as a means to support them realising their rights more generally. Children, including adolescent girls, have a right to be heard in all matters affecting them, including in the response to climate change. Child participation in decision-making is increasingly recognised as fundamental to age and gender sensitive policy making to better address children’s needs and well-being. Girls, in particular, are often excluded from participation in policy making, decision-making and political processes due to entrenched gender norms and stereotypes dictating behaviour, mobility and receptivity of policy makers to girls’ participation. Gender related discriminatory norms underpin other gender-related realities of girls’ lives such as time spent in unpaid domestic labour and care work, and discriminatory laws and policies, including those limiting women’s political participation and participation in public life more generally, requirements related to male guardianship that affect mobility, and often the lack of a
distinct legal identity as a rights holder in the state. Notably, the lack of the ability of girls and young women to control their reproductive health and choices also serve as significant barriers to their rights, including participatory rights.

While children, and particularly girls, are often more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, Plan International believes that girls and boys should not been seen as passive victims. Instead, they are active agents of change within their families and communities, and are contributors to successful adaptation and disaster risk reduction within their households and communities, and influencing climate change decision making at other levels. Despite this, children are still not sufficiently engaged in climate change processes and decisions, nor are they prioritised in funding targets.

As well as experiencing distinct age and gender-based risks, children and youth have capacities that can contribute to strengthening resilience. Further, children are excellent innovators, communicators and are the adults of tomorrow, including them in project design, implementation and monitoring is crucial to ensure the success of the project. Their engagement in programmatic response to climate change helps ensure interventions address the issues that they feel are most important whilst also improving the long-term success of responses. If children feel part of the entire project cycle they are more likely to share what they have learnt with peers and their community, and continue activities and advocacy after project completion. Girls in particular have an important role to play in reducing risk and, when adequately supported and empowered, can effectively communicate risk and drive change in their communities. Plan International and SEI’s research highlighted the need to create safe spaces to empower young women and girls, to voice their opinions and be encouraged to participate in planning at different levels. It’s also important to build capacities in order to strengthen girls’ self-esteem, their abilities to advocate for change and their potential for leadership, with buy-in from community leaders.

Plan International has extensive experience in adaptation for children (to address the specific impacts on their rights) and adaptation with children (to ensure their right to participation is upheld).

**PLAN INTERNATIONAL’S PRIORITY ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION**

Plan International’s work on climate change is based on our experience and expertise, and on a clear recognition of where we can add value. Of the two potential areas of engagement, the first priority for Plan International is adaptation. For the poorest communities, who are already feeling the impacts of climate change, reducing their vulnerability and building, adaptive, absorptive and anticipatory capacity is urgent. Plan International provides support in developing savings groups, providing climate change information and diversifying livelihoods. Climate change adaptation also aligns closely with Plan International’s existing experience in disaster risk reduction.

While mitigation is a lower programming priority, we recognise the importance of environmental sustainability and low-carbon development. In many cases, projects and programmes may help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while also being environmentally sustainable (for example through tree planting or fuel efficient stoves). Plan International’s programmes also contribute to the development of ‘green economies’ through, for example, green jobs for youth.

Plan International’s climate change programming and advocacy approaches are rights based, and include work on both securing child-sensitive adaptation policy and programming at global and national levels (adaptation for children), but also incorporates children’s active participation in adaptation programmes and advocacy (adaptation with children).

**PLAN INTERNATIONAL’S APPROACH**

Plan International’s child-centred climate change adaptation programme (4CA) provides key evidence of the benefit of working with and for vulnerable groups. Including children in project design, risk assessments, advocacy messages and policy recommendations is vital in ensuring their concerns and ideas are heard, respected and most importantly taken on board. The 4CA programme also ensures children have the knowledge to be able to offer solutions at the local level, through climate change education.
POLICY MESSAGES

It is critical that Parties rapidly reduce emissions to meet the 1.5°C target and address underlying vulnerability. Parties must also recognise that reducing emissions alone will not be sufficient in reducing climate change impacts. Plan International is calling on governments to take action on, and civil society and donors to provide support to ensure that the needs and rights of children, especially girls, are at the heart of these efforts. Specifically, we are calling on Parties to:

1) Include children, especially girls, in climate action and in all aspects of decision-making and policy processes (Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs))

- Parties should submit their 5-yearly mid-term reviews to UNFCCC, engaging with civil society organisations and communities to ensure they are inclusive and targeting the most vulnerable and importantly reaching the hardest to reach, at-risk communities, especially girls.
- All Parties should develop NAPs, in partnership with stakeholders in their country that are ambitious and support the most vulnerable. If we can build the resilience of those most vulnerable to climate change, then the resilience of the whole society will be increased. Developed countries should provide technical and financial support to least developed countries in developing their NDCs and NAPs.
- Meaningful participation should consider children and youth, particularly girls and young women, not only as beneficiaries of public policies but also as active participants involved in the development, planning, implementation and monitoring of policies.
- States should strengthen the mechanisms to ensure the gender-balanced and meaningful participation of children and youth, especially girls, in the implementation and monitoring of the NDCs and NAPs, at all levels, to hold governments to account to their commitments.
- Governments should uphold and promote the right of children, particularly girls, to participate in decision-making processes on CCA, including in the development, implementation and monitoring of CCA policies and programmes, at the local and national level. This includes through taking steps to address gender-specific barriers to participation and effect enabling environments facilitating such participation of girls throughout their childhood and adolescence. Information on climate impacts, disaster risks, risk reduction measures and relevant policy frameworks must be made accessible, including gender and child-friendly. This information should also promote human rights and gender equality and challenge entrenched gender norms that impact girls’ rights and resilience.

2) Include climate change education in all aspects of formal and non-formal curriculum and extra-curricular activities, and promote school safety to climate-related hazards

- Parties must undertake country-driven capacity building, including training, access to information and climate change education, as agreed in the Paris Agreement. Having access to climate change information, education and training builds the adaptive capacity of children enabling them to be involved in decisions affecting their future, and contribute to mitigation and adaptation efforts in the future.
- These commitments should support and reinforce other global initiatives for example the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools, whereby Governments commit to implementing the Comprehensive School Safety Framework.
- Climate change education must also target those not in formal education in order to reach and empower the most vulnerable. Those not in education less easily receive life-saving information (for example what to do in a disaster, how to swim), understand and implement alternative
livelihood options (for example how to apply climate-smart agriculture), and are often excluded from decision-making processes.

Key areas that donors and governments should focus on include:

- Ensuring school buildings are climate-proof and actively contribute to mitigating climate impacts (e.g. solar panels for electricity)
- Integrating climate change within the curriculum, particularly in science and geography, in order for children to understand the difference between climate and weather, how human and natural systems interact, causes of climate change, difference between hazard, vulnerability and risk, impacts of climate change and approaches to adapting and mitigating climate risks.
- Teacher training needs to include climate change and be scaled up nationally for all children to gain the skills and knowledge to respond to climate change
- Promoting critical thinking and problem-solving to give children the skills to build resilience and find solutions to climate problems affecting them

3) Ensure that girls' rights are recognised when implementing the Gender Action Plan

Now the Gender Action Plan (GAP) has been agreed it needs to be implemented. Plan International is calling for the following when implementing the Gender Action Plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority of the Gender Action Plan</th>
<th>Plan International's recommendations for implementing the GAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority A: Capacity Building</td>
<td>A1 “Enhance the capacity of Parties and stakeholder to develop gender-responsive policies, plans and programmes on adaptation, mitigation, capacity-building, technology and finance” Parties and UNFCCC must also consider how this age intersects with gender to ensure all needs are understood and actions reflect this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority B: gender balance, participation and women’s leadership</td>
<td>B1 “Promote travel funds as a means to support the participation of women in national delegations at UNFCCC sessions, including those from grass-roots, local and indigenous peoples communities from developing countries, the least developed countries and small island developing States” Parties and UNFCCC must also include girls in their delegations. They are the adults of tomorrow and must have a say in negotiations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B3 “Organize and conduct capacity-building training on leadership, negotiation, facilitation and chairing in the context of the UNFCCC process in cooperation with United Nations system wide efforts for women” As girls can be future leaders, Parties and the UNFCCC must also consider building the capacity of girls in leadership and negotiation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plan International is sending a delegation to COP24 to bring children’s rights to the debates and raise the voices of children.

- Plan International is hosting a Marketplace booth (no. 125) from 10th – 14th December highlighting how children, especially girls, can be involved in climate change action.
- Plan International is also hosting a Marketplace booth on Gender Day (11th December).

For more information please contact Jessica Cooke – Resilience and Climate Change Policy Officer

---

**PLAN INTERNATIONAL’S ENGAGEMENT**

Plan International works on climate education and will continue to ensure this reaches the most vulnerable, particularly girls, and work with Governments to ensure it is in the national curriculum.

**Governments must also collect age-disaggregated data to understand how climate change impacts girls and boys differently. Only with this information can Governments ensure gender considerations are adequately integrated into adaptation, mitigation, capacity building, and policies, plans and actions.**

---

**Priority E: monitoring and reporting**

**E1: “Make a submission on the following, including sex disaggregated data and gender analysis, where applicable:**

(a) Information on the differentiated impacts of climate change on women and men, with special attention paid to local communities and indigenous peoples;

(b) Integration of gender considerations into adaptation, mitigation, capacity-building, Action for Climate Empowerment, technology and finance policies, plans and actions;

(c) Policies and plans for and progress made in enhancing gender balance in national climate delegations

---

Plan International works on climate education and will continue to ensure this reaches the most vulnerable, particularly girls, and work with Governments to ensure it is in the national curriculum.

---

1 Plan International’s Because I am a Girl – The state of the world’s girls 2013 report, pg. 126
3 CRC, articles 12 and 13
4 See Children in a Changing Climate (2009): A right to participate: Securing children’s role in climate change adaptation
6 See for example Green Skills for Rural Youth in South East Asia
7 For more information please see World CNDP Initiative for Safe Schools
8 For more information please see the Comprehensive School Safety Framework