

COP27 POLICY AND ADVOCACY BRIEF



The climate crisis

Research from Plan International demonstrates the wide-ranging effects climate change has on adolescent girls' daily lives and futures¹. Despite significant evidence highlighting the catastrophic impacts of climate change and a range of international processes and efforts to address it, global action on climate change remains insufficient in the face of the scale of the crisis.

Since the industrial revolution, human activity, through the burning of fossil fuels, has already warmed the world by 1.1 degrees at a rate that is unprecedented in at least the last 2,000 years². Early industrialisation, colonisation, and wealth inequality mean some countries have and continue to contribute to global emissions significantly more than others. Between 1990 and 2015, the richest 1 percent of the world's population were responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the poorest 50 percent or 3.1 billion people³.

We continue to witness the wide-ranging impacts of human activity on the climate. Temperatures are reaching record levels, food insecurity is widespread and severe particularly in the Horn of Africa and Sahel, wildfires have destroyed entire forests and community infrastructure, and extreme weather events have occurred almost simultaneously within and across countries.

In 2021, weather extremes were the main drivers of acute food insecurity in eight African countries, with the impact of weather-related disasters on acute food insecurity intensifying since 2020⁴. In total, more than 14 million people are already experiencing extreme food insecurity as a result of the widespread drought across Somalia, northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia, with the UN warning that half a million children could die in Somalia alone this year⁵.

The climate crisis has significant ramifications for the pursuit of children's rights: UNICEF estimates that 1 billion children – nearly half the world's 2.2 billion children – live in one of the 33 countries classified as “extremely high-risk” for climate and environmental shocks with a high vulnerability due to inadequate essential services⁶ and wider climate resilience measures.

Climate impacts are being felt most severely by the poorest, most marginalised and those living in fragile settings: those who have contributed the least to the crisis. While Africa has contributed only 3.8 percent to global greenhouse gas emissions, it is the continent most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and is already suffering severe loss and damage⁷. Climate justice must therefore be at the heart of climate action to address the inequity between those responsible for emissions and those most impacted.

Loss and damage

Climate-induced loss and damage threaten to increase inequality. Plan International Canada's new brief [From the Frontlines: Youth Call for Action to Address Loss and Damage Caused by Climate Change](#), examines the meaning and impact of loss and damage through an intersectional, youth-centred, and gender lens. It is already affecting millions of children's and youth's lives, particularly girls and young women. Passing on the escalating impacts of human-induced climate change to future generations is a moral issue. Children and youth today will face the worst loss and damage of any generation to date, despite being the least responsible for its cause. Loss

¹ Plan International (2021) [Adolescent Girls in the Climate Crisis: Voices from Zambia and Zimbabwe](#)

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report, Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis (2021)

³ Oxfam (2020) Confronting carbon inequality

⁴ Global Network Against Food Crisis/FSIN (2022). [Global Report on Food Crises 2022](#)

⁵ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126491>

⁶ UNICEF (2021) The climate crisis is a child rights crisis

⁷ IPCC, Sixth Assessment Report Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Summary for Policymakers Headline Statements, February 2022.

and damage and the wider ramifications are already being felt every day, with children and youth facing growing economic insecurity, inequality, poverty, hunger, lack of access to education and health services, threats to current or future livelihoods, risk of violence against girls and women and the loss of loved ones. Financing is urgently needed to address loss and damage and meet the existing and future needs and rights of the most vulnerable children and youth, considering intergenerational equity, gender and inclusion. Youth specific calls to action on loss and damage are included [below](#).

Climate finance

Climate finance is currently insufficient in addressing the wide-ranging impacts of climate change, especially child sensitive climate action. According to new and upcoming research by the Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative:

- Less than 1% of all Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund (AF) projects can be considered child-sensitive
- Just over a quarter (27%) can be considered somewhat child-sensitive
- 47% are insufficient, while almost a quarter (24%) have no child-sensitive element at all

Impact on girls’ rights

The climate crisis is deepening existing inequalities and rolling back progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Discriminatory social norms mean that girls and women, as well as other marginalized groups, are often more affected by climate change, yet have the fewest resources to cope. Indigenous women, who are often forced to defend their territories, resources and rights from extractive industries, face intersecting and reinforcing forms of violence⁸. Girls and young women have identified school dropouts and an increase in child, early and forced marriages and unions as two of the most common impacts of climate change in research in Zambia and Zimbabwe.⁹

Education

Research estimated that climate-related events in 2021 would have prevented at least four million girls from completing their education in low- and middle- income countries¹⁰ and if current trends continue, by 2025 climate change will be a contributing factor in preventing at least 12.5 million girls from completing their education each year¹¹. In a recent survey by Plan International¹², the majority of 15–24-year-olds said that their teachers had taught them about the impacts of climate change, yet only 22 percent had been taught about climate change policies or frameworks, and only 11 percent had been taught how to participate in formal climate change policy decision-making processes. According to another Plan International survey on green skills¹³, fewer than 30 percent of respondents reported feeling competent in the skills they prioritised as important in addressing climate change. In particular, young women felt less competent in prioritised skills than young men. While 60 percent of respondents were aware of opportunities for green jobs, only 42 percent reported that these opportunities were available in their local area.

Violence against girls and young women

Climate change impacts also routinely place girls, especially during adolescence, at increased risk of exploitation, violence and disruption in access to health and protection services. It can also contribute to increases in harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and unions due to economic stress, disruption to education, and poverty induced by climate change. This can direct girls into a vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty, vulnerability, and further marginalisation.

“As girls, when the rains destroy our houses, our parents seek shelter on our behalf in the neighbourhood. While there, we are taken advantage of by boys and men living in that house where we will be sheltered.” *Girl during participatory activity, central province, Zambia*

⁸ IUCN <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-002-En.pdf>

⁹ Plan International (2021) [Adolescent Girls in the Climate Crisis: Voices from Zambia and Zimbabwe](#)

¹⁰ Malala Fund (2021) [A greener, fairer future: Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education](#)

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Plan International (2021) [Reimagining Climate Education and Youth Leadership](#)

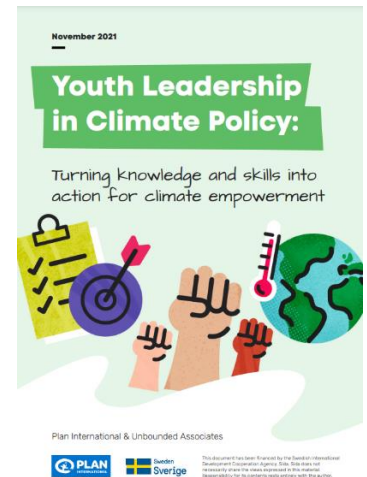
¹³ Plan International (2022) [Young People and Green Skills: Preparing for a Sustainable Future](#)

A recent assessment of the effects of drought on children and women undertaken in Somalia reported that 25 percent of respondents indicated increased prevalence of violence against girls and women, including sexual assault, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C), sexual harassment and abuse and child, early and forced marriage.¹⁴ Abuses occurred most during population movement, collecting firewood and water and in communal areas such as latrines/showers. Further, 66 percent of respondents indicated there were no child protection services¹⁵.

Girls' Leadership

According to a Plan International survey of 15-24 year olds, eight out of ten respondents highlighted they wanted to participate in climate policy processes but less than one in ten had done so. 91 percent of adolescents and youth said that it was difficult for them to participate in climate change policy decision-making processes. Not having been invited to participate or not knowing where to find information on how to participate were key barriers. Girls and young women were more likely to say that they knew nothing, very little or only a bit about climate policy processes than boys and young men. Further, only 5 percent knew how to engage in the negotiations related to and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Crucially, girls and young women must be meaningfully engaged in and central to all climate decision-making. This involves recognising their experiences and expertise, supporting their leadership and financing and implementing their ideas and solutions. This is important across all aspects of climate action, from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transitioning to a green economy, adaptation and influencing policy processes. To strengthen and support young people's knowledge and skills so they can engage in climate policy processes, Plan International developed a [Youth Leadership in Climate Policy Workbook](#).



COP27

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In the intervening years, there has not been a decision taken by the Parties of the Convention to provide guidance for the implementation of child rights-based climate action. There is a key need to bring coherence between agendas focusing on child rights, intergenerational equity, gender and climate action.

Beyond the reference to children's rights in the preamble of the Paris Agreement, there has not been a robust consideration by the process on how to operationalise the commitment to "respect, promote and consider" children's rights in the implementation of climate action, and to increase ambition to the fulfilment of children's rights. Further, according to a UNICEF report from 2021¹⁶, two thirds of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) do not address the needs and priorities of children. Of the 103 NDCs analysed, only 1 in 5 referenced child rights or intergenerational justice and equity in a meaningful way and only 12% reported that children participated in the development of the plan.

Despite this gap, there is clear enthusiasm from States to make the connections between child rights and climate action, as evidenced by General Comment 26 and by the more than thirty States that have signed the [Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action](#), launched by YOUNGO, UNICEF and governments at COP25.

To support intergenerational and gender justice, COP27 must deliver on child and gender-responsive climate action. The goal for the incorporation of children's rights under the UNFCCC process is to have mechanisms that advance knowledge and understanding of child-responsive climate action and coherent mainstreaming of children's rights, needs and priorities in the implementation of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, through the work of Parties, the secretariat, United Nations entities and all stakeholders at all levels.

¹⁴ Republic of Somaliland Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family (February 2022) [Child Protection and GBV Rapid Assessment on the Effect of Drought to Children and Women in Somaliland](#),

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ UNICEF (2021) Making Climate and Environment Policies for and with Children and Young People

Plan International's Calls to Action

At a glance:

- 1) Ensure climate policies include actions to uphold children's rights, recognising the disproportionate impact on girls
- 2) Ensure adaptation and resilience efforts are child-centred, gender responsive and locally-led
- 3) Finance Loss and Damage taking into account gender and intergenerational equity
- 4) Increase climate finance that is gender responsive and accessible to girls and young women
- 5) Support girls' leadership in climate action, including through inclusive education

Plan International supports the growing efforts to more meaningfully include and address children's needs and rights in UNFCCC processes and decisions. At the same time, Plan International advocates for all decisions to also consider the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on girls due to discriminatory social norms, and take action to advance both intergenerational and gender justice, in support of climate justice. The following recommendations reflect Plan International's approach in upholding child rights, advancing equality for girls and supporting meaningful child and youth engagement. The recommendations are for specific COP policy processes, as well as actions to be taken at national level.

Parties to the COP should:

Ensure climate policies include actions to uphold children's rights, recognising the disproportionate impact on girls

- 1) Sign up to and implement the [Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action](#)
- 2) Recognise the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on children, especially girls, and include measures to address this in updated **Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans**
- 3) Recognise and include provisions on girls in the review of activities and implementation of the **Gender Action Plan**
 - a) Include specific reference to girls, in addition to children and youth, as groups that need to be included in decision-making processes.
 - b) Agree on a new output under priority area E to request submissions from Parties and other relevant stakeholders on effective local and national measures to mitigate against the risks to girls' education violence, and participation arising from climate change and develop a synthesis report
- 4) Agree an **Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) Action Plan** that explicitly considers children's needs and priorities, particularly girls:
 - a) Defend the three existing provisions of relevance to children's rights contained within the draft text
 - b) Recognises the disproportionate impact of climate change on girls' education with key actions to support girls' access to quality education and extra considerations to girls' leadership
 - c) Under Policy Coherence, insert a provision under "Development of technical guidelines" to support the implementation of General Comment 26
- 5) Include the rights and needs of children, including gender and intergenerational equity, in the **Global Stocktake** process and consideration in discussions is given to:
 - a) Child rights and intergenerational equity as cross-cutting priorities
 - b) The responsibility of states to ensure that climate action addresses equality for girls and boys, with particular attention to the protection and promotion of girls' rights.
 - c) The right of children to participate in decision-making processes related to local and national climate action

Ensure adaptation and resilience efforts are child-centred, gender responsive¹⁷ and locally-led

- 1) Ensure the **Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation (2022-2023)** includes children's rights, needs and priorities, including by:
 - a) Prioritising a focus on social services that reach children and communities most at risk, including climate-resilient education, nutrition, social and protection services, water and sanitation, and health systems, and develop guidelines on child-sensitive adaptation approaches across these sectors

¹⁷ Approach that advances equality for girls and young women by tackling the root causes of discrimination to achieve sustained change

- b) Is informed by sex, age and disability disaggregated data on climate impacts and adaptation benefits
 - c) Strengthening data and monitoring mechanisms to track and measure the resilience of essential child-related services
 - d) Is coherent with relevant SDG and Sendai Framework targets, indicators, and monitoring mechanisms
- 2) Advocate for strengthening of the **Nairobi Work Programme** to consider and take tangible action to address children's rights and gender
 - 3) Fund and implement child-centred, gender responsive, locally-led adaptation and resilience to uphold children's and girls' rights and include these approaches in **National Adaptation Plans**

Finance Loss and Damage taking into account gender and intergenerational equity

See the [From the Frontlines: Youth call for action to address loss and damage caused by climate change](#) report for more detailed messages.

- 1) Commit to operationalise and implement a **loss and damage** finance mechanism to address and limit irreversible and life-changing impacts on young people.
- 2) Prioritise child and youth rights, and gender and intergenerational equity in the operationalisation of the **Santiago Network on Loss and Damage**
- 3) Improve evidence-based policy on the multidimensional and intersectional nature of loss and damage by ensuring those who are most at risk are meaningfully consulted and engaged
- 4) Support most climate-affected countries and communities to assess their loss and damage risks using robust approaches to inform the development of comprehensive strategies and action plans, including age, gender, and intersectional considerations

Increase climate finance that is gender responsive and accessible to girls and young women

- 1) Urgently increase climate finance to at least the committed \$100 billion/year in 2022, ensuring 50 percent is for adaptation and resilience in the most climate vulnerable countries
- 2) The **new collective quantified goal for climate finance** must urgently increase climate finance commitments beyond \$100 billion/year from 2025 on top of existing development finance commitments. The design and distribution of the collective quantified goal on climate finance must consider children's rights and the needs and priorities of developing countries:
 - a) Implement enhanced people-centred, rights-based and gender responsive approaches in climate finance
 - b) Scale up funding for locally-led adaptation that strengthens the decision-making power of, and direct implementation by, affected girls and young women and their communities. Countries should commit to and implement the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation.
 - c) Funding must be accessible and responsive to the rights and needs of girls, women, children, youth, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalised groups
 - d) Support countries experiencing hunger in accessing climate finance to adapt to and strengthen resilience to ongoing and future climate shocks and stresses

Support girls' leadership in climate action, including through inclusive education

- 1) Enable children's participation in all COP processes and support in making climate processes inclusive for all, implementing recommendations from the [COP Fit for Children brief](#)
- 2) Explicitly recognise and facilitate girls' right to participation in all forms of climate action, in a meaningful and safe way, by:
 - a) Addressing gender- and age-specific barriers to participation in climate action and policy processes, creating enabling environments that facilitate the meaningful participation of girls throughout their childhood, adolescence and adulthood
 - b) Ensuring adolescent girls and young women have opportunities to meaningfully engage in the development, review, implementation and monitoring of all climate policies and programmes
 - c) Ensuring information on disaster risks, climate impacts, risk reduction measures and relevant policy frameworks is easily accessible, and age and gender responsive and acknowledging governments' role in providing this information
- 3) Recognise the power of inclusive education by investing in and implementing an education that advances climate justice, girls' leadership, green skills and engagement in the green economy