



**For Our Futures:  
Youth Voices on Climate  
Justice and Education**

# Contents

- 04. First Nations Justice
- 05. Meet the team of young people leading this project
- 06. Foreword
- 08. Key Statistics
- 10. Executive Summary
- 11. Summary of Key Findings
- 12. Methodology
- 15. Key findings
- 15. Girls in lower-income countries have been impacted by the climate crisis, first and worst
  - 15. Key finding 1:  
Girls are experiencing the impact of climate change on their education - from floods to fires, climate change is preventing girls from realising their right to an education
  - 17. Key finding 2:  
Girls' education is disrupted due to multiple, compounding extreme climate events
  - 20. Key finding 3:  
Girls in lower income countries are hit first and worst. In Australia, First Nations young people are more heavily affected
- 24. Despair - The future we lose - childhood and loss
  - 24. Key finding 4:  
Climate change is not just impacting girls' ability to go to school, but also the quality of their education
  - 25. Key finding 5:  
Water scarcity is a key issue for girls in the eastern region of Indonesia, and it's impacting their education
- 26. Anger – Rippling consequences of the climate crisis on girls' lives and what it means for their futures and aspirations
  - 27. Key finding 6:  
Our crops are failing, and we can't afford to attend school
  - 28. Key finding 7:  
Girls are worried about climate change. It's impacting their mental health, and they're worried about finding the jobs they want in the future



- 28. Key finding 8:  
Girls feel that they have less choice about their futures because of climate change, and are angry that politicians aren't listening to their concerns
  - 30. Key finding 9:  
Girls and young people want to learn more about climate change and green job skills – the current curriculum isn't good enough
  - 32. Key finding 10:  
Girls' activism gives them hope for their future – but the responsibility to address the climate crisis lies with wealthy countries and big polluters
- 35. Loss and Damage**
- 36. Our Vision for a Better Future - Recommendations**

### **Cover artwork:**

*Girls and gender diverse young people going to school in Indonesia, Nepal and Australia*

**Artwork by Plan International Australia Youth Activist Niranjana and Anton (@loveon35mm @artxanton)**

Making art for the 'For Our Futures' report was challenging. There is significant loss and grief that's been experienced by young girls and gender diverse people our age due to the climate crisis, especially in lower income countries who have been the least responsible for climate change. We wanted to capture their strength and continued hope to push for change, despite having their education, health, safety and livelihoods disrupted by climate disasters. This report and other works like this are speaking from a place of truth and lived experience and young people like us want to hold our politicians and leaders accountable for turning a blind eye to our rapidly deteriorating environment. We hope people will engage with the report, the artwork and continue the fight for climate justice and a secure future for all.

---

# First Nations Justice

The Australian authors of this report acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise sovereignty was never ceded and that this land always was and always will be First Nations land. We recognise their ongoing connection to land, waters and community, and we commit to ongoing learning, deep and active listening, and taking action in solidarity.

We recognise that climate justice is dependent on First Nations justice. First Nations people in Australia are at the frontline of the climate crisis, and it is their knowledge of caring for Country for over 60,000 years that must be central to our climate responses. We are committed to our allyship and solidarity in the ongoing fight for

First Nations justice and the long and continuing history of discrimination and disenfranchisement of First Nations people in Australia, most recently seen in the disappointing outcome of the Voice referendum.

As allies, we know that when it comes to First Nations justice and responding to the climate crisis, it is First Nations communities who have the solutions. It is critical that Australia listens and centres their knowledge in our climate response. Treaties are critical in this movement for change, recognising First Nations sovereignty, and custodianship of our land and waters.



---

# Meet the team of young people leading this project

---

## Nepal

Babita	Manisha	Samikshya	Sostika
Bandana	Neha	Samita	
Chetana	Rehimat	Shikha	

---

## Indonesia

Alif	Devy	Rio	
Daffa	Dhita	Roslin	
Dela	Hilda	Wigbertha	

---

## Australia

Allyza	Georgia	Melis	Rhiannon
Angelina	Iman	Niranjana	
Chloe	Lydia	Rabia	

---

## Youth activist alumni supporting this project

Bettina	Imogen	Kayshini
Danielle	Jazmin	Naila
Grace	Jemma	Olivia

---

# Foreword

---

As a youth activist from the heart of the Himalayas, Nepal, I am deeply honoured to introduce this collection of narratives and insights on the profound impact of climate change on girls' education in three countries: Australia, Nepal and Indonesia. The Youth Activist Series on Climate Change provided me with a platform to share my experiences and concerns, and I am humbled to be part of this vital dialogue.



Nepal is a nation of unparalleled natural beauty, yet we bear the brunt of environmental changes. Girls, particularly in rural areas, are often the most vulnerable in this unfolding climate crisis. The stories within these pages highlight their resilience and determination in the face of adversity.



Climate change exacerbates the challenges girls face in accessing education. Prolonged droughts, erratic monsoons, and extreme weather events disrupt their daily lives, making the journey to school perilous. Household responsibilities, intensified by climate-induced disasters, force many girls to drop out of school to support their families. These narratives shed light on their indomitable spirit as they strive to overcome these hurdles, proving that education is worth the sacrifice.

Through these stories, we underscore the importance of not only addressing climate change but also ensuring that girls' education remains a priority. These young voices are a testament to the fact that empowering girls with knowledge and skills is a crucial step in building resilience in the face of climate adversity.

We hope this research inspires you to act and stand with us in the fight against climate change, because the future of Nepal and our planet depends on it. Let these stories serve as a call to action, motivating us to make a difference, not just for our generation but for those yet to come.

In solidarity.

– Chetana and Samikshya, Nepal

---

Young people represent our nation's relay baton and hold the future in their hands. We serve as a bridge connecting the present and the future. Young people are directly impacted by the climate crisis, and it is affecting our future. We experience frustration at the lack of action from decision makers, and that leads us to act instead. We have limited resources, but we make a concerted effort in trying to halt the climate crisis.



This new research undertaken by young people serves as one of the spaces for young people to address climate issues. Together with other young people from Australia and Nepal, I discovered the diversity of climate change impacts affecting young people in each of our respective regions. Drought, pollution, waste problems, floods, the spread of diseases, and many other climate crisis issues have drawn our focus. Young people's great longing for change makes it both necessary and crucial. To bring about this transformation, we require unwavering support, space, and gratitude. Especially, in reality, development is slowed down for a variety of reasons, but the effects of climate change do not stop or wait for our reflection.

---

As an Eastern Indonesian woman, I also hope for that change. This project provides me with a platform to voice my aspirations as a young Indonesian concerning climate issues. I hope that this endeavour becomes a path towards a broader youth movement in addressing climate issues in each country. Just as change is necessary, we, as young people, have the right to make it a reality.

– Osin, Indonesia

---

We find ourselves at a critical juncture in the climate justice struggle. There is an urgent need for reform and action. Australia is situated in a part of the world where our neighbours are already experiencing life-changing and devastating effects due to climate change. However, we are still awaiting more definitive action from our government. This is a source of frustration for young people who are demanding swift action.

Here in Australia, I am fortunate to be able to amplify and support the voices of those who are already calling for change and climate justice. I am grateful that my own education was not impacted but there are so many young people in Australia who are not as lucky, and this is exacerbated globally. We are seeing entire towns, states and countries facing devastating consequences of climate change.

We will not be silenced, and we are uniting in solidarity with young activists from around the world. We represent the future, and this is evident in countries across the globe. We have partnered with youth activists from Nepal and Indonesia to amplify their voices and experiences in this fight for global climate justice.

As a wealthy nation, it is time for Australia to take a leading role in this fight and take meaningful action. Girls in lower-income countries bear the brunt of climate change's consequences, even though they bear little responsibility for it. Globally, girls already face numerous barriers and obstacles in their pursuit of education, and climate change further disrupts and hinders their access to education. The consequences of climate change are severe, impacting mental and physical health, stealing our future opportunities, and increasing the risk of gender-based violence and child marriage. Girls' education is crucial, and it's already under threat, which underscores the urgency of taking definitive action on climate change.

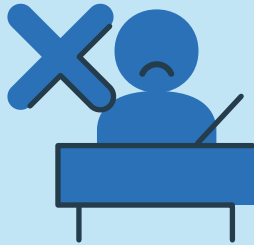
The title of our report "For Our Futures" encapsulates our key messages: our hopefulness, the steps we can take now to address the impact of climate change and save our futures, and the responsibility we, as the future generation, have in preserving the world we will inherit.

Our hope is that our message is heard and that our government takes responsibility. We are all in this together, and together, we are stronger.

– Rhiannon, Australia



# Key Statistics



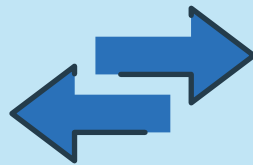
In the next two years, it is predicted that more than

**12.5 million girls**

may be prevented from completing their schooling each year, because of climate change.<sup>1</sup>

**98%**

of respondents said that they are very concerned or somewhat concerned about how climate change is affecting their school life, or how it will affect them in the future.



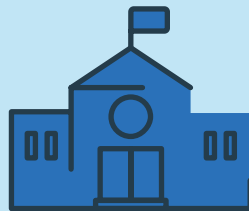
62% of respondents had experienced disruptions to their travel to and from school due to climate change.



Over 1 in 3 respondents had seen their school closed, damaged or destroyed due to climate change related events.

**'less power to make decisions about my future'**

was what 69% of respondents in Australia said was one of the top concerns they had about how climate change was impacting their education.



At least

**35,300**

schools in Indonesia have been impacted by disasters from 2005 to 2019.

Almost

**1 in 2**

respondents felt unsafe at school or travelling to and from school due to climate related disasters.



# Key Statistics

In Nepal, it is estimated that students are losing up to three months of education every year, due to climate disasters. During the 2017 floods, almost 2,000 schools were damaged or destroyed, and around 238,900 children missed school. In the worst hit areas, 90% of schools were destroyed.



## 1 in 2

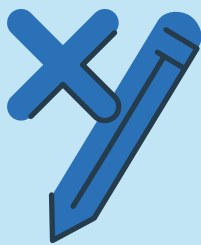
respondents wanted girls to be taught more about how to prepare for disasters.



## 50%

of respondents wanted to learn more skills for green jobs in the future.

In Australia, the 2019-2020 bushfires affected approximately 1.65 million people in NSW alone, 30% were children and young people aged 0-24 years. Almost one in ten children and young people impacted by the bushfires were First Nations young people.



In Indonesia, over 50% of respondents were concerned about a decline in their academic performance due to climate events disrupting their education.

Approximately  
**100k**

children in Indonesia, in 2021 had their education disrupted by flash floods and landslides.



In Australia, the 2022 floods in NSW and Queensland lead to the temporary closure of almost 1,000 schools.

# Executive Summary

The climate crisis is not gender neutral. It is impacting girls first and worst, particularly in the poorest countries which are the least responsible for climate change. Internationally, there is a growing body of evidence around how climate change is impacting girls and their education. In the next two years, it is predicted that more than 12.5 million girls may be prevented from completing their schooling each year, because of climate change.<sup>2</sup> However, investing in girls' education is one of the most powerful, and often overlooked, solutions to improving a country's climate resilience.<sup>3</sup>

However, these stories are rarely told by girls themselves, and their priorities and aspirations are not listened to when it comes to how climate policies are developed and implemented by power holders.

In this project, 30 youth activists from Indonesia, Nepal and Australia worked together to find out how climate change was impacting girls' education, as told by them, and what they wanted to see change as a result. Through an online survey and photos, the youth activists collected stories of girls' experiences when it comes to how climate change is impacting their education, and developed their vision for a better future. Youth activists used a climate justice lens when developing these recommendations, looking at how the climate crisis is hitting hardest the people who have contributed the least to the problem, and how the solutions we recommend can rectify this injustice.

We found that girls in lower income countries are being hit first and worst by the climate crisis, and that it is threatening their right to an education. The climate crisis has damaged and closed schools, and prevented girls from getting to school, resulting in significant disruptions to their access to a quality education. These disruptions have far-reaching consequences for their futures, including falling behind their peers and losing out on future job opportunities.

Climate change is impacting young people everywhere – but it's not affecting them equally. Girls face additional barriers in getting to school due to climate change compared to boys. For

example, in East Nusa Tenggara region in Indonesia girls must travel further to collect water each day, impacting their ability to get to school on time, and their ability to focus on learning when they get there.

The climate crisis is also leading to girls feeling more worried and anxious about their futures. They feel they have less power to make decisions about their futures, and they are worried about finding the jobs they want in the future.

Despite the disproportionate impact, girls are stepping up to fight the climate crisis. They want to learn more about how to participate and influence in climate decision making policies, funding and processes. They want to learn skills essential for green jobs, so they can be at the heart of their communities adapting to the impact of climate change.

Above all, girls crucially understand that the climate crisis is mostly caused by rich countries and big polluting companies. We are calling on those responsible to act now, to fund loss and damage and support girls to be heard in climate decision making.

# Summary of Key Findings

1. Girls are experiencing the impacts of climate change on their education – from floods to fires, climate change is preventing girls from realising their right to an education.
2. Girls' education is disrupted due to multiple, compounding extreme climate events.
3. Girls in lower income countries are hit first and worst. In Australia, First Nations young people are more heavily affected.
4. Climate change is not just impacting girls' ability to go to school, but also the quality of their education
5. Water scarcity is a key issue for girls in the eastern region of Indonesia, and it is impacting their education.
6. Crops are failing, and it is impacting girls' opportunity to attend school.
7. Girls are worried about climate change. It is impacting their mental health, and they are worried about finding the jobs they want in the future.
8. Girls feel that they have less choice about their futures because of climate change, and are angry that duty bearers are not listening to their concerns.
9. Girls and young people want to learn more about climate change and green job skills – the current curriculum isn't good enough
10. Girls' climate activism gives them hope for their futures, but the responsibility to address the climate crisis lies with wealthy countries and big polluters.



Adiana, 13, Indonesia

# Methodology

For Our Futures: Youth Voices on Climate Justice and Education engaged 30 young change makers across Australia, Indonesia and Nepal using a Feminist Participatory Action Approach to co-research the impact of climate change on girls' right to an education. The approach included training and equipping young people with the skills to advocate for change. This took place over six online cross-country workshops and ongoing in-country engagement with youth activists.

## Research Question

The climate crisis is one of the greatest threats for girls, young women, and gender diverse young people in the fight against poverty and inequality. We want to understand how the climate crisis is impacting one of their most basic and important rights – the right to an education.

1. What is the impact of climate change on girls' education?
2. What changes do young women, girls and gender diverse young people want to protect their right to an education?
3. How do we harness intersectional values to fight climate change through education?

In making our recommendations, youth activists took a climate justice lens, looking at how the crisis is hitting hardest the people who have contributed the least to the problem, and how the solutions we recommend can rectify this injustice.

## The Workshops

The 30 young people involved in this project participated in six online workshops, designed and facilitated by Youth Activist alumni and Plan International staff, including individual country workshops and training on ethical data collection and data analysis.

1. Workshop 1: Building the Future - Introduction to each other and the Project
2. Workshop 2: Many Strong Voices - Deep dive into climate change and gender justice

3. Workshop 3: Paragons of Policy - Evidence creation including research design and data collection
4. Workshop 4: Just Do It – How to campaign
5. Workshop 5: Youth4Climate - Develop our campaign strategy
6. Workshop 6: The Council of Wise Ones - Data analysis and recommendations

## Data Collection

Through a participatory process, youth activists decided to collect data through an online survey and a data collection method called photovoice, which allows young people to share their experiences and views through photos.

The survey was available online in English, Bahasa and Nepalese via Survey Monkey in Indonesia and Nepal, and Microsoft Form in Nepal. The survey was shared via Facebook, Instagram and email lists, including to Plan International's youth networks in the three countries, and through youth activists' own networks. The survey included one open ended question. All other questions were closed questions. There was no financial incentive for completing the survey. Although primarily completing by young people who identified as girls, young women, or gender diverse, some young people identified as young men or boys also completed the survey.

The 30 youth activists involved in this project were asked to take two photos in response to the research question, and recruit one of their peers

to do the same. These photos focused on their experiences of how climate change had impacted their education, or what changes they wanted to see to protect their right to an education. They were taken by youth activists on their phones, and were based on their own context and experience. Plan International staff did not accompany youth activists when they took these photos. This happened concurrently with the online survey distribution. Youth activists undertook training on the photovoice data collection method as well as ethical data collection practices. Youth friendly guidance was distributed to peer networks to support. Although the majority of youth activists who took part in this project identified as young women or gender diverse young people, there were 3 young men who participated from Indonesia.

### We received:

**502** young people completed the online survey

- 154 from Indonesia
- 182 from Nepal
- 166 from Australia

**96** photos, videos or graphic representations received

- 29 from Indonesia
- 55 from Nepal
- 12 from Australia

Youth activist alumni from Australia alongside Plan International staff conducted initial data analysis, which included:

- Initial analysis of the survey results
- Coding of the one open ended question
- Coding of the photos and photo caption/ descriptions from youth activists.

This initial analysis was then tested and validated by youth activists in three separate country specific workshops, and one joint online workshop, to develop the final findings and recommendations. Given the inclusion of young men and boys in the online survey and photovoice, throughout the report we have noted where the issue is also impacting young people in general, based on the data.

Youth activist alumni from Australia alongside

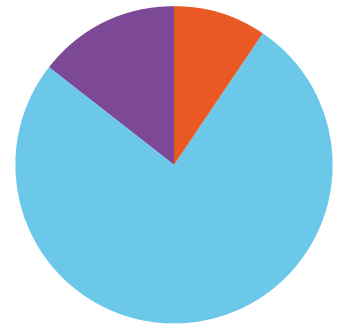
Plan International Australia staff also conducted a literature review, the evidence from which has been used in conjunction with the survey results and photos to develop the findings and recommendations.

## Survey respondents

Breakdown of respondents by gender:

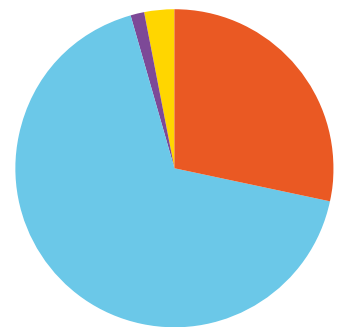
### Australia

- Male (10%)
- Female (76%)
- Non-Binary/ Gender Diverse (14%)
- Prefer not to say (0)



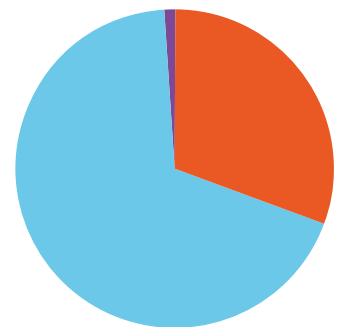
### Indonesia

- Male (29%)
- Female (67%)
- Non-Binary/ Gender Diverse (1%)
- Prefer not to say (3%)



### Nepal

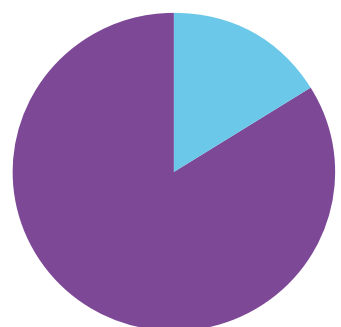
- Male (31%)
- Female (68%)
- Non-Binary/ Gender Diverse (1%)
- Prefer not to say (0)



Breakdown of respondents by age:

### Australia

- 10–13 (0)
- 14–17 (16%)
- 18–24 (84%)

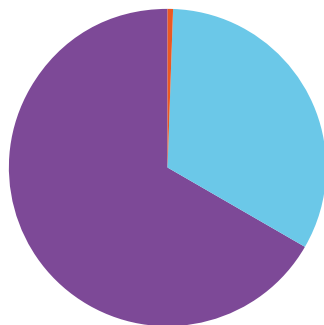




Girls at school in Nepal have started a group called Girls Out Loud. The girls showcase their art skills and call for action to save the environment.

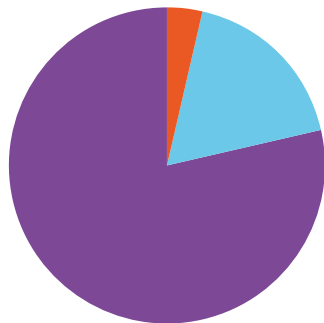
### Indonesia

- 10–13 (less than 1%)
- 14–17 (33%)
- 18–24 (67%)



### Nepal

- 10–13 (4%)
- 14–17 (18%)
- 18–24 (78%)



## Limitations

- Our survey was designed to be quick and easy to fill out. As such, questions around the impact of climate change on education gave options mostly relating to disrupted access to school, rather than giving options around gendered impacts.
- To ensure no one had to answer a question they weren't comfortable with, only key questions were mandated. However, this meant that we had varying number of respondents per question.
- Youth activists' self-nominated themselves to take part in this project. The youth activists were not a representative cross section or sample

– they had various experiences, intersectional identities and levels of privilege. We are not presenting their experiences as evidence of all girls and young people's experiences in relation to climate change and education. We recognise that our survey is also not a representative sample. This report is focusing on sharing the experiences of girls in their own words, to add to the already existing research on how climate change is affecting girls' education.

- Australian YAS found it difficult to engage their peers in the photovoice activity, and many had not experienced a direct impact of climate change on their education (see Finding 3). This meant fewer photos and stories from Australia.
- For the Australian survey and photo voice, there was a lack of representation from First Nations young people with only one respondent identifying as First Nations, and limited representations from other diverse young people.<sup>4</sup> This is a significant limitation and this data does not speak to the experiences of First Nations young people. We recognise the unique impacts of climate change on First Nations young people, as well as the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge in terms of caring for Country, and the leadership of First Nations young people the fight for climate justice.
- Building on our initial data collection, in the future we want to find out more about how the climate crisis is impacting girls with a disability and their right to an education.

# Key Findings

This section talks about key findings to answer the first part of our research question: What is the impact of climate change on girls' education?

## Girls in lower-income countries have been impacted by the climate crisis, first and worst

The education of girls and young people in all three countries had been impacted by the climate crisis. From fires to floods to drought, girls in all three countries had seen their schools closed temporarily. Even when they were open, girls were prevented from getting to school, with roads closed or damaged from disasters, made worse and more frequent by climate change. This was similar for boys and young men.

They are seeing compounding and more extreme crises – rain when it's not supposed to fall causing floods and landslides, followed by periods of drought and water scarcity.

However we found that climate change is not impact girls equally. It is girls in Nepal and Indonesia that are being hit first and worst by this crisis – without the resources to reopen schools quickly after disasters, girls reflected on an increasing number of school days robbed from them by climate change.

### Key finding 1:

**Girls are experiencing the impact of climate change on their education - from floods to fires, climate change is preventing girls from realising their right to an education**

Across all three countries, girls have experienced disruptions to their education because of climate-induced disasters. 98% of respondents said that they are very concerned or somewhat concerned about how climate change is affecting their school life, or how it will affect them in the future.<sup>5</sup> The most common impact experienced was disruption to travel to and from school, as well as school closures.

# 98%

of respondents said that they are very concerned or somewhat concerned about how climate change is affecting their school life, or how it will affect them in the future.

## Australia

In Australia, disasters exacerbated by climate change have impacted schools in recent years. The 2019 Queensland floods closed 38 schools, disrupting education for 17,900 students.<sup>6</sup> The 2022 floods in NSW and Queensland lead to the temporary closure of almost 1,000 schools.<sup>7</sup> The 2019-2020 bushfires affected approximately 1.65 million people in NSW alone, and approximately 30% were children and young people aged 0-24 years.<sup>8</sup> The bushfires had a disproportionate impact on marginalised children and young people, such as those with a disability or First Nations young people. Almost one in ten children and young people impacted by the bushfires were First Nations young people. 3.3 percent of children and young impacted had a disability.<sup>9</sup>

**The 2022 floods in NSW and Queensland lead to the temporary closure of almost 1,000 schools.**

The 2019/2020 Black Summer Bushfires loomed large in the memory of Australian girls who completed our survey. At the height of the Black Summer bushfires, almost 600 schools in NSW were closed, and 221 schools and early learning in northern Victoria.<sup>10</sup> Respondents reflected on



the disruption to their schooling because of these fires. For some, they were followed by floods the following year:

*Climate change really impacted my education in 2019 with the fires, which my family was directly impacted by, putting stresses on my life and education. My school was shut down continually for most of December. I was not able to partake in any exams, which impacted my HSC years later on (combined with COVID, I had no examination prep). Floods followed the next year, closing access to school and my community, placing stress on my family and I again. (Australian survey respondent)*

## Indonesia

Indonesia's location on the 'Ring of Fire' makes it one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Environmental degradation and the climate crisis exacerbate these natural hazards. Approximately one third of the national population lives in flood-prone areas.<sup>11</sup> In 2021, approximately 100,000 children in Indonesia had their education disrupted by flash floods and landslides.<sup>12</sup> At least 35,300 schools in Indonesia have been impacted by disasters from 2005 to 2019.<sup>13</sup>

In Indonesia, Tropical Cyclone Seroja impacted over half a million people in 2021, and wreaked havoc on the province of East Nusa Tenggara, displacing over 8,000 people. Alongside damage to wider community infrastructure, it also damaged schools, leading to school closures:

*April 2021, the entire province of NTT (East Nusa Tenggara) was affected by a tropical cyclone that resulted in heavy rain for several days, accompanied by strong winds. This led to disruptions in education as roads, electricity, and buildings were damaged due to many fallen trees, floods, and damage to learning facilities. (Indonesian survey respondent)*

## Nepal

In Nepal, it is estimated that students are losing up to three months of education every year due to climate disasters.<sup>14</sup> During the 2017 floods, almost 2,000 schools were damaged or destroyed, and around 238,900 children missed school.<sup>15</sup> In the worst hit areas, 90% of schools were destroyed.<sup>16</sup>

Respondents in Nepal reflected on how heavy rain and flooding is regularly causing school closures:

**Due to heavy rainfall, the roof of my classroom was damaged. The water entered my class. There were not other spaces to shift our classes therefore school announced a holiday without any notice.**

Missing school has severe consequences for learning, which can last many years after the disaster. A study on the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan found that children who missed three months of school were still 1.5 years behind their peers four years later.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, a study of nearly 25,000 Australian school children exposed to the 'Black Saturday' bushfires found they were more likely to fall behind with their learning during their school years.<sup>18</sup> If current trends continue, in 7 years time, 83.1% of young people in Nepal will not have the secondary education level skills needed to thrive. In Indonesia, this figure is 71.9%. In Australia, this number drops to 21.4%, however, this is still one in five young people.<sup>19</sup>

**If current trends continue, in 7 years time, 83.1% of young people in Nepal will not have the secondary education level skills needed to thrive.**



## Key finding 2:

### Girls' education is disrupted due to multiple, compounding extreme climate events

Girls across all three countries reflected on an increase in compounding, extreme climate events. 'Once in a lifetime' weather events are experienced multiple times by girls today, and it is leading to more and more school closures. Children under 10 in 2020 will experience a nearly four-fold increase in extreme weather in their lifetime, compared to people aged 55.<sup>20</sup>

Respondents in Nepal reflected on the compounding impact of heavy rain, landslides and flood, alongside drought and heat waves:

*Due to floods, the road to school is blocked. Even if you go to school, books and textbooks get wet when you are soaked in water...There is a different kind of weather than it used to be; sunny days in rainy season and no rainfall in rainy season or no water because of rise in temperature. As a result, schools are closed. (Nepali survey respondent)*

Australian respondents reflected on the compounding effects of heat waves and heavy rain as well:

*In the past few years, the area where I studied was affected by major bush fires, and although my school was undamaged, it was closed for multiple days due to smoke. Heat waves and heavy rain have also made school attendance difficult on many days, heavy rains effecting buses, and heatwaves causing me to experience health issues that prevented me from attending school. (Australian survey respondent)*

This is also disrupting girls' travel to and from school. Feelings of being unsafe to and from school, and at school, was one of the most frequently identified cause for concerns by survey respondents because of climate change.<sup>21</sup> Even when schools remain open, it is increasingly difficult for girls to get to school:

*During significant floods, it's extremely challenging to get to school, even when using a motorcycle, due to the high water levels and long traffic jams. (Indonesian survey respondent)*

Similarly, in a separate study of over 4000 Nepali students, 18% said that climate change

impacted their journey to school. Among those impacted, female students (20%) were more likely than male students (15%) to say that climate change impacted their journey to school.<sup>22</sup>

By 2050, almost every child on earth – over two billion children – will face more frequent heatwaves, an increase from 24% of children in 2020.<sup>23</sup> Children in Asia will continue to experience more extreme heat and longer heatwaves than children in Australia. In 2050 it is predicted that even under a low-emissions scenario virtually every child in Nepal will experience longer heatwaves, compared to 92% in Indonesia, and 12% in Australia.<sup>24</sup> Heatwaves had a significant impact on education across all three countries, with respondents reflecting on how this makes it difficult to concentrate in class:

*It's hard to focus when you are sweating so much during class and are feeling sick from the high temperatures. (Australian survey respondent)*

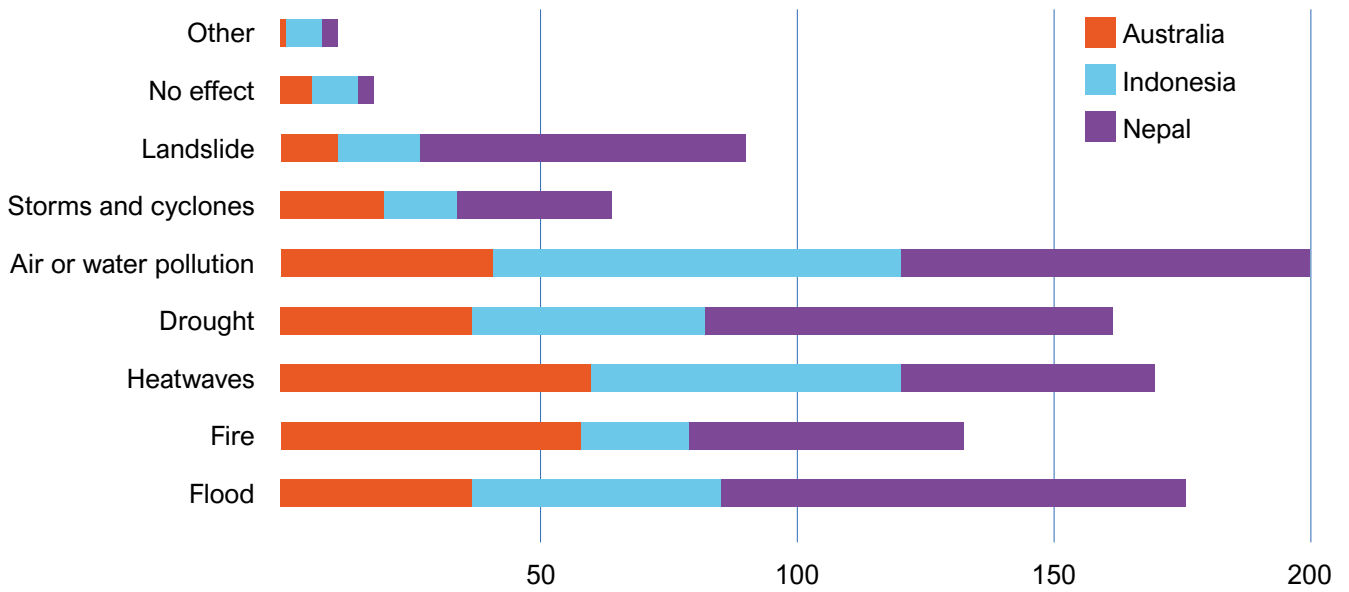
*Due to excessive heat, we feel tired and could not concentrate in studies. (Nepali survey respondent)*

*My main concern is temperature changes. Every day after 10:00 AM...I no longer feel comfortable, even in my own home. I believe the rising room temperature is the main cause that affects my daily productivity. (Indonesian survey respondent)*

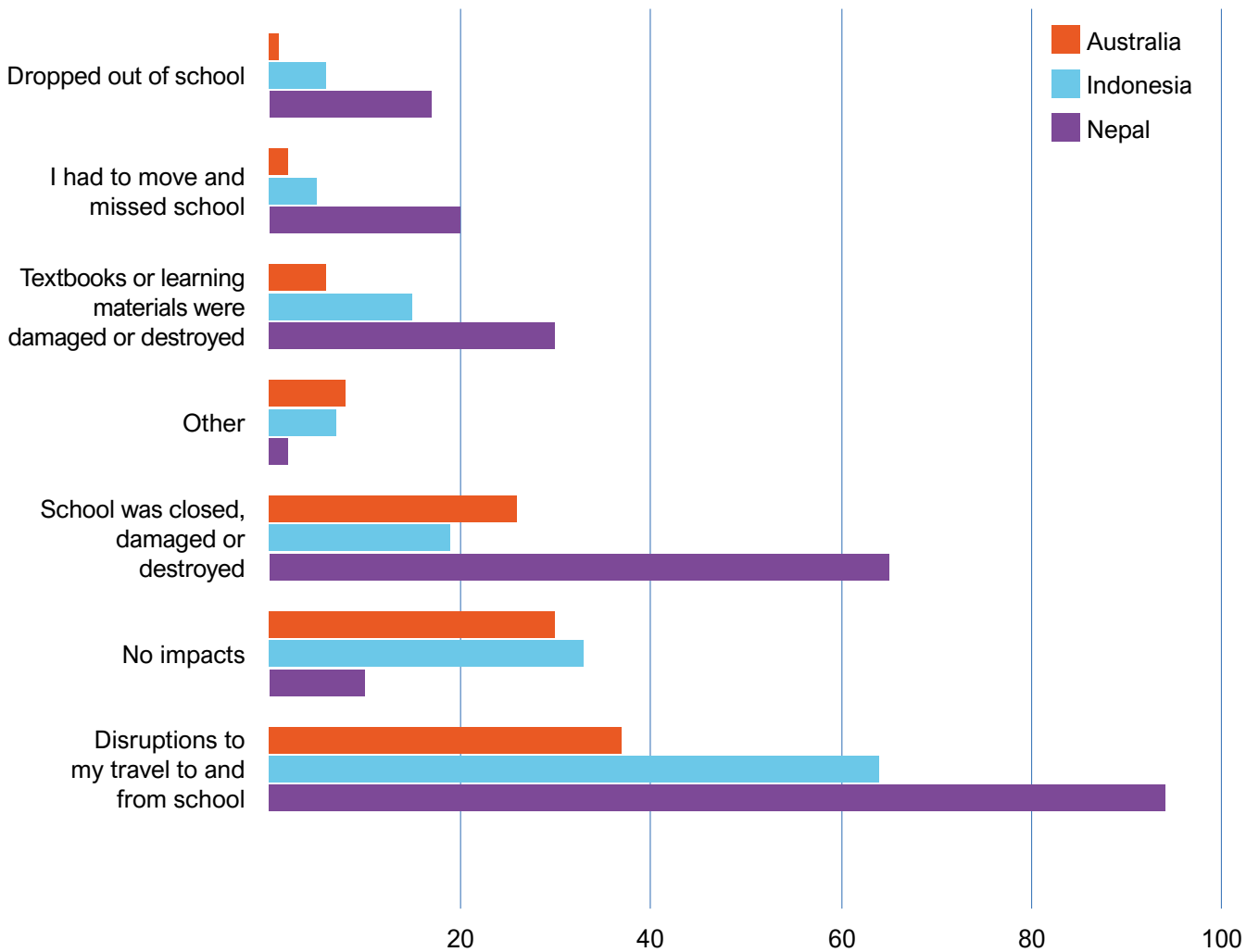
This has an impact of the quality of learning and school completion rates: children who experience significantly higher temperatures complete 1.5 years less school compared to a child experiencing average temperatures.<sup>25</sup>

There is a different kind of weather than it used to be; sunny days in rainy season and no rainfall in rainy season or no water because of rise in temperature

## Types of climate events respondents had experienced by numbers

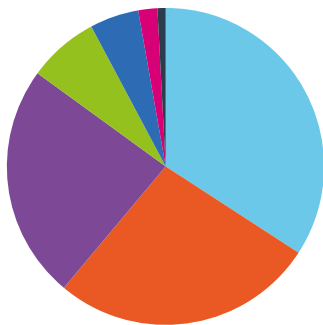


## Impacts of climate change on education across all countries



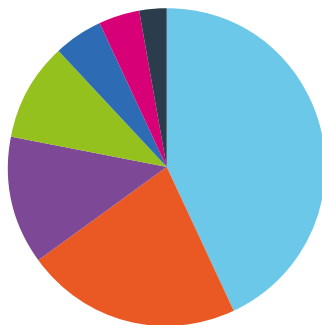
## Impacts of climate change on respondents' education in:

### Australia<sup>26</sup>



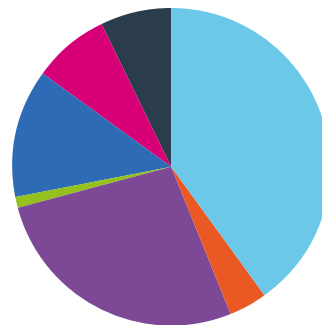
- Disruptions to my travel to and from school (34%)
- No impacts (27%)
- School was closed, damaged or destroyed (24%)
- Other (7%)
- Textbooks or learning materials were damaged or destroyed (5%)
- I had to move and missed school (2%)
- Dropped out of school (1%)

### Indonesia<sup>27</sup>



- Disruptions to my travel to and from school (43%)
- No impacts (22%)
- School was closed, damaged or destroyed (13%)
- Other (10%)
- Textbooks or learning materials were damaged or destroyed (5%)
- I had to move and missed school (4%)
- Dropped out of school (3%)

### Nepal<sup>28</sup>



- Disruptions to my travel to and from school (40%)
- No impacts (4%)
- School was closed, damaged or destroyed (27%)
- Other (1%)
- Textbooks or learning materials were damaged or destroyed (13%)
- I had to move and missed school (8%)
- Dropped out of school (7%)

## Air and Water Pollution

In addition to the impact of disasters, air and/or water pollution came up as a key concern across all three countries, impacting girls' health and ability to concentrate at school.

*Air pollution causes many diseases where school are closed for longer time as it is affecting the health of the students. (Nepali survey respondent)*

*I've had days where it was so hot and the air was so polluted and dusty that me and my peers who suffer from asthma couldn't attend school as we couldn't properly breathe. (Australian survey respondent)*

This was a heightened issue for girls in Indonesia, especially in major cities.

Devy, a youth activist from Indonesia, reflected on the plastic waste emergency in Bengkulu in her photo, emphasising the contribution of accumulated waste as a primary source of methane emissions, leading to an increase in greenhouse gas that worsens climate change and

rising temperatures in her city.

Devy reflected that the issue of waste and rising temperatures is also closely intertwined with her school activities, leading to a decrease in her ability to concentrate on her studies, impacting her health, and causing frequent headaches and a weakened immune system, disrupting her learning process.

*The atmosphere becomes uncomfortable and uncondusive. The hot temperature also makes it difficult for outdoor learning.*

Devy's photo of the plastic waster emergency in Bengkulu.



### Key finding 3:

#### Girls in lower income countries are hit first and worst. In Australia, First Nations young people are more heavily affected

Even though the climate crisis is affecting girls everywhere, it is not affecting them equally. Girls in lower income countries are being hit first and worst, with less resources to respond to disasters and to invest in resilient infrastructure. These disparities are reflected in how climate change is impacting girls' education in these three countries.

Although respondents from Australia and Indonesia spoke about impact on schools, it was students from Nepal that were worst impacted by floods, landslide and excessive heat. This was demonstrated in survey responses, where the top three impacts on climate change on education chosen by respondents in Nepal were:<sup>29</sup>

- Disruptions to my travel to and from school (40%)
- School was closed, damaged or destroyed (27%)
- Textbooks or learning materials were damaged or destroyed (13%)

This is in comparison to respondents in Indonesia and Australia, where 62 respondents also choose 'no impacts' on their schooling (30 from Australia representing 27% of responses, and 32 from Indonesia representing 22% of responses).<sup>30</sup> This is compared to only 10 respondents from Nepal choosing this option, representing 4% of responses.

Infrastructure damage and other disruptions to education was much more frequent in the photos from Nepal and Indonesia compared to Australia. This reflects greater capacity and funding to prepare and respond to disasters in Australia, and funding available to repair damaged buildings.

Abdillah and Dhita, two youth activists from Indonesia, emphasised the significant impact of the flood that engulfed hundreds of homes in Ciamis Regency, occurring nine months ago. An unprecedented flood disaster that took two to three days to recede, indirectly triggering other disasters such as landslides. Although the disaster began with heavy rainfall and entered an increasingly damaged environment, the polluted condition of the river and the accumulation of waste also contributed to the higher intensity of the disasters.

*"Floods and landslides have occurred in the past, but the intensity was not as severe and frequent as it is now." (Dhita, Youth Activist, Indonesia)*

The severity of the flood disaster directly impacted the mobility of the community, particularly through blocked access roads and evacuation warnings that led people to be displaced. When experiencing flooding at this scale, both Dhita and Abdillah noted that school activities had to be temporarily halted. This situation also affects the health of the community and young people, as Abdillah explains:

*"Even at a young age, many of us are falling ill, and the effects come back to our access*



In this photo, Bardiya shows children travelling through flood water to get to school.



In her photo, Babita focused on a playground filled with water due to irregular monsoons.



A still frame from Abdillah's video, showing the flooding in Ciamis Regency, Indonesia.

*to education, which I believe is once again hampering our progress."*

Uman in his photo story reflected how intensive rain following by flooding resulted in significant damage to the school's infrastructure:

*This damage includes crumbling walls, dirty chairs and desks from the floodwater, and most worrisome of all, a leaking and deteriorating roof.*

In Indonesia, the unequal impacts of climate change were also felt, with girls from rural areas experiencing the crisis first and worst, particularly in relation to water insecurity. This is discussed in more detail in key finding 5.

## First Nations people are disproportionately exposed to extreme weather events due to climate change. One in ten children affected by the Black Summer bushfires in NSW were First Nations children

In Australia, it is First Nations young people bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. First Nations people are disproportionately exposed to extreme weather events due to climate change.<sup>31</sup> One in ten children affected by the Black Summer bushfires in NSW were First Nations children and young people, despite First Nations people comprising only 2.3% of the population in NSW and Victoria. Among the total First Nations communities in fire-affected areas, 36% are less than 15 years old.<sup>32</sup>

The impact of the climate crisis in Australia on girls' education is also likely to differ significantly depending on where you live.<sup>33</sup> For example, children living in Western Sydney experience more extreme heat compared to the rest of the city. During the 2019-2020 summer, Western Sydney recorded 37 days over 35 degrees, compared to only six in the city. The difference in temperatures across the city, from the coast to the west, can be as much as 10 degrees.<sup>34</sup>

A significant limitation of our survey was a lack of representation from First Nations young people, with only one respondent identifying as First Nations, and limited representations from other diverse young people.<sup>35</sup>

Australian Youth Activists considered that impacts of climate change have become normalised in Australia, and this was part of the reason so many respondents chose this option. They reflected that they had not considered the impact of climate change on their education before involvement in this project, despite experiencing flooding, bushfires or heatwaves that interrupted or impacted their schooling.

*Originally, I didn't really give too much thought about my lived experience with climate change affecting my education... Doing this project has made me reflect more on its impacts, especially having lived in Southeast Queensland where all our schools are built on floodplains. So I definitely resonate with the fact that not many [young people in Australia] would have thought about how climate change is impacting their education, and even talking to the people I who I went to school with, they also hadn't really thought about it until then... They were like 'oh no my school just got flooded every year and that was the thing'. – Angelina, Youth Activist, Australia.*

There were few respondents in the survey and photovoice activity who identified as living with a disability. Through our literature review, we found that the climate crisis is also amplifying education inequalities for children and girls with a disability. Globally, children with disabilities are six times less likely to go to school than children without disabilities.<sup>36</sup> In Indonesia, while 95% of children finish primary school, only 56% of children with disabilities do.<sup>37</sup> In Nepal, 23% of children with disabilities do not go to school, compared to 14% of children without disabilities.<sup>38</sup>

Climate catastrophes intensify the double discrimination faced by girls with disabilities due to their gender, age and disability. Climate disasters devastates family incomes, which makes it harder for girls with disabilities to go to school. Girls with disabilities face additional barriers during climate disasters, such as healthcare disruptions and difficulty accessing schools. During the 2017 floods in the Northern Rivers in Australia, people with disabilities, were more likely to have their homes flooded, be evacuated and were displaced for longer.<sup>39</sup>

---

## Case Study:

### A tale of bushfires, floods and droughts – Australia, Nepal and Indonesia

---

#### Georgia's story

My name is Georgia, I'm from regional NSW, and in 2019 my town sat in the centre of two massive bushfires, from the north and south. I remember my dad told us he filled up the garbage bins with water, while we waited to hear if our school would make it. Many of the villages around my town were not so lucky, and for months after we drove through black forests of ash, a reminder of what had happened. I'm scared for this summer, and for every summer coming. If we don't do something about climate change, this could be our new reality.



– Adapted from audio story

---

#### Samjhana's story

20-year-old Samjhana is from Bardiya, the western region of Nepal. She lives in a Tharu community in Bardiya at risk of flooding from a nearby river.

Samjhana says, "Since my childhood, I have experienced major changes in my community due to climate change. My community has been transformed and understood a lot more about the different challenges that affected it and its members due to flood."

She explains, "The situation I and my family faced due to the sudden rise in water level in the nearby river, heavy rainfall, and strong winds in 2014 will always remain in my memory." she further adds, "I had not experienced such rainfall in my lifetime. I was just 11-year-old holding my mother tight so that I won't be swept away with my house."

In 2014, I used to live a joint family with thirty-five members. We had four houses, three in the village and 1 away in the city. The houses are made of mud and bamboo, not cement. My family was a traditional one following ancient techniques to build houses that are not disaster resistant.

All three houses were easily swept away due to the overflow of water inside my house. It was nighttime. We were even not able to collect our important things like our school uniforms and books. When I woke up early morning, I could not find my house or my school. The whole community was drowned with loss of property but fortunately, there was no loss of life.

The incident still frightened me. Many times it makes me restless and worried about what else would have happened if the rain had not stopped, or if my family had not shifted us to the next place.

Samjhana's family, like 80% of families in Nepal, are dependent on farming and cultivating varieties of crops in our field. My family sells it and generates income that provides all our basic needs including fees for our school. Due to the flood in 2014, our store was also swept away where we used to store rice, wheat, crops, and vegetables.

My mother and female members of my family cleaned the rice drenched in the mud and served the whole family wet rice for almost three days. We were starving for days and depended on the foods that were mixed with dirty water.

---

My elder sister's leg was damaged by the water as she was working with my mother clearing the rice from mud. She could not get medical attention on time as the health post was half an hour away from my village.

In the daytime, we used to stay in a dry place near my house. But in the evening, we went to school to sleep. We did not have proper blankets and cushions to get proper sleep. I and my cousins was always hungry.

The school was closed for almost a month. Therefore, we had to stay with our parents who were busy shifting the remaining property to our house in the city. I did not have my uniform. My books and bags were also swept away.

I vividly remember ward officers visiting us in the school and providing some food, blankets, and other hygiene materials. This is how I was introduced to Plan International Nepal. The organization provided relief and supported us with food, drinking water, and hygiene kits.

After a month, I was excited to go to school. The school provided us with new books, copies, and uniforms. I was worried about my studies and grades. But my school provided us with free extra classes and coaching before exams.

But for my parents, it took more than a year to build our houses again. The government supported Rs. 50,000 which was not enough. My parents had to take a loan to complete the house. For almost a year, we stayed under a tarpaulin.

Now I am participating in various orientations, training, and programs provided by the local government and Plan International Nepal regarding disaster responses. Therefore, I dream of becoming a police officer so that I can work as a rescue team during such disasters in my community.

---

### **Osin's story**

In her video, Osin shows the well which is commonly used by the people in their village. Extra effort is required to fetch water from a minimal number of wells that need to serve more than a hundred households.

"So, if we happen to arrive late and someone else arrives first, and there are more containers for collecting water, it means we have to wait until they finish fetching. And if, by any chance, they finish and the water runs out, it automatically means we won't have water in the morning when we need it for school or bathing."

Prolonged heat and drought have clearly caused difficulties for the community, including young women like Osin, in their daily activities. Especially in terms of its impact on education, Osin feels that her schedule is disrupted by the additional responsibilities she must undertake to meet her and her family's basic needs. Furthermore, this situation also affects her mood during educational activities at school, as she experienced during junior high and high school. "So if we don't get water, we go to school just washing our face, and I am impacted because it's hot during the day. So, I don't have the motivation to study, it's like I'm feeling weak, and I don't have the enthusiasm to learn. From the morning, when the teacher comes to teach, we are lazy, and eventually, we become unfocused in our studies."



## Despair – The future we lose – childhood and loss

The climate crisis is impacting more than just girls' access to school. It is disrupting the quality of their education, their rites of passage, and their daily activities. Girls are experiencing the loss of the markers of their childhood, and loss of hope for their futures, worried about what will happen in the years to come, and the lack of power they feel when politicians refuse to listen to them or act swiftly.

In Indonesia and Nepal, the gendered impact of the climate crisis is reverberating into their school lives. Girls feel the impact of an increase in household tasks due to the climate crisis, for example, having to travel further to get enough water to meet their daily needs. Girls are expected to carry out domestic tasks such as collecting water, and this means they have less time to concentrate on their education.

### Key finding 4 :

#### Climate change is not just impacting girls' ability to go to school, but also the quality of their education

Girls commented on the impact of school closures on their learning and the quality of their education. Girls could see that they were not getting through the curriculum, and with textbooks and other school materials damaged, felt the frustrations about the lack of resources and how it impacted their studies. A decline in academic performance was one of the most frequent impacts of climate change on education cited by survey respondents across all three countries.

*Due to extreme heat, cold, and rain, schools are closed for longer periods of time due to which we cannot finish our curriculum on time. It is getting difficult to attend travel or attend classes due to extreme weather. (Nepali survey respondent)*

*Due to the flood, educational materials were damaged. It made it difficult to prepare for my exam. (Nepali survey respondent)*

Disasters also mean that time is diverted away from learning into recovery – it not only disrupts the educational routine but hinders students' ability to concentrate and learn effectively. Satria, a youth activist from Indonesia, spoke about the disruption of floods on student learning. His experience is divided between concerns about the

flood entering their classrooms and the desperate need to allocate learning time to help remove water from school infrastructure.

*"So, it's not focused...on learning."*

Students in Indonesia and Nepal felt that lack of support to continue their education whilst schools were closed, with no access to remote learning opportunities. Alif, a youth activist from Indonesia, spoke about the annual floods in the Lamongan Regency, which affected his region for three to four months of the year:

*"[M]any schools have to be closed, especially those that have not yet reconstructed their infrastructure to raise their buildings higher. This extended closure of schools poses a significant setback for quality education. There is no support to ensure they can effectively continue their studies."*



Alif's image.

This concern was raised in Australia too, particularly relating to students in regional and remote areas, who already experience unequal access to education opportunities:

*I have always been more concerned about the overall impact of climate change on young people's access to quality education. Particularly in Australia, the impacts of climate change will disproportionately affect regional and rural schools, compromising young people's access to quality education in areas already known to receive less resources and support relating to education. (Australian survey respondent)*



Beyond the classroom, respondents spoke about the impact of air pollution limiting their participation in sports and outdoor extracurricular activities, underlining the loss of important and nourishing parts of adolescence and schooling:

*Air quality meant had to wear masks... [I] couldn't do sport. (Australian survey respondent)*

*"It really affects students, especially when we compare them to adults because their scope of movement is mostly indoors." – Della, Indonesia*



This impact was also felt in important rites of passage – particularly in Australia, where respondents spoke about how climate change meant that important milestone celebrations such as graduation ceremonies were being cancelled:

*School has been disrupted and closed sometime due to fires...Important events are also postponed/cancelled due to fires such as graduations and assemblies. (Australian survey respondent)*

*"[T]hose practical things like events being cancelled and stuff like that as well...it's like it's impacting kids ability to like have a normal school life in like day to day activities..." – Youth Activist, Australia*

## Key finding 5:

### Water scarcity is a key issue for girls in the eastern region of Indonesia, and it's impacting their education

The climate crisis is not gender neutral. Women experience 260% more financial losses compared to 76% for men due to extreme heat, as women do the bulk of domestic chores, such as collecting water.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore it is estimated that by 2040, one out of every four children will live in places with severe water shortages.<sup>41</sup> This was highlighted as a key issue facing girls in the eastern region of Indonesia. It was a particularly gendered issue, with girls facing the increased burden of collecting water due to gender norms, impacting their ability to get to school on time, and to concentrate when they get there:

*In the last decade, climate change has resulted in droughts, which have hindered my ability to go to school on time. This is because of the inadequate supply of clean water (the river water has receded and is not clean, and there are long queues at the well to meet everyone's needs). As a result, my time to get to school is delayed, and it can affect the quality of my education. (Indonesian survey respondent)*

Wiwin, a youth activist from Indonesia reflected that the persistent drought in the area imposed additional responsibilities on young girls before heading to school, which included fetching clean water using jerrycans. To obtain this water, Wiwin, and alongside other children in Wiwin's village had to travel long and risky paths to other villages.



*"Carrying jerrycans through the river [to the other village] used to be done three to four times a week."*

It was not uncommon for girls to miss school because they were asked to prioritize these



Monica's image.

chores, and for Wiwin, even when she did go to school, it was difficult to balance her schooling with these household demands:

**"I have difficulty managing my time. Because after returning home, I have to do household chores, fetch water again, and so on, and my study time is taken up by all these tasks."**

Girls also reflected on the impact of water scarcity on girls' ability to manage their periods safely and with dignity at home and at school, and how this may impact their school attendance. Mogu, a youth activist from Indonesia, reflected on how her community coped with the water crisis following Cyclone Seroja, the impacts of which were exacerbated by the severe summer.

The water crisis in Mogu's region meant that she had to travel to various water sources to meet her and her family's needs. The reservoir shown in the photo is used for sanitation and bathing purposes, and it is situated at a considerable distance and uphill. There are also other locations where they collect water for cooking, drinking, and even for their livestock or gardens.

Mogu shows her concerns about water scarcity in her photo. She reflected that the water that she and other children collected was prioritised for the

needs of the teachers' bathrooms at school. She expressed concern about how girls at school may not have access to sufficient water to meet their sanitation needs, especially during menstruation. Evidence shows that girls are less likely than boys to attend temporary school facilities after disasters, as girls and people who menstruate face additional barriers.<sup>42</sup>

## **Anger – Rippling consequences of the climate crisis on girls' lives and what it means for their futures and aspirations**

The rippling consequences of climate change are felt outside of school too. For girls reliant on agriculture, they are seeing their crops destroyed, impacting the resourcing available to send them to school.

Loss of livelihoods increases the financial burden on families, and evidence shows it is more likely to be girls who are pulled out of school to ease the financial strain.

**It is estimated that the climate crisis may push 158.3 million women and girls into extreme poverty around the world by 2050.<sup>43</sup>**



Pude's mother observing the condition of their garden after a landslide



Pude's image #2.



Pude's image #3.

### Key finding 6:

#### Our crops are failing, and we can't afford to attend school

In her photo, Pude, a youth activist from Indonesia, shows her mother observing the condition of their garden after a landslide in 2021. Pude recounts that behind this photo, her mother had shed tears, recalling that the harvest that year had completely failed. In addition to damaging their family's garden, the landslide also blocked the access road.

*"When their livelihoods fail, the cost of their children's education may automatically be hindered...Because the results of livestock farming are also used for their children's education, so I really hope that everyone pays more attention to the water supply available in the village." (Pude, Indonesia, Photovoice)*

In Nepal, in a separate survey of over 4000 students, more than one in ten students said that the climate crisis affected their family's ability to pay to go to school. 29% of students said that the climate crisis impacted their surroundings, such as agriculture and livelihoods.<sup>44</sup> This was reflected in the photos from youth activists in Nepal, many of which focused on the impact of the climate crisis on their families crops – with photos of crops damaged by floods, or the way drought and lack of rain is affecting families' crops.



In their photos, Bandana and Manisha from Nepal show how crops have been damaged by flood and dry land



## Key finding 7:

**Girls are worried about climate change. It's impacting their mental health, and they're worried about finding the jobs they want in the future**

The climate crisis is taking a huge toll on the mental health of girls, which affects their education. The IPCC concluded with high confidence that girls are at particularly high risk of mental health impacts from climate change.<sup>45</sup> It is not surprising that girls are increasingly worried about climate change – about the impact it is having on their lives now, and what this will mean for their futures. They are worried about having less power to make decisions about their futures – including the job they want and their academic progress.

*I think... biggest thing is the fear and stress that comes with climate change; and how this negatively affects my mental health, and consequently, how well I'm able to engage at school (Australian survey respondent)*

**In Australia 71% of respondents said that 'less power to make decisions about my future' was one of the top concerns they had about how climate change was impacting their education.<sup>46</sup>**

**In all three countries, approximately 1 in 5<sup>47</sup> respondents in the survey said that 'difficult finding the job I want in the future' was one of the top concerns.**

## Key finding 8:

**Girls feel that they have less choice about their futures because of climate change, and are angry that politicians aren't listening to their concerns**

Girls are experiencing climate anxiety, but they are also frustrated – with the lack of control over their futures, and that politicians aren't acting on their concerns. They feel powerless:

*"In the end, the climate crisis makes them feel like they have no other option, and the only thing they can do is to carry on with their lives as usual, unlike people in big cities." – Mogu, Indonesia, Photovoice*

Australian YAS reflected that the options for young people to raise their concerns with decision makers are limited, with young women, girls and gender diverse young people often excluded from climate policy processes and decision-making spaces:

*'When you're at school and when [climate change] is impacting your primary or secondary education, you don't really have a connection to anyone with influence and you don't feel like you can actually reach out to those adults in your life, or do anything about it' – Ni, Youth Activist, Australia*

Even when they do know how to raise the issue, girls feel frustrated that their concerns aren't being taken seriously and acted upon:

*"I know how to contact my politician, but they're not going to listen to me about this. Young people do know how to influence politicians, but they're not listening. I think that's the difference." – Youth Activist, Australia*

*In South-East Queensland torrential rain and flooding is increasing in severity and frequency. However, many schools have been built on cheaper, flood-prone land... I would have hoped that in the long-term children's education would be worth more than the government's short-term savings.'*  
– Angelina, Youth Activist, Australia

---

## Case Study:

### Radical hope – As oceans rise, so do we – School Strikes 4 Climate

Amelia is a school strike for climate activist, attending her first school strike rally when she was in Year 7. Although currently residing in Canberra, it was her time living in the Solomon Islands when she was in primary school that first ignited her passion for climate justice.

'I ... saw, my friends and my community at the time being impacted slowly by climate change and at the time I didn't really know what this was or what it meant. All I knew was, you know, slowly people were losing land...'

Amelia's education has been impacted due to her activism, but she recognises that she is in a privileged position to be forgoing her education to fighting for climate justice compared to those missing school without a choice due to climate impacts.

'I'm really lucky. I have a lot of supportive teachers, but I've missed out on a lot of school. And it's impacted me like sort of when it comes to exams season, like I gotta choose between exams or rally and I'm like, OK, well, I wanna go to this rally because if I don't push climate action, then what's the point of passing my exams?'

But she thinks this has been worth it, given the growing presence and impact of the School Strikes.

'Politicians are actually considering [School Strikes for Climate] now and actually know us too... We are recognised and... it's not as good as ending climate change, but at least we are in the minds of politicians.'



## Global climate solidarity: wealthy nations owning up and stepping up

The key findings in this section answer the second and third part of our research question: What changes do young women, girls and gender diverse young people want to protect their right to an education? How do we harness intersectional values to fight climate change through education?

### Key finding 9:

**Girls and young people want to learn more about climate change and green job skills – the current curriculum isn't good enough.**

Respondents across the three countries want to learn more about climate change, how to adapt to its impacts and how to influence climate decision making and policies. Education is key for learning about climate change - when asked what they want decision makers to do, girls also said they wanted to learn more about how to prepare for disasters.

Survey respondents from all countries have concerns about difficulty in finding the job they want in the future. In Nepal, girls particularly want to learn skills for green jobs, and feel that this is one of the top ways decision makers can address the impact of climate change on their education.

In Indonesia, girls want to see the curriculum move beyond theory, and teach practical ways to adapt to climate change. Almost 1 in 3 respondents in Indonesia wanted to learn more about how they can influence climate change policy and decision making.<sup>48</sup>

Youth activists from Indonesia reflected on this in their photos. Umam hopes that teachers can support awareness of climate change and how it is impacting their lives, and not just provide formal theoretical education. Abdillah hopes that an 'environmentally based curriculum' will be implemented.

Maria spoke about her work in engaging government agencies, and the need for decision makers to engage with young people, especially girls, more on climate policy. In collaboration with Plan International Indonesia, Maria conducted workshops with relevant government agencies to continue providing suggestions and recommendations, with the hope that environmental regulations, such as waste management, can be improved and enforced effectively to minimize climate-related issues:

*“Engaging with government agencies and advocating for better environmental regulations is a crucial step in addressing climate-related challenges in coastal areas.”*

This was reiterated by other youth activists in Indonesia, including Alif who spoke about his hopes that the government listens to the needs



of young people, and prioritizes access to education, healthcare, and basic rights for the affected population, rather than solely focusing on material or financial aspects, especially for vulnerable groups such as girls and children, as well as the elderly, and people with disabilities, amongst others.

In Australia and Indonesia, young women also spoke about the need for an intersectional focus on climate justice in the curriculum, and one which goes beyond climate science, into civic education, indicating their aspirations to be included and listened to when it comes to climate related policies in their countries.

*[My climate education] gave me the terminology and the science behind it, but it did not go ohh. And if you wanna do something about it you can do this...I wish there was, you know, a lot more comprehensive stuff on it. – Amelia, School Strikes 4 Climate*



For Australia, the importance of First Nations knowledge was seen as critical to this curriculum. They want a more intersectional curriculum, that looks at the unequal impacts of climate change, and the implications for government action and policies.

In her photovoice, Iman, a youth activist from Australia, reflected on the lack of climate change curriculum, especially focusing on the work of women and girls, and the unique and unequal impacts women and girls are experiencing:

In her photovoice, Ni from Australia spoke about her experience with the School Strikes for Climate, and the jarring disconnect between so many students taking action, and their teachers not being allowed to acknowledge that it was happening:

*Strangely, while I remember the majority of my classmates... buzzing with energy on the morning of the strike, our teachers weren't allowed to acknowledge it because they were advised that it was "too political"... What struck me the most was that we had to bring in handwritten letters to excuse our departure from lessons, stating a reason that was, for the most part, not explicitly related to the strikes. It was absurd to me that our teachers weren't allowed to engage with us in this conversation, it was absurd that educators and important role models in our life were expected to be silent and not encourage conversations regarding our education and climate justice.*



Young people are worried that some of their teachers, or universities do not have a strong understanding of environmental issues, and as a consequence, are not more active in teaching these values or supporting students in their activism.

From Indonesia, Hilda spoke about the education and awareness raising focus she has in her climate activities, however she's found that many key actors in this process, such as teachers at school, are not willing to participate. Rio reflected on how few teachers at her university have a background in environmental issues:

*"When I wanted to voice my environmental concerns on campus, [a challenge] was the lack of educators with a background in environmental issues. So, I found it a bit difficult to figure out how to get this environmental issue noticed by campus stakeholders."*

### Investment case in girls' education

- **\$15- \$30 trillion:** the cost to countries when girls worldwide don't finish 12 years of education.
- **51.48 Gigatons:** the potential reduction in emission by 2050 through educating girls.<sup>49</sup>
- **25 per cent:** the increase in girls' future wages for each year of secondary education they complete.<sup>50</sup>
- **22 per cent:** the return on investment in primary education in low-income countries.<sup>51</sup>
- **12 times** more cost effective to invest in climate resilient school infrastructure than disaster relief assistance.<sup>52</sup>

### Key finding 10:

#### Girls' activism gives them hope for their future – but the responsibility to address the climate crisis lies with wealthy countries and big polluters

Despite the impact of climate change on their education, girls are active agents of change, and we saw this overwhelming in the work of the young women involved in this project and the girls who shared their stories via our survey. Their climate activism, and the activism of girls around the world, gave them hope for their future, and made them believe that change was possible.

*'All these concerns about climate change led me to join communities and take part in actions to address this issue. I became passionate about understanding and combatting climate change, shifting from being concerned about global warming to becoming a global educator. I realised that I needed to care for my environment, and I felt responsible for sharing my knowledge about it. Instead of panicking, I saw it as an opportunity to make a positive change.'*

*I distinctly remember being a Year 9 student at an all-girls school, having recently moved to Australia, I felt uneasy about socialising and participating in something as big as a strike. Through conversation and sharing of passions for climate and gender justice I gathered up the courage (and some friends) and made the decision to participate in the school strikes for the climate movement. This movement was inspired by Greta Thunberg, who had sparked conversation amongst my classmates, teachers, friends and family. It was the talk of the year to me at least, and millions of people were coming together to make impactful change so of course I had to speak out too. – Ni, Youth Activist, Australia*

Girls and young women are leading the call for climate justice globally – but it is not their responsibility to fix the problem. The responsibility for climate action does not sit with them alone, and the young people involved in this project were adamant about the need for government to take greater action, listen to their solutions, and implement real change in response to the climate crisis.





## Devy: Encouraging students to think about the environment

Devy initiated extracurricular activities at her school to address climate change, such as making eco-bricks, creating tyre gardens and tree planting. Devy emphasizes the importance of collaboration in tackling this complex climate issue:

*"It's crucial to involve more young people who have a passion for the environment. If possible, collaborate with the local government to address the plastic waste issue in Bengkulu City. Because if it's only a few people, it won't be resolved quickly. The challenge is to engage more people in these efforts."*



## Della: Encouraging students to ride their bikes

Della has initiated various efforts to promote environmentally friendly habits, such as the movement to encourage bicycle use. Over a period of five months, a series of activities were carried out in collaboration with many activists and organizations, with funding provided by the government. Regarding these initiatives, Della is confident, stating:

*"So I'm quite optimistic. We organized the activities for five months because this is actually very possible to do, to implement in Indonesia, not just in Bengkulu." – Della, Indonesia*

## First Nations knowledge

First Nations people have been caring for Country for over 60,000 years, and it is their knowledge and leadership that should be central to Australia's response to the climate crisis, as well as any climate change curriculum. It is First Nations young people that have the most to lose from inaction – climate change is threatening their cultural heritage and knowledges, lands rights and ongoing connection to Country.<sup>53</sup> It is critical that any response to the climate crisis centre Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, centring First Nations expertise and experience in caring for Country.

It is First Nations young people that are leading this call for climate justice. Amelia Telford, a young Bundjalung woman founded Seed, Australia's First Indigenous Youth Climate Network, who have run campaigns calling to the end of fossil fuel subsidies, and most recently worked with traditional custodians and their communities, to protect Country from the harmful impacts of fracking in the Northern Territory and supported the development of the Water is life film. Gadanji Wakaja women, Rikki Dank, advocated for First Nations voices to be heard at COP26, and campaigned against fracking in her home of Borroloola in the Northern Territory.

## Youth Verdict v. Waratah Coal<sup>54</sup>

In 2022, Youth Verdict made history, with a Queensland court ruling in their favour that the Galilee Basin coal project should not go ahead. The project would have extracted up to 40 million tonnes of coal each year, for 25 years, producing 1.58 billion tonnes of carbon emissions.

Youth Verdict is a First Nations led group of young people aged 13-30. In their case, they argued that the Galilee Basin coal project would limit the cultural rights of First Nations peoples and the rights of children. The project had received Federal Government approval, but needed approval from the environmental authority and a mining lease to go ahead. It was the first time that a Queensland Court took on-country evidence from First Nations people, and the first time that a human rights argument was used in a climate change case in Australia.

The Queensland Court ruled that the project posed an unacceptable climate risk, and due to the work of Youth Verdict, recommendation to the Queensland government that both the environmental authority approval and the mining lease be refused.

*'We are taking this case against Clive Palmer's Waratah Coal mine because climate change threatens all of our futures. For First Nations peoples, climate change is taking away our connection to Country and robbing us of our cultures which are grounded in our relationship to our homelands.'*

*Climate change will prevent us from educating our young people in their responsibilities to protect Country and deny them their birth rights to their cultures, law, lands and waters.'*

*- Murrawah Johnson, Youth Verdict co-director and First Nations lead*

---

# Loss and Damage

Loss and damage refer to the destructive impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided and go beyond what people and communities can adapt to.

It can also refer to a community's lack of access to funds or resources in a community to deal with loss and damage.

Loss refers to consequences that are irreparable, such as loss of life, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and Indigenous knowledge. Damage speaks to the consequences that can either be restored or repaired – for example, houses, schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges.

Some losses can be quantified in economic terms – the cost of repairing destroyed buildings and roads, or the loss of economic productivity after disasters.

However, some loss and damage can't be quantified in economic terms – as this report shows. For girls, it comes in the form of lost school days, lost rites of passage, loss of Indigenous knowledge, and loss of hope for the future.<sup>55</sup>

Passing on the escalating impacts of human-induced climate change to future generations is a moral and leadership failure.

Wealthy countries, from Germany to New Zealand, who have contributed most to climate change are stepping up to support low-income countries devastated by its impacts. These countries are making contributions to loss and damage finance, Australia must join them and help build this momentum towards climate justice.

The duty to act could not be more urgent. The rights and well-being of youth today, future generations and the planet are at stake.

We are already beginning to see the irreparable loss of life, land and culture. This report shows that the loss and damage young people are experiencing in regard to their education is

immense. And we know these impacts will only get worse the longer it takes us to act.

Taking responsibility as a wealthy country for Australia's role in driving climate change also includes phasing out coal and gas and doing our part to limit global warming as much and as urgently as we can, in line with the Paris Agreement.

# Our Vision for a Better Future – Recommendations

These recommendations are in answer to the third part of our research question: How do we harness intersectional values to fight climate change through education? We acknowledge that we have not captured the range of diverse and intersectional experiences of girls and gender diverse young people – this is for further research and campaigning, and we hope we can continue to build on these findings and recommendations.

## **Disrupting power, and girls leading the way in a climate changed world**

The climate crisis is not gender neutral. Girls, young women and gender diverse young people are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis and they want their voices to be heard and acted upon.

### **1. Establish a National Council of Young Women on Climate:**

- a. Our youth activists want to see Nepal, Indonesia and Australia establish a National Council of Young Women on climate, to amplify diverse voices, focus on young women with lived experience of the impact of climate change, and to enable direct communication between young women, girls and gender diverse young people and decision makers. Such a council would be a spotlight on how climate change is worsening gender inequality, and ways decision maker can prioritise and address this.
- b. Decision makers at both the national and sub-national levels should take affirmative actions to actively involve young women, in the process of climate policy-making, its implementation and evaluation.

## **Loss and damage**

Young women, girls and gender diverse young people have the most to lose when it comes to climate inaction, and they are already experiencing these losses in terms of disruption to their education, impacts on their mental health, and loss of hope for their futures. The climate crisis is impacting girls first and worst, particularly those in low-income countries where communities are experiencing the most severe impacts of the climate crisis daily. Wealthy countries like Australia who have contribute the most to climate change have a responsibility to support low-income countries who are bearing the brunt of climate-related disasters, and the opportunity to be a global leader making change in this area. Our youth activists want to see:

- 2. The Australian Government to make a financial commitment to the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28.**
- 3. Child rights recognised as a guiding principle in loss and damage funding allocation.**
- 4. Disruption to education recognised as a form of non-economic loss and damage in the UNFCCC Loss and Damage Fund.**
- 5. Funding from the loss and damage fund should be used to help girls realise their right to an education during the climate crisis. Funding should be directed towards:**
  - a. Supporting girls to access school after disasters, including travelling to and from school, replacing loss textbooks and other learning materials, and access to the internet and online learning opportunities.
  - b. Mental health support.

- c. Investment in key social services sectors; such as social protection; health; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH); and child protection.
- d. Opportunities for green job skill development, creating opportunities for green jobs and vocational training, focusing on sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and eco-friendly initiatives, recognising that the climate crisis is impacting girls' future livelihood opportunities.

### **Prioritising girls' education during the climate crisis and enhanced disaster preparedness**

Our youth activists want to adapt schools' culture and infrastructure so they are more climate resilient, are safe spaces, and reduce the risk of girls missing or dropping out of school after disasters. They want to see decision makers:

#### **6. Allocate resources and develop policies that ensure girls' education is maintained and protected during climate-related disruptions:**

- a. Create a safe and conducive learning environment by constructing climate-resilient schools, especially in vulnerable areas.
- b. Implement comprehensive disaster preparedness programs that involve the active participation of girls and women in local communities.
- c. Integrate climate resilience education, including climate change risk assessment and mitigation strategies, into the national school curriculum to empower girls with the knowledge and skills to respond to disasters.
- d. Provide training and support for teachers and students (especially girls) in disaster response, climate adaptation, and sustainable agriculture to enhance their resilience.
- e. Promote gender-sensitive climate policies and community-based solutions to address the unique challenges faced by girls.
- f. Local governments in Indonesia, particularly in drought-prone regions such as East Nusa Tenggara, should prioritise enhancing access to water within their local development programs to tackle water crises that have been disproportionately impacting the well-being and education of girls and young women in the region.

### **Connecting girls for collective power**

Our youth activists want to connect and learn from young women, girls and gender diverse young people across the globe who are leading the calls for climate justice. They want to see:

#### **7. Development of an app –based and module-based toolkit for climate change action, risk assessment, mitigation and activism. Such a toolkit could:**

- a. Teach girls about the impact of climate change
- b. Teach girls how they can influence climate change policy and action
- c. Improve understanding of collective power and empower young people to push for change
- d. Connect youth led grassroots movements, share experiences, stories and campaigns.
- e. Include the capacity for dissemination through multiple media platforms, including local radio, to ensure widespread access.

#### **8. Technology and digitalisation used for education continuity:**

- a. Develop and implement digital learning solutions and internet connectivity in remote areas to ensure uninterrupted education, even when schools are closed due to climate crises.
- b. Provide access to technology and digital resources to bridge the education gap, with a particular focus on girls.

#### **9. Local governments to prioritize the strengthening of girls' and young women's networks and groups, giving them a platform to advocate for climate action and gender equality.**

# Endnotes

- 1 The Malala Fund, 2021, A greener, fairer future Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls education, available here: [https://assets.ctfassets.net/0oan5gk9rgbh/OFgutQPKIFoi5IfY2iwFC/6b2fffd2c893ebdebee60f93be814299/MalalaFund\\_GirlsEducation\\_ClimateReport.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/0oan5gk9rgbh/OFgutQPKIFoi5IfY2iwFC/6b2fffd2c893ebdebee60f93be814299/MalalaFund_GirlsEducation_ClimateReport.pdf)
- 2 The Malala Fund, 2021, A greener, fairer future Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls education, available here: [https://assets.ctfassets.net/0oan5gk9rgbh/OFgutQPKIFoi5IfY2iwFC/6b2fffd2c893ebdebee60f93be814299/MalalaFund\\_GirlsEducation\\_ClimateReport.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/0oan5gk9rgbh/OFgutQPKIFoi5IfY2iwFC/6b2fffd2c893ebdebee60f93be814299/MalalaFund_GirlsEducation_ClimateReport.pdf)
- 3 Plan International, Raising our Voice: Funding climate education and youth leadership in SE Asia and the Pacific (2021) 2.
- 4 15 respondents had a disability, 19 were from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, and 19 from regional and rural areas
- 5 Response rate for this question: 45% of total survey respondents.
- 6 [The social and economic cost of the North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough \(2019\) Queensland Reconstruction Authority \(2019\), Deloitte](#)
- 7 2022 Flood Response and Recovery (2023), Royal Far West
- 8 Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) “Children and Young People’s Experience of Disaster - Report” (2020)
- 9 [1 in 10 children affected by bushfires is Indigenous. We’ve been ignoring them for too long \(2020\), Bhiemie Williamson, Francis Markham and Jessica Weir](#)
- 10 [Victoria, November 2019 - February 2020 Bushfires - Black Summer, Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub](#)
- 11 Building a disaster-ready culture in Indonesia (2022), Wahyu Wilopo
- 12 Disaster upon disaster’ for children in Indonesia as 100,000 have exams disrupted by flash floods (2021), Save the Children
- 13 [Understanding the impacts of floods on learning quality, school facilities, and educational recovery in Indonesia \(2022\), Jonatan Lassa, Marla Petal, Akhilesh Surjan](#)
- 14 The Heat is On! Towards a Climate Resilient Education System in Nepal (2022), UNICEF
- 15 1.8 million children out of school as South Asia floods put education at risk (2017), Save the Children. Save the Children estimates around 500,000 children were impacted by school closures of official Government number of children who missed school was 238,900 children.
- 16 Still recovering from the 2015 earthquake, now Nepal’s children are hit by floods (2017), Theirworld
- 17 [Addressing the climate, environment, and biodiversity crises in and through girls’ education \(2022\), UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#)
- 18 [After the Disaster: Recovery for Australia’s Children \(2021\), Royal Far West and UNICEF](#)
- 19 World Skills Clock, <https://skillsclock.io/#interactive>
- 20 IPCC 6th assessment, [FAQs](#)
- 21 Question response rate: 64%
- 22 UNICEF, Rising to the challenge: Youth perspectives on Climate Change and Education in Nepal (2021).
- 23 [The coldest year of the rest of their lives: Protecting children from the escalating impacts of heatwaves \(2022\), UNICEF](#)
- 24 [The coldest year of the rest of their lives: Protecting children from the escalating impacts of heatwaves \(2022\), UNICEF](#)
- 25 [Climate change and educational attainment in the global tropics \(2019\), Heather Randell and Clark Gray](#). What the data technically says is In this region, a child who experiences temperatures 2 SDs above average is predicted to attain 1.5 fewer years of schooling than one who experiences average temperatures.
- 26 Question response rate: 53%
- 27 Question response rate: 74%
- 28 Question response rate: 65%
- 29 Question response rate: 64%
- 30 Question response rate: 53% Australia; 74% Indonesia
- 31 Standen, J.C.; Spencer, J.; Lee, G.W.; Van Buskirk, J.; Matthews, V.; Hanigan, I.; Boylan, S.; Jegasothy, E.; Breth-Petersen, M.; Morgan, G.G. Aboriginal Population and Climate Change in Australia: Implications for Health and Adaptation Planning. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2022, 19, 7502. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19127502>
- 32 [1 in 10 children affected by bushfires is Indigenous. We’ve been ignoring them for too long \(2020\), Bhiemie Williamson, Francis Markham and Jessica Weir](#)
- 33 Queensland bears the highest disaster costs compared to other Australian states and territories. They suffered 50% more losses than NSW, and three times more than Victoria, which were the next two biggest total losses, between 1970-2019: [Hitting Home: The Compounding Costs of Climate Inaction \(2021\), Climate Council Even within QLD, the impact varied significantly](#). For instance, Lismore experienced

a loss of \$20,000 per adult, whereas Brisbane had a loss of \$1,500 per adult: Climate Council (2022), [The Great Deluge: Australia's new era of unnatural disasters](#). Furthermore, lower-socioeconomic communities experienced the highest bushfire exposure during the 2019 Black Summer bushfires: [Do fires discriminate? Socio-economic disadvantage, wildfire hazard exposure and the Australian 2019–20 'Black Summer' fires \(2021\)](#), Sonia Akter & R. Quentin Grafton. Similarly, during the 2017 Lismore floods, most of the people affected (82% of people affected in Lismore, and 50% from the Tweed region) came from lower-socioeconomic groups: [Floods expose social inequities, and potential mental health epidemic in its wake \(2022\)](#), University Centre for Rural Health (USYD). In Sydney, heat is distributed unevenly along the 'latte lines' in Sydney. Western Sydney experiences hotter days than the rest of the city. During the 2019-2020 summer, Western Sydney recorded 37 days over 35 degrees, compared to only six in the city. The difference in temperatures across the city, from the coast to the west, can be as much as 10 degrees: [Why Western Sydney is feeling the heat from climate change more than the rest of the city \(2023\)](#), Milton Speer, Anjali Gupta, and Joanna Wang

- 34 [Why Western Sydney is feeling the heat from climate change more than the rest of the city \(2023\)](#), Milton Speer, Anjali Gupta, and Joanna Wang
- 35 15 respondents had a disability, 19 were from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, and 19 from regional and rural areas
- 36 <https://plan-international.org/blog/2022/12/02/inclusion-better-for-everyone/>
- 37 [The State of Children in Indonesia \(2020\)](#), UNICEF
- 38 file:///C:/Users/swen/Downloads/Disabilities-Report\_11\_30.pdf page 77 (Jen to update)
- 39 [Floods expose social inequities, and potential mental health epidemic in its wake \(2022\)](#), University Centre for Rural Health (USYD)
- 40 [The scorching divide: How extreme heat inflames gender inequalities in health and income \(2023\)](#), Arsht-Rock
- 41 <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/climate-change>
- 42 <https://www.plan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/from-crisis-to-classroom.pdf>
- 43 [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023 \(2023\)](#), UN Women
- 44 UNICEF, [Rising to the challenge: Youth perspectives on Climate Change and Education in Nepal \(2021\)](#).
- 45 [Climate Trauma: The growing toll of climate change on the mental health of Australians \(2023\)](#), Climate Council
- 46 Question response rate: 21%
- 47 Question response rate for combined results: 39%
- 48 Question response rate: 28%
- 49 [Raising our Voice: Funding Climate Education and Youth Leadership in SE Asia and the Pacific \(2021\)](#), Plan International Australia
- 50 [Raising our Voice: Funding Climate Education and Youth Leadership in SE Asia and the Pacific \(2021\)](#), Plan International Australia
- 51 [Generation Hope: 2.4 billion reasons to end the global climate and inequality crisis \(2022\)](#), Save the Children.
- 52 [RewirEd 2021 Summit \(2021\)](#)
- 53 <https://theconversation.com/caring-for-country-means-tackling-the-climate-crisis-with-indigenous-leadership-3-things-the-new-government-must-do-183987>
- 54 <https://theconversation.com/this-case-has-made-legal-history-young-australians-just-won-a-human-rights-case-against-an-enormous-coal-mine-195350>
- 55 <https://plan-international.org/publications/loss-and-damage/>



**Until we are all equal**

**plan.org.au** **13 75 26**

Plan International Australia  
18/60 City Road, Southbank VIC 3006  
GPO Box 2818, Melbourne VIC 3001  
Tel: 13 75 26 Fax: +61 (3) 9670 1130  
Email: [info@plan.org.au](mailto:info@plan.org.au)

ABN 49 004 875 807

 /planaustralia

 @PlanAustralia

 @plan\_australia