



COP29

Policy Brief

October 2024

Introduction

“The time to act is now. The climate crisis is a heavy burden on children and youth, filling us with anxiety and fears for our future. How can we dream of a better tomorrow when it was destroyed yesterday, and we are failing to construct it today? That’s why COP29 needs to prioritise, protect, and prepare for the climate crisis by investing in intergenerational and gender justice that responds to people’s needs.”

Ineza Umuhoza Grace, impact-driven youth climate advocate and negotiator, Rwanda

Over one billion children remain at extreme risk from the impacts of the climate crisis¹, which continues to limit development opportunities and exacerbate humanitarian crises around the globe. As we approach the COP29 climate negotiations, the world is experiencing yet another record-breaking year of intensifying climate change.² Children and youth, particularly girls and young women, are on the frontlines of the climate crisis. They are also leaders in developing effective responses and adaptation strategies to build resilience.

The climate crisis is already having a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of children and youth, especially girls and young women, around the world, limiting economic and educational opportunities, impacting health, nutrition access to sexual and reproductive rights services, and increasing the risk of gender-based violence and early and forced marriage. New emergencies are unfolding, while existing ones intensify, with children and young people, especially girls and young women, bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. The climate crisis is the greatest intergenerational injustice of our time. The future of today’s children and youth, the largest generation in history, depends on bold commitments and action at COP29.

COP29 has been referred to as the “Climate Finance COP” with key negotiations focusing on establishing a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance. This goal must be ambitious, based on fair-share and science. It must meet the needs of those most impacted by the climate crisis. Crucially, the NCQG should prioritise the human rights of those on the frontlines of climate change, including youth, children, girls and women, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalised communities. Gender equality and intergenerational equity must be embedded as guiding principles. While the USD 100 billion goal provided a solid start to meet the needs of affected communities, current science and research highlights that this is insufficient to meet current needs, estimated to be in the trillions of dollars to achieve systemic change.

Despite increasing recognition of the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on girls and women, there has been a lack of action and investment at the national

level and within UNFCCC processes to mobilise gender transformative climate action.

At COP29, it is essential for Parties to advance the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) by producing an updated and improved Gender Action Plan (GAP) with clear targets, financing, roles, and a longer timeframe for implementation.

Parties should ensure the full and inclusive participation of women and girls—in all their diversity—across all climate action and advance implementation of the GAP. A comprehensive and well-resourced GAP must be adopted at COP30 in Brazil. Integrating gender equality, intersectionality and social inclusion across all COP negotiations will help create meaningful links between the GAP and other climate action strategies.

This brief sets out Plan International’s COP29 call to action to Parties, negotiators and leaders:

- **Uphold children’s rights in climate policies, with a focus on addressing the disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis on girls, and young people.**
- **Increase climate finance for gender and intergenerational justice as part of the New Collective Quantified Goal— including clear allocation for adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage, with targets for gender and age responsive interventions, and which are accessible to communities most affected by the climate crisis.**
- **Prioritise gender in all UNFCCC processes, with an enhanced focus on girls and women in the review of the Lima Work Programme and Gender Action Plan.**

By centring children, girls, youth, and gender equality in the COP29 outcomes, we can support intergenerational justice and ensure a more just and resilient future for generations to come.

Recommendations

1 Uphold children's rights in climate policies, with a focus on the disproportionate impact on girls

"Due to heavy rainfall and floods destroying our crops and properties, many parents in my communities are forced to send their girl children for marriage so that they can collect money from their future husbands to feed the family...with the increase in forced marriages, I am traumatised, because if parents do not have means to provide for the family, they give you up for an early marriage ..."

Participant from Mali, *The Gendered Impact of Climate Change on Adolescent Girls and Young Women in the Sahel*

The climate crisis is driving an alarming increase in the number of disasters each year, **rising from 400 in 2015 to a projected 560 by 2030.**³ It disproportionately impacts children and young people, particularly girls, even though they have contributed the least to the crisis and they have limited opportunities and invaluable perspectives for influencing action.

The climate crisis is experienced by girls as growing inequality, hunger and food insecurity, reduced access to education and health services, the erosion of livelihoods and increased gender-based violence. This is because social and gender norms often exacerbate the impact of climate change on girls and young women, who have fewer resources to cope and build resilience. Incorporating gender and age-responsive approaches into climate adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage efforts is crucial to prevent existing inequalities from worsening. By recognising the heightened vulnerability of children—especially girls—and ensuring their rights and perspectives are central to climate policy, COP29 can help secure a more equitable and resilient future.

Girls, particularly those from marginalised communities, must have full and equal access to their rights, free from the threats posed by climate change. **As powerful advocates and leaders, girls have the potential to drive climate solutions. However, their participation in climate policy processes is often limited, preventing them from fully contributing to meaningful climate action.**

A 2021 Plan International survey revealed that **91% of adolescents and youth surveyed in 37 countries find it difficult to participate in climate policy decisions, and only 5% know how to engage in negotiations related to the Paris Agreement.**⁴ Despite these challenges, girls continue to actively campaign on climate issues through youth and girl-led organizations, using

their lived experiences and unique insights to contribute valuable solutions.

Education plays a critical role in supporting girls' leadership in climate action. Research shows that **each additional year of schooling for girls significantly enhances a country's resilience to climate-related disasters.**⁵ Yet the education of more than 40 million children is disrupted each year by the climate crisis, and this number continues to increase.⁶ Education systems that incorporate climate education, such as through the [Comprehensive School Safety Framework](#), help to protect the education systems from anticipated climate shocks and develop anticipatory, absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities for resilience through meaningful participation of, and accountability to, affected populations, including girls. Education helps equip young people with the knowledge and skills needed to lead climate initiatives, while also protecting them from climate impacts and helping communities to adapt to the climate crisis.

Public awareness campaigns that promote gender equality and climate education are essential for creating a civic space where girls can confidently take leadership roles. However, mechanisms must be established to remove gender and age specific barriers, ensuring girls' meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Young people, particularly girls and young women, face challenges accessing decision-making spaces due to restricted access and extremely limited financial support for youth-led organisations and opportunities to hear voices, solutions, and realities from affected young people. Supporting girl-led initiatives and girls' leadership in climate action is a crucial step towards an inclusive and just approach to addressing the climate crisis. **Girls are vital agents of change, and their participation and leadership are crucial to driving transformative climate solutions.**

Plan International COP29 Recommendations

- **Uphold children's rights and gender equality** to avoid "siloeing" children, especially girls, and effectively integrate considerations of child-specific vulnerabilities and measures across UNFCCC workstreams, the work of the Constituted Bodies and in national level policies, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs 3.0) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) **building on progress from the Bonn SB60 session and the first mandated Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate**.
- Encourage all Parties to **recognise the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on children, especially girls, and ensure that these issues are addressed in updated NDCs 3.0 and NAPs**, and increase focus on children in research, notably incorporating the disproportionate impacts on children in the next cycle of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
- All Parties should **commit to accelerating inclusive, child and youth centred climate policies and action by joining more than 50 government signatories of the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action, which provides a framework for national dialogue and action**.
- **Create formal mechanisms at local, national, and international levels through the establishment of children and youth councils to ensure children and girls' rights are respected and their role as agents of change in climate action is realised.** These councils should address specific gender and age barriers to participation in policymaking by creating more inclusive and accessible spaces, addressing language barriers, and through safe and meaningful participation in climate decision-making at all levels.
- **Increase investment in climate education and green skills for children and young people**, including skilling, up-skilling and re-skilling for future employment opportunities in emerging green sectors. Parties should call for the uptake and dissemination of "guidelines and good practices with respect to child education on and empowerment in climate action, with special consideration given to gender equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities" (activity C.2 of the [ACE Glasgow Work Programme](#)), including in the context of countries' updates to NDCs 3.0 and NAPs. This should include committing to integration of climate change education in curricula and teacher training, increasing children's awareness and preparedness for climate change, as well as their agency and ability to contribute to climate-resilient and sustainable development.
- **Increase public education and awareness** about the links between gender equality, climate change impacts on children's lives and opportunities, and disasters, fostering an environment where girls can lead climate policy and advocacy efforts.
- **Endorse and implement the [Comprehensive School Safety Framework](#)** ensuring that programmes support gender transformative, multi-hazard education systems, with a particular focus on the unique needs and vulnerabilities girls, adolescents and young women.

2 Increase climate finance for gender and intergenerational justice as part of the New Collective Quantified Goal

“Increasing climate finance for gender responsive projects and creating safe spaces for girls and women’s engagement in climate action will address their specific needs and enhance community resilience”

Damaris, Kenya, age 23, She Leads

“There is no ambitious climate action without ambitious climate finance goals; these goals should be scaled from the billions to trillions of USD dollars. As a young woman, I urge that new climate finance goals reflect the impacts climate change disproportionately inflicts upon women and young girls globally, through gender and youth responsive funding.”

Tegan, Australia, age 23

International climate finance is a central issue at COP29, with key negotiations on the NCQG. For today’s children and youth, adequate and ambitious climate finance is crucial to enabling effective climate action and ensuring that the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C remains within reach. Without it, the costs associated with disaster relief, humanitarian aid, and large-scale displacement will rise significantly, further destabilising vulnerable communities.

The NCQG must **prioritise the human rights of those most affected by the climate crisis, while embedding principles of gender equality and intergenerational equity. This is particularly important given the failure of international climate finance distribution which leave the most vulnerable groups and conflict affected communities, especially girls and women, with limited resources to cope with climate impacts.**

The inadequacy in meeting previous climate finance commitments must be addressed to build trust and cooperation between all Parties. The NCQG must meet international and science-based needs mobilising more than \$1 trillion dollars per year to achieve the systemic change necessary to meet the challenge of the climate crisis. This finance must be sufficient to meet the collective ambition to limit warming to 1.5°C in the NDCs; be new additional, predictable and transparent; include significant grant-based contributions from developing countries, particularly for adaptation and loss and damage; and address gender equality and intergenerational equity. International climate finance has failed to meet the needs of children and young people by:

- Allocating only **2.4%** of all climate-related Official Development Assistance (ODA)⁷ investment in climate action that **integrates gender equality as a principal objective.**

- Insufficiently allocating resources for adaptation, recovery, and loss and damage with UNDP estimating the **adaptation gap at US\$194-366 billion per year. Adaptation costs are 18 times higher than the funding currently available.**⁸
- Inadequately considering and **addressing the needs of girls**, despite their vulnerability and potential leadership, in building climate resilience, **with less than 4% of projects** funded addressing the needs and involvement of girls, highlighting a critical gap in climate finance.⁹
- Scarce climate finance for **adaptation and loss and damage** means that children, especially girls, face heightened risks of displacement, loss of education, and exposure to violence.
- Neglecting to fund programs addressing the **climate-conflict nexus**, despite greater vulnerability and lower capacity to respond to climate change impacts. Countries affected by fragility and conflict receive less than two-thirds of the adaptation finance committed to other low-income countries, a gap that has widened in recent years despite the increase in adaptation funding.¹⁰

Girls are not only most impacted by climate change but are also leaders in their communities, contributing to effective climate adaptation and resilience-building. However, they require increased support, including dedicated and accessible climate finance, to continue their vital work. **Setting ambitious qualitative and quantitative child-centred and gender-transformative targets within the NCQG can drive progress towards a more equitable and resilient future for all, while addressing the urgent needs of children and girls who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis.**

Plan International COP29 Recommendations

- **Prioritise the rights of those most affected by the climate crisis**, including Indigenous Peoples, marginalised communities, children and women, especially young women and girls. The NCQG must embed **gender equality** and **intergenerational equity** as core principles and include transparent and consistent reporting on **gender equality markers** to ensure accountability and progress in integrating gender into climate finance.
- **Recognise the diverse and heightened climate vulnerabilities of children, especially girls**, and ensure measures are in place to respond to the disproportionate impacts of climate change on them while empowering them as agents of change. The NCQG should **set ambitious targets** that include a **qualitative goal** affirming that finance must respond to the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children, as well as their empowerment, through targeted measures to deliver child-centred, gender-responsive and transformative climate finance, aligned with the evolving needs of developing countries and guided by science. All international climate finance should be new and additional finance, primarily provided as grants, particularly for **adaptation, anticipatory action, and loss and damage**—areas critical for building resilience.
- **Establish a thematic sub-goal on adaptation**, responding to funding needs of the [UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience](#)'s thematic targets on education, health, water and sanitation, food security and nutrition, and adaptive social protection. Children's education and child protection should also be prioritised. This grant-based funding goal should be based on science and evolving needs, noting various studies including UNEP's analyses, which conclude that adaptation costs in developing countries amount to \$215-387 billion per year.¹¹
- **Establish thematic sub-goal on loss and damage finance**, prioritising grant-based funding for resilient recovery and rebuilding of essential services for children and their communities, including education, health, and protection. Funding should be **needs-based** and **adopt a fair share approach** that complies with the **principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities** as set out under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.
- **Create dedicated climate financing windows** for implementation of tailored solutions to enhance children's resilience, especially the most vulnerable and effectively track child-responsive expenditures and indicators within updated national indices.
- **Provide clear guidance to climate finance institutions** including the **Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, and Loss and Damage Fund** to integrate gender responsive gender transformative, and child-responsive provisions into their policies and projects, including specific objectives, indicators, and safeguards.
- **Support direct access to climate finance** by building institutional capacity to enable countries, particularly highly vulnerable and conflict affected ones, to directly access climate finance, ensuring that girls and women needs are met.
- **Increase attention to the disproportionate impacts** of economic and non-economic loss and damage on children in the third review of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), including the work of its thematic expert groups, and the Santiago Network.
- **Allocate additional funding** to build government capacity at all levels to support the effective engagement of girls and young women in climate-related decision-making processes to ensure dedicated resources for girl-led climate initiatives that empower their leadership in climate action.

3 Prioritise gender in all UNFCCC processes, with a specific focus on girls in the review of the Lima Work Programme and Gender Action Plan

“I want to see more representation of young people, especially girls and young women, in the climate negotiation and decision-making process, ensuring their views and solutions are taken seriously and accounted for.”

Deli, Ghana, age 20, She Leads

Gender-transformative climate action is crucial for addressing both the climate crisis and the root causes of gender inequality, particularly for marginalised girls and young women. The gendered impact of the climate crisis disproportionately affects girls placing them at higher risk of violence, exploitation, and educational disruption due to intersecting inequalities related to gender, age, race, socio-economic status, nationality, migratory status, and ethnicity. Vulnerabilities for women and girls intensify during climate-related disasters exacerbating existing inequalities:

- **Over 80% of those displaced by climate-related disasters are women and girls.**¹²
- By 2050, it's estimated that the climate crisis will push an **additional 158 million women and girls into poverty and cause 232 million to face food insecurity.**¹³ During food shortages caused by climate change, girls are more likely to go hungry and will often eat least and last, leading to hunger and malnutrition.¹⁴
- Climate-related disasters significantly **increase the likelihood of child labour, forced marriages, and gender-based violence**¹⁵, particularly for girls in fragile contexts.¹⁶
- **Girls' education** is too often sacrificed. Girls are pulled out of school to help their families find food and water or take care of siblings. It's estimated that climate change will lead to **end to schooling for at least 12.5 million girls every year** in 30 climate-vulnerable countries.¹⁷
- **Women and girls face disproportionately higher health risks due to the impacts of climate change.**
- In 2021, out of a total of \$28 billion in adaptation funding by developed countries, providers reported that \$12.2 billion also had gender equality as an objective. However, \$11.2 billion (40%) of adaptation finance is not screened for gender equality targeting when reported, which leaves great uncertainty over precisely how much adaptation finance also targets gender equality.¹⁸

By addressing both gender inequality and climate vulnerability at their core, gender transformative climate action creates long-term, systemic change. It promotes climate justice by ensuring equal participation in decision-making and investing in girls' and women's leadership and resilience. This comprehensive approach leads to more sustainable and equitable outcomes for communities.

The COP28 review of Gender Action Plan (GAP) under the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) revealed critical gaps in funding, implementation, and meaningful engagement of girls and women in decision-making processes. These shortfalls must be addressed at COP29 to ensure that girls' unique challenges and contributions are adequately recognised and supported in climate policies.

By addressing the gendered impacts of the climate crisis and empowering girls to lead in climate action, COP29 can foster a more inclusive, just, and effective global response to climate change. **Prioritising gender in all UNFCCC processes, with a specific focus on girls, will help to ensure that climate solutions are equitable and sustainable, benefiting current and future generations.**

Plan International COP29 Recommendations

- **Integrate girls' perspectives into climate policies and actions** by ensuring their voices and experiences are central to shaping NDCs 3.0 and NAPs and climate finance decisions. Girls' unique insights and lived experiences must be reflected in climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience strategies.
- **Enhance focus on girls in the review of the Lima Work Programme and five-year Gender Action Plan**, including a call for climate policies, action and finance to better address the gendered and age-related impacts of climate change on girls, adolescent girls, and young women, and to amplify perspectives and solutions from feminist women's rights and girls-led organisations. This focus should inform preparation of NDCs, NAPs and national reporting.
- **Increase gender responsive and gender transformative climate finance**, prioritising investments in education, health, and protection services for girls in climate-affected regions. This will help address the heightened risks of child marriage, gender-based violence and end of schooling that climate crises exacerbate.
- **Enhance the full and inclusive participation of girls in climate decision-making** at all levels, from local to global. Formal mechanisms must be created and strengthened to support the meaningful involvement of girls in policymaking, ensuring that their leadership in climate action is recognised and resourced.
- **Increase commitments for gender and age responsive inclusive anticipatory action**, based on early warning indicators, utilising forecast-based financing where appropriate, to support resilience building and preventing crises from escalating. Funding must be adequate, timely, and flexible to meet the needs of affected communities, particularly girls and young women, by investing in food security, education, health, and social protection.

Conclusion

“Climate change really affects my future as a young girl like my education and the loss of my island home.”
Indigenous girl from an ethnic minority group, Solomon Islands, age 13, *Pacific Girls in a Changing Climate*

The urgency for action at COP29 is undeniable. The future of our planet and the rights of children and youth, especially of girls and young women, in all their diversity, are at stake. Failing to address the escalating impacts of climate change will result in severe consequences for future generations and represents a profound failure of global leadership.

At COP29, decision-makers must ensure that the **New Collective Quantified Goal for climate finance** prioritises the needs of climate affected and marginalised communities, including girls and women, and is guided by science with resources directed toward **gender-transformative solutions**. Without ambitious climate finance commitments, girls will continue to bear the brunt of climate-related disasters, including increased risks of violence, exploitation, and loss of education.

Plan International calls on COP29 leaders to take decisive action by scaling up climate finance to support **gender-equitable policies** and **amplifying girls’ leadership** in climate decision-making as part of the review of the Lima Work Program and Gender Action Plan. **Girls must be at the centre of climate finance strategies, ensuring their voices shape NDCs 3.0 and NAPs.**

The future of today’s children and youth, particularly the most marginalised girls, depends on bold commitments. Now is the time for COP29 decision-makers to lead with ambition, ensuring that the necessary resources are mobilised to protect and empower the next generation and secure a more just, resilient, and sustainable future for all.



Annex

Plan International climate research and reports

Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Pacific Girls in a Changing Climate, forthcoming

Adolescent Girls in Crisis: The Gendered impact of Climate Change on Adolescents Girls in the Sahel, forthcoming

Australia's National Child and Youth Statement on Climate Change, 2024

Making Climate Finance Work For All: Five Tests For A Robust New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), 2024

A Fair Share of Climate Finance? The Collective Aspects of The New Collective Quantified Goal, 2024

Plan International Climate Change Education Capacity Statement, 2024

Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Anticipatory Action: Learning & Best Practices Report, 2024

Youth Leadership in Climate Policy Workbook, 2024

Integrating Child Protection, Education and GBV in Anticipatory Action, 2023

Girls' activism and leadership for climate justice in Asia and the Pacific, 2023

Real Choices, Real Lives: Climate Change and Girls Education - Barriers, Gender Norms and Pathways to Resilience, 2023

Falling short: Addressing the climate finance gap for children, 2023

Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Experiences of migration in Central America and Mexico, 2023

A Tough Period: Global Report, 2023

Young People and Green Skills: Preparing for a sustainable future, 2023

Supporting women to take the lead in renewable energy, 2023

Climate Justice: Loss and Damage Finance for Children, August 2023

For Our Futures: Youth Voices on Climate Justice and Education, 2023

From the frontlines: Youth call for action to address loss and damage caused by climate change, 2022

Safe Schools Global Programme - Our goals, 2022

Reimagining Climate Education and Youth Leadership, 2021

Adolescent Girls in the Climate Crisis: Voices from Zambia and Zimbabwe, 2021

Working with young people to adapt cities for climate resilience, 2021

Endnotes

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- 10 World Bank (2022). *Closing the Gap: Trends in Adaptation Finance for Fragile and Conflict-affected Settings*.
- 11 UNEP (2023). *Adaptation Gap Report 2023: Underfinanced. Underprepared – Inadequate investment and planning on climate adaptation leaves world exposed*.
- 12 World Economic Forum (2024). *Women Health and Climate Change*.
- 13 UN Women (2023). *Feminist climate justice: A framework for action*.
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- 16 Save the Children (2023). *Global Girlhood Report 2023: Girls at the Centre of the Storm – Her planet, her future, her solutions*.
- 17 Malala Fund (2021). *A Greener Fairer Future: Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education*.
- 18 Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance (2024). *Making Climate Finance Work for All: Five Tests for A Robust New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)*



About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.

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- facebook.com/planinternational
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Plan International
International Headquarters
Dukes Court, Duke Street, Woking,
Surrey GU21 5BH, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 1483 755155
Fax: +44 (0) 1483 756505
E-mail: info@plan-international.org