

# Topics: climate change, energy security and disaster management all from a South Asian context

[ADDRESS TO UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD – September 2022 meeting](#)

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Honourable Chairman of the Session

Distinguished members of the UNICEF Executive Board

Ministers and Heads of Delegations

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Life, and the future, for children in South Asia, feels like it has never been more precarious.

Extreme weather, natural disasters, earthquakes, sea level rise, cyclones, droughts – the list grows every year.

Every day seems to bring with it a new threat that families and children must face — as they continue to live through the knock-on impacts of the pandemic and environments marred by air and lead pollution.

The Country Programme Documents of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka cover almost 600 million children or 1.7 billion people. Every child in South Asia is affected by at least one climate or environmental hazard, shock, or stress. But, if you're a child in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, or Pakistan, the Children's Climate Risk Index, puts you at an extremely high risk. 128 million children are highly exposed to heatwaves and over 220 million children are highly exposed to flooding.

And we know that it is the most vulnerable children and families who suffer most. Disasters and climate change increase inequalities and push them further into poverty.

The pandemic and the events of the last year have underscored just how interconnected humanity is.

Conflicts in Eurasia have affected food and energy security in South Asia — reducing the amount of food on children's plates, in a region already home to half the world's wasted children. Yes, some 24.8 million children in South Asia suffer from wasting.

But the last few years have also shown us just what is possible when we work together.

Cooperation and solidarity are the key to tackling these, what often seem impossible, challenges. Cooperation among South Asian countries, but also beyond.

We must leverage our relationships with international finance institutions and the private sector — especially technology companies, renewable energy developers and infrastructure financiers.

We must tap into the expertise of partners within the United Nations system to support and develop sustainable markets for children.

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We need to scale-up efforts to build social services that are climate resilient and increase child-sensitivity in climate, disaster risk and recovery policies, strategies and plans.

And young people need to be supported as active agents in the solution-making processes already underway. We must not forget; it is their futures at stake.

The world should not forget the climate and disaster management burden in South Asia. We have the potential to overcome it.