



Take actions with and for children to secure a livable planet for all

As global temperatures reach new records in 2023, fears are deepening about the far-reaching changes taking place in Earth's system. Children are uniquely and disproportionately vulnerable to disasters, environmental degradation and climate change. **The climate crisis is not just changing the planet, it is changing children.**

One billion children - nearly half of the world's total child population - are at 'extremely high risk' due to a deadly combination of high exposure to climate hazards and insufficient essential services to help them cope - with devastating impacts on their lives, health and wellbeing. Climate change is affecting children everywhere, even in high-income countries, and the world is not doing nearly enough to protect them.

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA region) including the Arab Gulf, climate change is raising temperatures at a faster rate than the global average, increasing the frequency and the intensity of extreme weather events. In parts of the Middle East, the combination of high temperature and high humidity is projected to reach or exceed the thresholds of human adaptability - with the Gulf as a 'hotspot' and young children particularly vulnerable to extreme heatwaves.



Info-box Children and Climate Change in MENA

More than **82 million children** in the MENA region including the Arab Gulf face either high or extremely high climate risks as of 2023.



With **temperatures rising**,



the region also experiences **increases in the incidence and extent of vector-borne diseases**, such as malaria, dengue fever, schistosomiasis and yellow fever.

In the past decade, disasters have triggered at least



1.5 million new internal displacements in MENA.



COP28 UAE: Position children at the heart of climate action

Despite the unique vulnerabilities of children to the climate crisis, their needs and perspectives are almost totally absent in climate policies, urgency and investment at all levels. This urgently needs to change. The World Climate Conference 2023 (COP28) in Dubai can be a catalyst for meaningful, immediate change, and put children at the heart of climate action. **UNICEF is calling on parties to:**

- Elevate children within the final COP28 Cover Decision and convene an expert dialogue on children and climate change.
- Embed children and intergenerational equity in the Global Stocktake (GST).
- Include children and climate resilient essential services within the final decision on the Global Goal for Adaptation (GGA).
- Ensure the Loss and Damage Fund and funding arrangements are child-responsive with child rights embedded in the fund's governance and decision-making process.

Beyond COP28, UNICEF is calling on parties to take action to protect the lives, health and well-being of children, empower every child to be a champion for the environment, and fulfil international sustainability and climate change agreements including rapidly reducing emissions.

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COP28 in the UAE calls on us to join forces across borders and sectors. Governments, private sectors, NGOs, academic institutions, our mandate is clear. Let us bring our collective strength together to move in the direction of a greener, safer, and more equitable world for generations to come. Let us put the voices of children and youth at the center of the climate agenda.”

Eltayeb Adam,
UNICEF GAO Representative



UNICEF in the Gulf Area

UNICEF Gulf Area Office (GAO) is focusing on five pillars to operationalize the climate agenda and keep the climate dialogues focused on children and youth, in the lead up to COP28 and beyond.

Elevate

UNICEF has been tirelessly advocating and campaigning on a global, regional, and local level to place children and youth at the heart of climate action and the COP28 climate agenda - with a momentous achievement: COP28 President, HE Sultan Al Jaber, announced a **thematic day focused on Children and Youth (December 8th)** - for the first time in the history of COP. To strengthen the voice of children and youth, UNICEF GAO has appointed **10 Youth Advocates in the UAE** with passion for environment and climate action. They are acting as role models for their peers, bringing the voice of children and youth to policy making and taking part in various events organized locally and globally, such as COP28.

Educate

Integrating climate change and sustainability into school education equips young people with knowledge and skills to address global challenges. UNICEF is a strategic partner to the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) in the **Green Education Partnership**, an initiative that enables students, teachers, and communities to adopt eco-friendly and sustainable practices. As a result, every school in UAE will provide climate education to all children and young people in UAE. Besides, UNICEF works with partners to offer comprehensive and accessible climate literacy programs that empower young people to engage in climate decision-making.

Empower

To enhance capacity to address climate change challenges, UNICEF is working to organize capacity building programs for young people. UNICEF partnered with the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood (SCMC) to host **climate change capacity-building workshops** to enhance skills among participants to address the impacts of climate change on children. Additionally, UNICEF is training **40-member Emirati Children's Parliament** on climate change to develop deep expertise in the local children and youth. In collaboration with the UAE MoE, UNICEF empowers and acknowledges children actively involved in the critical discourse on climate change as **'Net Zero Heroes'**.

Engage

UNICEF works with various stakeholders from both the private and public sector to develop and implement comprehensive campaigns to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change. **UNICEF is working with embassies** to draw attention to the climate hazards that children and youth face, aiming to sensitize stakeholders to the unique challenges faced by these vulnerable groups. By working closely with diplomats and businesses, UNICEF promotes a collective commitment to securing the future of the young generation in the face of environmental change.

Evidence

As robust climate data play a pivotal role in policy decisions and evidence-based national climate action, UNICEF provides data on the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on children and child-centered analyses of existing policies. In the UAE, UNICEF has initiated the **Climate Landscape Analysis for Children and Young People** in partnership with the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and the Youth Climate Champion (YCC). In collaboration with other organizations and partners, UNICEF contributes to UAE's climate policies and climate indicators such as National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NDPs).

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Our culture and heritage have always promoted values in responsible consumption. Why don't we try to learn from these values?”

Mariam Al-Ghafri,
Youth Advocate in UAE