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Regional Strategy on Action for Climate Empowerment of Children, Adolescents and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean (2023-2025)

UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO)

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

The following is a list of abbreviations and acronyms, and their meanings included in this document in their Spanish and English versions.

ACE	Acción para el Empoderamiento Climático	Action for Climate Empowerment
ALC / LAC	América Latina y el Caribe	Latin America and the Caribbean
CEED	Sección de UNICEF en Clima, Energía, Medio Ambiente y Reducción de Riesgos de Desastres	Climate, Energy, Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction Section of UNICEF
CEPAL / ECLAC	Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
CMNUCC / UNFCCC	Convención Marco de las Naciones Unidas sobre Cambio Climático	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COP	Conferencia de las Partes	Conference of Parties
COY	Conferencia de la Juventud	Conference of Youth
IPCC	Panel Intergubernamental sobre Cambio Climático	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRCI / CCRI	Índice de Riesgo Climático de la Infancia	Children's Climate Risk Index
LCOY	Conferencia Local de la Juventud	Local Conference of Youth
NNAyJ/C&Y	Niños, niñas, adolescentes y jóvenes	Children and Youth
NDC	Contribuciones Determinadas a Nivel Nacional	National Determined Contributions
ODS/SDG	Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible	Sustainable Development Goals
RCOY	Conferencia Regional de la Juventud	Regional Conference of Youth
WASH	Agua, Saneamiento e Higiene	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
YOUNGO	Representación Oficial de la Niñez y las Juventudes ante la CMNUCC	Official Children and Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC

Foreword

The climate crisis is a child rights crisis. Climate change poses a major threat to children and young people's health, education, development, and future potential. Across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), more than 169 million children and adolescents live in areas exposed to multiple climatic and environmental shocks annually – from cyclones and heatwaves to water scarcity and pollution.

In a world shaped by new and unexpected climate challenges, it is imperative that we take action to secure a sustainable future for all. Deprivation as a result of environmental degradation at a young age can result in a lifetime of lost opportunity.

As we embark on this crucial journey, we cannot ignore the voices of the most affected population groups- children, adolescents, and young people. ***UNICEF's Regional Strategy on Action for Climate Empowerment of Children, Adolescents, and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean (2023-2025)*** is our commitment to a better world for the next generations.

We believe that children and young people should be dynamic leaders of change. The young minds of today hold innovative ideas that can shape effective solutions for the challenges of tomorrow. By bringing them to the decision-making table, we are ensuring their right to participate and getting their valuable insights.

This strategy places them at the forefront, as the champions of the region, catalysts for transformation, and integral members of the decision-making processes. By empowering them to lead, we empower the entire region to rise to the climate challenge with determination, creativity, and urgency.

May this strategy inspire and guide our work with public and private partners to boost our commitment to children, adolescents, and young people empowerment.



Garry Conille
UNICEF Regional Director for
Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Introduction

The climate crisis is a child rights crisis. In just a few years, we have experienced accelerated changes in the climate that affect the development of life, socioeconomic context, and ecosystems, and undermine the rights of children, from their access to clean air, food, basic sanitation services, and drinking water, to their right to education, housing, protection, and even life.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is one of the most vulnerable regions to the effects of climate change, with more than 169 million children and adolescents living in areas exposed to at least two climatic or environmental shocks per year, such as cyclones, heat waves, water scarcity, environmental pollution, and vector-borne diseases, according to the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI). In turn, several countries face multiple or overlapping shocks hindering development and further increasing children's deprivation. In addition, the 6th Assessment Report 2023 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reveals that recent generations are born into a more drastic climate scenario due to emissions from previous generations. This generates an extraordinary disadvantage for their development and life cycle, especially for those born after 2020.

While the only long-term solution to climate change is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions drastically, there are many measures to reduce the risk and vulnerabilities of children and youth (C&Y) in the short term. Strengthening resilience and expanding the provision of social services is a crucial pathway for the most vulnerable children to enjoy better opportunities. Promoting education that develops knowledge and skills to cope with climate change has a multiplier and transformative effect on sustainable development and curtailing emissions at the individual, institutional, and community levels. In turn, it is essential to empower children, adolescents, and youth to exercise their right to express themselves, to participate in mitigation, adaptation, and climate resilience activities, and to be part of the solution.

For this reason, through internal and external consultative processes, the first **UNICEF Regional Strategy on Action for Climate Empowerment of Children, Adolescents, and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean (2023-2025)** was developed:

- **First stage:** Draft document developed by the Climate, Energy, Environment, and Disaster Risk Reduction Section (CEED) and the Adolescent Development and Participation Section (ADAP) of UNICEF at the regional level.
- **Second stage: Internal consultation** with UNICEF's Country Offices of both Sections in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF Headquarters, together with other UNICEF Sections such as WASH, Education, and Inclusion at the regional level were also invited.
- **Third stage: External consultation** in Spanish and English with children, adolescents, and young people in the LAC Region who have been previously involved with UNICEF.
- **Fourth stage:** The CEED section of UNICEF at the regional level systematized all the inputs from both consultations to finalize the Regional Strategy

The Regional Strategy aims to support children, adolescents, and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean to develop skills and capacities that will enable them to play a role as agents of change in the face of the climate crisis. In this way, they can develop better support from all actors in the public and private sectors and civil society organizations in designing better solutions to environmental problems and advocating for more decisive action by their governments, other national actors, and the international community.

We thank all the children, adolescents, and young people of this region, as well as the entire UNICEF team that has participated in this process. We are confident that the Regional Strategy presented below will contribute to strengthening actions for climate empowerment in Latin America and the Caribbean.



2. Contextual framework

a) Climate governance in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Regional Strategy is based on this contextual framework to respond to the commitments made by countries, as well as to address the gaps in response to the climate crisis affecting children, adolescents and youth.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, aiming to eliminate poverty, reduce inequality and achieve more peaceful and prosperous societies by 2030. More than 100 Member States have renewed their commitment to the rights of children and adolescents in the context of implementing the SDGs. In particular, the Strategy seeks to achieve SDGs 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.b.

Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on December 12, 2015. It entered into force on November 4, 2016 and its overall objective is to keep the global average temperature increase well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Action for Climate Empowerment

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), under Article 6 of the UNFCCC and 12 of the Paris Agreement, is developed through its six elements: education, public awareness of climate change, capacity building, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation. As of June 2023, some governments have designated focal points in Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action

In 2019, during COP25 in Madrid, a group of world leaders joined young activists in a historic moment to sign this Declaration, with support from UNICEF, the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), and YOUNGO. This is the first commitment of its kind to accelerate inclusive, child- and youth-centered climate policies and actions at the national and global levels. As of June 2023, the LAC countries that have signed are Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Saint Lucia, and Uruguay.

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Escazu Agreement

In 2021, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (known as the Escazú Agreement), which Technical Secretariat seats at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), entered into force. Its main beneficiaries are the population of our region, particularly the most vulnerable groups and communities. The objective of the Agreement is to guarantee the right of all people to have access to information in a timely and adequate manner, to participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their lives and environment, and to access justice when these rights have been violated.

As of June 2023, the countries that have signed and ratified the Escazú Agreement are Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Grenada, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Uruguay; among the countries that have only signed are Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Paraguay, and Peru; and among those that have not yet signed the agreement are Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, El Salvador, Honduras, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

Nationally Determined Contributions

The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC's) are the cornerstone of the Paris Agreement because they are intended to centralize the efforts of each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. As of June 2023, 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have issued their first NDC communication, and 24 countries have issued their second update. However, the vast majority of these communications are not sensitive to children, adolescents and youth; only 38% of the region makes explicit reference to children and youth, including Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico and Saint Lucia.

Laws, regulations or other policy instruments on climate change

The governments of Latin American and Caribbean countries have developed policy instruments such as Laws, Decrees, Policies, Strategies, and Plans, among others, to respond to the climate and environmental commitments to which their countries are party and mitigate the Greenhouse Gases (GHG) they generate. Likewise, in recent years, institutional participation spaces for children, adolescents, and youth have been created and strengthened at the national and sub-national levels. However, in some countries, they are insufficient, and it is necessary to facilitate the possibility of involving them and ensuring that they have an active role in decision-making.

National Adaptation Plans

The process to develop the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) was established under the Cancun Adaptation Framework. The document enables Parties to identify medium and long-term adaptation needs and develop and implement strategies and programs to address those needs. It is an ongoing, progressive, and iterative process that follows a country-driven, gender-sensitive, participatory, and fully transparent approach. In Latin America and the Caribbean, not all countries have child-sensitive NAPs. Adaptation actions must prioritize the needs of children, adolescents, and youth in the face of climate change impacts.

b) Climate action by children, adolescents and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean

Far from being passive victims, children, adolescents, and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean have decided to take a key leadership role in climate action in their communities at national, regional and global levels. This role has been recognized by the United Nations System, the public sector and the private sector, integrating the idea of giving space to children, adolescents and youth in climate governance.

The actions developed in Latin America and the Caribbean have been diverse, encompassing the development of programs and projects focused on ecosystem conservation, environmental and climate education, research, generation of campaigns, and advocacy in public policies and regulations. However, the C&Y still face several challenges that prevent them from broadening the scope of their actions and building resilience to the climate crisis.

These challenges include the need for data and evidence on the impact of climate change on their lives, the lack of funding for organizations and initiatives led by young people, the need for capacity building and free access to information adapted to the languages present in the region, as well as the availability of universal design¹. Another challenge is the need for official and systematic spaces for meaningful participation, allowing them to directly impact decision-making processes and formulate public climate policies or policies related to their realities.



1. Universal design refers to organizations directing their actions to the development of physical or digital environments and/or products so that they can be used and understood by the vast number of people.

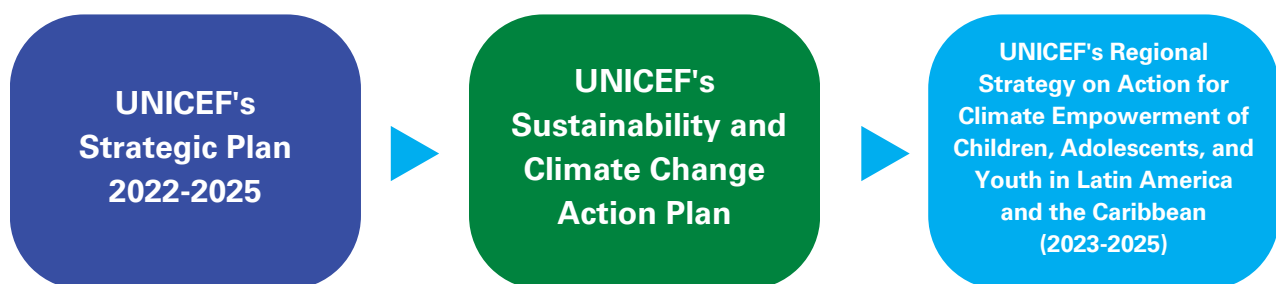
3. UNICEF's role

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) promotes the right of children, adolescents, and youth to grow up in a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment where they can have an active and meaningful participation in decision-making and climate governance. It also recognizes the current inclusion gaps and the diversity of the social, cultural, and geographic context of children and youth, which increases their environmental, economic, physiological, social, and political vulnerability.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF works in 36 countries and territories together with governments, civil society, the private sector and other partners to generate decisive progress in the fight against climate change and ensure that children and youth take a leading role as champions of the region and are at the center of decision-making processes. From UNICEF's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan to its recent Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan, we work with a systemic and inclusive vision to create innovative solutions promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, low-carbon growth, disaster risk reduction, and environmental sustainability for effective climate action by children, adolescents and youth as agents of change.

Within this framework, **UNICEF's Regional Strategy on Action for Climate Empowerment of Children, Adolescents, and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean (2023-2025)** was developed. The Strategy has a vision that contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals and provides thematic axes aligned to current challenges under cross-cutting approaches that allow working with cultural and territorial relevance, universal design, and gender perspective in the framework of a constant digital transformation. Therefore, this Regional Strategy promotes leadership and action by the Regional Office and the 24 Country Offices to urgently address the climate change agenda to safeguard better living conditions for children and youth.

Finally, this path requires the participation of children, adolescents, and young people in the LAC region, as well as strategic allies in the social, public, and private sectors and among the agencies of the United Nations System that wish to take proactive measures to develop actions aimed at its implementation and collaborate through intergenerational partnerships, under the 2030 Agenda.



4. Systemic Framework



VISION

The Latin American and Caribbean region guarantees a safe and sustainable environment for children, adolescents and young people, who are agents of change in decision-making.



GOALS

SDG 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related risks and natural disasters in all countries.

SDG 13.2 Incorporate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and plans.

SDG 13.3 Improve education, awareness and human and institutional capacity for climate change mitigation, adaptation, mitigation and early warning.

SDG 13.b Promote mechanisms to build capacity for effective climate change planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, with particular emphasis on women, youth, and local and marginalized communities



OBJECTIVES

General Objective: To provide support to children, adolescents and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean for the development of skills and capacities that will enable them to play a role as agents of change in the face of the climate crisis.

Main Objective 1: Strengthen environmental and climate education for children, adolescents and young people in LAC.

Main Objective 2: Promote the development of green skills of children, adolescents and youth in LAC.

Main Objective 3: Provide mechanisms for access to reliable, inclusive and timely information for children, adolescents and young people in LAC.

Main Objective 4: Advocate for the participation of children, adolescents and young people in LAC in climate governance spaces



PROGRAMATIC AREAS

Health

Education

Child
Protection

WASH

Social
Protection



THEMATIC AXES

Environmental
and climate
education

Development of
green skills

Access to
information

Participation in
climate
governance



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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5. Cross-cutting approaches

The approaches presented will be taken into account during the implementation of the Strategy, together with the active, inclusive and meaningful participation of children, adolescents and young people in LAC.

1. Rights Approach

We will develop the capabilities of children, adolescents, and youth as holders of rights in climate action.

2. Intergenerational Approach

We will strengthen the role of current generations and the right to have safe and healthy lives in a sustainable environmental settings for future generations.

3. Territorial Approach

We will adhere to a territorial approach (geographical and socio-cultural environment) while developing interventions for and with children and youth.

4. Intercultural Approach

We will consider traditional and ancestral knowledge from indigenous communities among other cultures in our interventions.

5. Inclusivity Approach

We will promote access and inclusion of children and youth with disabilities, attending the added vulnerability and risks in the face of the climate crisis.

6. Intersectional Approach

We will recognize systemic inequalities in the interaction of gender, sexual orientation, race, or other categories of a person or group of people.

7. Gender Approach

We will promote gender equity under the construction of the roles of children and youth and the genders with which they identify.

8. Digital Transformation Approach

We will promote digital transformation for the development of innovative technological skills that contribute to the climate resilience of children and youth.

6. Thematic axes

The Regional Strategy is framed under 4 thematic axes with multiple lines of actions per axis which will enable UNICEF Country Office and our partners to work in diverse initiatives depending on the specific local context aiming to increase the climate resilience of children, adolescents, and young people in LAC.

A) THEMATIC AXIS: Environmental and climate education

LINE OF ACTION

1. Integration of environmental and climate education topics in the formal and non-formal education sector.
2. Elaboration of evidence-based and knowledge management products on environmental and climate education progress at the national level in LAC.
3. Development of educational materials and interactive digital resources related to climate change for children and youth, emphasizing vulnerable groups (indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, among others).
4. Development of climate projects in schools and local communities generated by children, adolescents, and youth in collaboration with the education sector and civil society.
5. Development of projects related to climate change in schools or other educational spaces in collaboration with educational staff.
6. Promotion of sustainable educational practices for the integral development of children and young people and their families.

B) THEMATIC AXIS: Development of green skills²

LINE OF ACTION

1. Development of green skills in collaboration with the public and private sectors.
2. Organize events, workshops, and skills training for children and youth to create and strengthen their entrepreneurship skills related to sustainability, circular economy, and other business models.
3. Promotion of digital skills to access information, educational opportunities, and development of green projects, entrepreneurship skills related to sustainability, and innovations in vulnerable communities.
4. Promotion of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and climate change innovation projects for children and youth.
5. Access to green jobs for young people through internships and professional practices with the public and private sectors.

2. Green skills are the knowledge, values, abilities and attitudes necessary to live and develop a sustainable, resilient and resource-efficient society.

C) THEMATIC AXIS: Access to information

LINE OF ACTION

1. Generation of data and evidence on the impacts of climate change on C&Y and their role in climate governance in LAC countries (e.g. U-Report, among others).
2. Systematization of successful experiences of UNICEF Offices in LAC on the involvement of children and youth in climate action.
3. Creation, translation and dissemination of friendly, accessible, and inclusive content on issues related to climate change in social networks (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, among others) and digital platforms in collaboration with children and youth with emphasis on vulnerable communities.
4. Promotion of knowledge and practices (traditional and ancestral) to prepare for disasters and strengthen climate resilience.
5. Access to technological resources as tools for innovation in climate education.

D) THEMATIC AXIS: Participation in climate governance

National Scope

LINE OF ACTION

1. Strengthen the capacity of UNICEF Offices in LAC to provide support to children, adolescents and youth in climate action initiatives.
2. Promotion for the participation of children, adolescents, and youth in local spaces led by C&Y (e.g. adolescent councils, youth committees, LCOY, etc).
3. Creation of alliances for the participation of children, adolescents and youth in climate governance spaces, mainly between UNICEF and international, governmental, private and civil society organizations.
4. Advocacy for the involvement of children, adolescents and youth engaged in national and sub-national processes related to climate governance.
5. Organization of events, discussions, talks and other spaces with children and youth climate activists, specialists and decision-makers in climate governance.
6. Promotion of climate volunteering led by children, adolescents, and youth in LAC countries.

Regional Scope

LINE OF ACTION

1. Advocacy for the participation of C&Y from LAC in regional and international spaces (e.g. COP, RCOY, COY and others).
2. Empowerment of C&Y in climate action through mentoring programs, training, workshops, discussion forums, among others.

3. Development of a work plan focused on UNICEF Youth Advocates in LAC countries for the development of joint projects at the national and regional levels.
4. Creation of a seed fund to support the participation of children, adolescents, and youth in negotiations and other key advocacy spaces for climate action through donors.
5. Development of an advocacy plan to increase awareness of children's rights and their inclusion in climate negotiations with the negotiating teams of LAC countries at the UNFCCC processes.
6. Facilitation of tools and guidance on online safety and self-care for climate activists in spaces led and supported by UNICEF.



Francisco Vera Manzanares, first Youth Advocate de UNICEF Latin American and the Caribbean (2023)

3. UNICEF Youth Advocates are named by UNICEF to advocate for universal goals, from making the planet more resilient to climate change to fighting gender-based violence to defending the rights of children with disabilities; these young people raise their voices and take action for children's rights around the world.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Regional Strategy will be monitored under the Core Strategic Indicators focused on climate action for children, adolescents, and youth according to UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Likewise, annually, the Country Offices and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean will evaluate the progress of these indicators that contribute to the achievement of UNICEF's global goals.

Core Strategic Indicators 4.3.2			
Number of countries engaging children, adolescents and young people in action and advocacy to address climate change, unsustainable energy use and/or environmental degradation, with UNICEF support			
Method of calculation	Count of the number of countries that have conducted at least two of options 1), 2) or 3) of Data Point 0000322.		
Options			Thematic axes of the Strategy
Option 1: Development of surveys to gather the opinion of children, adolescents and youth, and promotion of access to information on climate, energy, environment and/or disaster risk reduction.			Thematic Axis C (information)
Option 2: Support for integration of climate, energy, environment, and/or disaster risk reduction in education / green skills (curricular or non-curricular).			Thematic Axis A (education) Thematic Axis B (green skills)
Option 3: Participation of young people on climate, energy, environment, and/or disaster risk reduction initiatives including policy development, advocacy, or campaigning			Thematic Axis D (participation)
Option 4 None of the above			-
GOALS			
Base Line 2022	2023	2024	2025
16 countries in LAC	18 countries in LAC	23 countries in LAC	28 countries in LAC

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