

Actions for a Liveable Planet for Every Child

Athieng Akoi (13) washes pots near a flooded village in South Sudan, where 390,000 children were without basic social services, safe water, proper health care and schooling in early 2022 due to flooding exacerbated by a changing climate. As a response, UNICEF invests in building flood resilience, disaster preparedness and recovery, and climate change adaptation activities.

Climate change, disasters and other humanitarian crises disproportionately affect children and young people

UNICEF is calling for bold, urgent and inclusive disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) action for and with all children and young people to uphold their rights so they can survive and thrive.

UNICEF calls for child-critical services to be more resilient to and prepared for climate change, disasters and other humanitarian crises and for DRR and CCA investments to center on all children and young people. This includes empowering them to be educated, prepared, resilient and able to meaningfully participate in key decisions and actions. Children and young people are more than victims. As independent leaders and in collaboration with governments and development and humanitarian partners, they have capacity and an active role to play in reducing disaster risk and adapting to climate change as agents of change.



Around the world, children and young people are facing immediate and long-lasting consequences from increasingly frequent and severe disasters, climate impacts and humanitarian crises that can impact the trajectory of their entire lives.

- **Almost every child** (>99%) is now exposed to at least one climate or environmental hazard, shock or stress, according to UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI), with approximately one billion children at an extremely high risk from the impacts of climate change.¹
- In 2021, there were **38 million internal displacements** across the world, with **23.7 million** triggered by disasters.²
- **1.7 million children** lose their lives every year because of avoidable environmental impacts. Millions more are being forced to leave their homes, missing out on school and suffering from disease.³
- At the peak of the disruption to education caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, **1.6 billion learners** experienced disruptions to their learning.⁴
- **~600,000 children under age 5** die each year from respiratory infections related to indoor and outdoor air pollution and second-hand smoke resulting from unsustainable energy practices.⁵

For children and young people, disasters, other humanitarian crises and the ever-growing impacts of climate change can raise the risk of child marriage, child labour, conflict and public health emergencies; threaten nutrition and food security; prevent access to school and social safety nets; and decrease access to resilient health, water and sanitation services — especially for girls without adequate menstrual hygiene provisions. Such impacts can lead to death, disease and illnesses (like diarrhea, worm infections and stunting) and adversely affect their education and development.

UNICEF's role in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

UNICEF is the lead agency in several sectors in implementation and advocacy, including making child-critical services more resilient and working for and with young people: e.g., in education, nutrition, child protection and water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH). UNICEF co-leads in or contributes extensively to other sectors and areas of work, including social protection, health and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). UNICEF is committed to reducing risk and building resilience as the climate changes and before and after disaster.

- UNICEF implements DRR and CCA programming around the world, often in remote, fragile, conflict-affected and risk-prone contexts, and partners with the most marginalized and at-risk children and young people.
- In 2021, UNICEF supported nearly **1 million young people** to participate in or lead offline and online civic initiatives on climate, environment, energy and DRR. UNICEF campaigns to engage young people in advocacy and action were active in **over 100 countries**.
- In 2021, **83 national child-sensitive CCA and mitigation plans and policies** were developed through UNICEF support (up from 65 countries in 2020; and 28 in 2019).
- In 2020-2021, UNICEF installed nearly **3,000 solar-powered water systems** in schools, healthcare facilities and communities in rural, urban, disaster-prone and conflict-affected contexts.



Nearly 1 million young people

Supported in climate, environment, energy and DRR action



3,000 solar-powered water systems

Installed in 51 countries



83 countries

Developed child-sensitive climate plans/policies with UNICEF support

UNICEF works for and with children and young people to reduce risk, adapt to a changing climate and build resilience

UNICEF and its partners are committed to integrating DRR and CCA into development and humanitarian efforts to strengthen resilience. Programmes work through a holistic vision for and with children and young people so they can gain skills, knowledge and resources to survive, grow and develop.

Building children's and young people's resilience and meeting the targets of global agreements — such as the *Sendai Framework for DRR* and the *Paris Agreement* — is complex and urgent. Across multiple sectors, UNICEF is committed to working with partners to reduce the disproportional risks children face before and after increasingly frequent and severe disasters and from a changing climate.

Leaving no child behind requires collaboration through strong partnerships with networks, governments, UN agencies, civil society, academia, the public and private sectors and, most critically, children and young people themselves.



As examples of UNICEF's wide array of efforts:

UNICEF and its partners are

- Sharing guidance and lessons for [child-centered DRR](#) (Nepal), [climate policymaking for and with children and young people](#) (Cambodia, Namibia), [risk-informed education programming for resilience](#) (global), [migration due to disasters and climate impacts](#) (global) and [climate-resilient WASH](#) (global).
- Gathering and sharing age- and gender-disaggregated data on [disaster risk](#) (Honduras), [climate risk](#) (global) and [gender-responsive disaster risk management](#) (Eastern and Southern Africa);
- Supporting [climate-resilient education systems](#) (Sri Lanka) and developing [school disaster risk reduction](#) plans (Armenia);
- Working with governments and partners on programming on [the solarization of water systems](#) (Mauritania), [renewable energy solutions in healthcare](#) (Malawi) and [innovative groundwater mapping](#) in response to drought (Ethiopia, Madagascar);
- Brokering [public-private partnerships to keep children safe during Covid-19](#) (Indonesia) and increasing [business commitments to child rights](#) in a changing climate (global);
- Setting up systems and capacities for [shock-responsive social protection](#) (global), including [cash transfer mechanisms](#) (Mongolia); and
- Engaging in many more programming and advocacy initiatives around the world.

Children and young people are critical partners

Having to face disasters, climate impacts and public health emergencies themselves, children and young people have critical skills, experiences and ideas needed for safer and more sustainable societies everywhere. They are already playing a key role in DRR and CCA by exercising their views, opinions and concerns; identifying and working on solutions; and promoting environmentally sustainable lifestyles.

As an example of diverse global actions by children and young people, they are:

- Acting on the world's most pressing environmental challenges to [reduce disaster risk](#) (global), [improve climate policies](#) (Chile, Costa Rica, Fiji, India), [monitor and address air pollution](#) (Mongolia) and [save the planet](#) (Panama, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Peru, Argentina, Côte d'Ivoire, Bolivia, Indonesia, Guatemala);
- Applying innovative ideas to [disaster risk reduction and management](#) (Indonesia), [risk assessments](#) (Pacific Islands), [child-centred DRR](#) (Nepal), [early warning systems](#) (Tajikistan), [waste management](#) (Bhutan) and [climate change & conservation](#) (India);
- Offering peer-to-peer guidance, such as the youth-led [climate change toolkits](#) (Latin America and Caribbean region), and input to shape decisions, such as on [the green transition](#) (Africa, Europe) and [climate & gender equity](#) (global);
- Learning and implementing [green skills](#) (Iraq) to mitigate climate-related disasters and for a more sustainable world; and
- Engaging in many more programming and advocacy initiatives around the world, including with UNICEF support.



Young people can inspire and lead

A message from Faye Anne Tuliao Bandilla, 22, Philippines

It is the role of the government to protect us, and because it is our safety and future that are at stake. It will be beneficial if young people are included in disaster risk reduction and climate action because they are capable of leading and inspiring other young people — and even other vulnerable groups and community members — to take action. When we involve young people, we are also building their capacity to lead.

Photo provided by Faye Anne Bandilla and used with her permission

Working together will build more impactful action

Reducing disaster and climate risk and building resilience requires children, young people, governments, UN agencies, civil society, the public and private sector, networks, donors, media, academia and communities working together. The following list is a small sample of our multiple partners, and the coalitions we participate in at national, regional and global levels

[ARISE Global Network](#)

[Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative \(CADRI\)](#)

[Children in a Changing Climate](#)

[Children's Environmental Rights Initiative \(CERI\)](#)

[Climate & Clean Air Coalition](#)

[Climate Watch](#)

[Connecting Business initiative \(CBI\)](#)

[Data for Children Collaborative](#)

[Fridays For Future](#)

[Global Alliance for DRR and Resilience in the Education Sector \(GADRRRES\)](#)

[Global Water Partnership \(GWP\)](#)

[International Renewable Energy Agency \(IRENA\)](#)

[Major Group for Children and Youth](#)

[Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction \(PEDRR\)](#)

[Protecting Every Child's Potential](#)

[SDG 7 Youth Constituency](#)

[The Nature Conservancy \(TNC\)](#)

[The NDC Partnership](#)

[U-Inspire](#)

[World Meteorological Organization \(WMO\)](#)

[World Resources Institute \(WRI\)](#)

[YOUNGO](#)



Students in Fiji unload UNICEF WASH Kits as part of disaster recovery after Category five, Tropical Cyclone Yasa made landfall in December 2020. More than 2,700 WASH Kits reached over 15,000 people.

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To meet global targets, UNICEF urgently calls on all stakeholders to:

- **Ensure child-critical services are more inclusive, and resilient to and prepared for disasters and wider climate change impacts**, including education, health, MHPSS, nutrition, WASH, child protection and social protection;
- **Scale up and accelerate investment and resources** in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures centered on children and young people, including promoting public and private sector partnerships for resilience;
- **Empower all children and young people** to be educated, prepared for and resilient to disasters and wider climate change impacts, and able to meaningfully participate in key disaster- and climate-related decisions and actions;
- **Integrate child-specific interventions into national and local DRR and climate policies and actions**, ensuring that the risks to their survival, well-being and development are systematically considered and addressed; and
- **Strengthen the capacities of governments and other stakeholders** on child-centered DRR and CCA by maximizing partnerships, supporting age- and gender-disaggregated and localized data collection and sharing technical expertise to inform, shape and influence DRR and CCA actions for and with children and young people.



Children ride a bike on a severely polluted road in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Air pollution is a climate-related risk to children's health and contributes to complications like asthma, dust allergy, heart disease and lung cancer. As one response, in 2020 in Bangladesh, UNICEF brought together 300 'child parliamentarians' to debate climate issues, policies and actions with their elected representatives (such as on air pollution). As part of a [Children's Climate Summit](#), 1 million Bangladeshi children and young people were consulted on climate, disasters and ways to safeguard their future.

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From risk to resilience

A message from Catherine Russell,
UNICEF's Executive Director

Children and young people should be at the center of our efforts to reduce risk and build resilience. And these efforts must be both for children and young people and with them.

Young people are not just passive victims. They have an active role to play as leaders; collaborating and co-creating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation solutions — based on their lived experiences.

UNICEF is committed to supporting efforts for every country to be protected and for every child to be resilient. Please join us as we work together to achieve this critical goal.

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The time to act is now to ensure a liveable planet for every child

Resources

- [A Liveable Planet for Every Child – UNICEF's Strategy-at-a-Glance for Climate, Environment, Energy and Disaster Risk Reduction \(2022-2030\)](#)
- [DRR in Action: Every Country Protected, Every Child Resilient](#)
- [The climate crisis is a child rights crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index](#)
- [UNICEF Environment & Climate Change site](#)
- [UNICEF Disaster Risk Reduction & Recovery site](#)
- [UNICEF Disaster Risk Reduction](#) technical knowledge hub
- [UNICEF Sustainable Energy](#) – Case Study from Malawi
- [Childhood Air Pollution Exposure](#) key messages

1 UNICEF, The climate crisis is a child rights crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index, <https://www.unicef.org/reports/climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis>.

2 IDMC Global Report on Internal Displacement 2022, www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC_GRID_2022_LR.pdf.

3 WHO, Don't pollute my future! The impact of the environment on children's health, www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-FWC-IHE-17.01. WHO news release: <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-03-2017-the-cost-of-a-polluted-environment-1-7-million-child-deaths-a-year-says-who>.

4 United Nations, Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond, www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf.

5 UNICEF, Healthy Environments for Healthy Children Global Programme Framework, www.unicef.org/media/91216/file/Healthy-Environments-for-Healthy-Children-Global-Programme-Framework-2021.pdf.