UNICEF Policy Briefing for children and young people: SB60 & the Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate Change

Child and youth friendly version
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This briefing summarizes the suggested entry points for UNFCCC Parties’ consideration regarding National Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), as well as various UNFCCC agenda items. It is informed by children’s rights, including their right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

It also emphasizes on the need for a follow-up process from the Dialogue to COP29 and beyond.
• SB60 refers to the 60th session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

• It is one of the two permanent subsidiary bodies established by the UNFCCC, alongside the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

• During SB, which take place as part of a series of UNFCCC sessions, discussions and negotiations are held on various implementation-related issues under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

• These sessions typically involve representatives from member countries, observer organizations, and various stakeholders, and they play a crucial role in advancing the global climate agenda.
What is the SB60 Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate?

The Paris Agreement mentioned that Parties should respect, promote, and consider the rights of children and intergenerational equity when taking climate action. Despite this, children, are often overlooked in climate change responses.

Under the outcome of the first global stocktake, Parties requested the (SBI) to hold an expert dialogue on children and climate change at its 60th session.

This dialogue is a historic milestone, marking the first time in the 30-year history of the UNFCCC that the unique and vulnerabilities of children are considered.
1. **Disproportionate Impacts**: It will discuss how climate change affects children, especially the most vulnerable ones.

2. **Policy Solutions**: It will explore policy measures and actions that can help protect children from the impacts of climate change and promote their resilience, while engaging relevant United Nations entities, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to share expertise and collaborate on addressing these issues.
What key terminologies should I know before starting this briefing?
Mitigation: It is defined as human actions that seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance sinks of greenhouse gases.

Climate Finance: It refers to local, national or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing—that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change.

Just Transition: A set of principles, processes, and practices that develop the economic and political power to transition from an extractive economy to a regenerative one. This involves an integrated, zero-waste approach to the production and consumption cycle, based on the principle that a healthy economy and a clean environment can and must coexist.

Adaptation: It refers to the process of adjusting to changes in the environment or circumstances to minimize negative impacts and take advantage of opportunities.

Loss and Damage: It refers to the adverse effects of climate variability and climate change that people have not managed to cope with or adapt to. These impacts can be economic, such as loss of property and livelihoods, or non-economic, including loss of traditional ways of living, cultural heritage, and human health.
Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE): It’s a term adopted by UNFCCC to encompass efforts under Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. Its overarching goal is to empower all members of society to engage in climate action through elements like climate change education, public awareness, training, public participation, access to information, and international cooperation. ACE seeks to ensure that everyone has the knowledge, skills, and opportunities needed to contribute effectively to addressing climate change.

Gender approach: Women and girls are especially vulnerable to climate change due to socioeconomic inequality. Actions should promote their equal and effective participation to enable full contribution to climate policy, strategy planning, formulation, and implementation, as their experiences and views are critical for effective climate action.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are commitments made by countries that ratified the Paris Agreement to achieve global climate goals. Each country determines the ambition level of its contribution, which means they decide on climate mitigation actions to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C, achieve a balance of zero emissions through carbon reduction and sequestration by 2050.
Now, let’s start with UNICEF’s key policy asks and proposed solutions for the SB60 and the expert dialogue
ADAPTATION
Children are experiencing climate-related harm. Urgent adaptation to address these impacts is important.

What does this mean?

It means we need to enhance the climate resilience of services that are critical for children’s survival, development and health, including water, sanitation, health, education, nutrition and child- and social protection services at all times.

What can the expert dialogue and negotiations on adaptation during SB60 recommend?

1. Develop a child-sensitive metrics, which can focus on Climate-resilient social sectors, Children’s participation, Education sector, Human mobility, and Mental health.

2. Revise the technical guidelines for the National Adaptation Plan process, which can include guidance and tools tailored to address children's needs throughout the adaptation policy cycle.

3. Establish early warning systems that are protect children and their communities.

4. Include information about children in national climate plans, strategies, and reports to better adapt to their needs.

5. Involve children in planning for adaptation, using local leadership principles, and make sure to include the perspectives of most vulnerable groups.
Loss and Damage
How does Loss and Damage affect Children?

Loss and damage caused by the climate crisis is one of the greatest intergenerational injustices children face today. It can severely affect children, leading to increased mortality rates, irreversible climate-related impacts on their cognitive and physical development, mental health, and education. They may also face heightened exposure to violence, exploitation, and abuse.

What can the expert dialogue and negotiations on loss and damage during SB60 recommend?

• To have a more child-centric focus and greater attention to how children are impacted by the economic and non-economic loss and damage in the third review of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), including the work of its thematic expert groups, and the Santiago Network.

• Integration of Child Rights as a foundational principle guiding all financial interventions addressing loss and damage.

• Allocate new and additional funds for addressing loss specifically targeting children and their communities and tailored to mitigate their heightened and context-specific climate vulnerabilities.
• **Protection of Children's Rights** and development of effective social, environmental and human rights safeguards and mechanisms to ensure access to justice for children and families to hold financial contributors and implementing entities accountable. These safeguards should include processes for child rights impact assessments.

• **Meaningful Child Participation** from different backgrounds in the design, implementation, and monitoring of responses to loss and damage.

• **Coordinated Response** to prevent and mitigate impacts through investments in child-responsive early warning systems, anticipatory actions, adaptive social protection, effective humanitarian interventions, disaster risk management, and broader adaptation and mitigation measures and financing.
Mitigation
The transition to renewable energy is urgent and critical for children. A child born in 2020 will experience a two-to-sevenfold increase in extreme events, particularly heatwaves, compared with people born in 1960, under current climate policy pledges. Furthermore, increased and ambitious mitigation action can deliver significant co-benefits for children.

What can the expert dialogue and negotiations on mitigation during SB60 recommend?

- An urgent and equitable phase out of fossil fuels and investment in renewable energy, energy storage and energy efficiency, based on the best available science.
- Enhanced attention to children’s needs and perspectives in mitigation action.
- Greater attention to emissions reductions across social sector infrastructure and services.
Climate Finance
Research from the Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) coalition finds that over a 17-year period, just 2.4% of climate finance from these can be categorised as supporting projects incorporating child-responsive elements.

On the other hand, some funders have recognised this critical gap and are taking action such as the Green Climate Fund is actively working with partners to bridge the climate finance gap for children in the areas of health and education.

What can the expert dialogue and negotiations on Finance during SB60 recommend?

- Urgently providing **new and additional climate finance**, with a focus on **child-critical social services**, primarily in grant form for adaptation and loss and damage.
- That the **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)**:
  - Prioritise human rights, including those of children, Indigenous Peoples, gender equality, and intergenerational equity.
  - Incorporating qualitative goals for child- and gender-responsive climate finance.
  - Urgently increasing finance for adaptation.
  - Allocating funds for rebuilding and recovering child-critical essential services.
Discussing how child- and gender-responsive climate finance can speed up climate action and resilience in the Standing Committee on Finance.

Making sure that long-term climate finance goals address children's vulnerabilities and specific needs.

To provide clear guidance to various funds and banks to integrate child-responsive provisions in their policies and strategies.

To integrate meaningful engagement and participation of children in climate finance decision-making processes at all stages and levels.
Just Transition
A just transition must prioritise the future and livelihoods of all community members, especially children. The transition must not only do no harm, but actively enhance the enjoyment of children’s rights. In addition, contributions made by caregivers, a pivotal part of our care economy, must not be overlooked.

What can the expert dialogue and negotiations on Just Transition recommend?

- To include specific terms for protecting and promoting children’s rights, focusing on the socio-economic impacts of climate policies on children, particularly those who are from marginalised and disadvantaged groups.
- The role of adaptive social protection in supporting families during workforce transitions and protecting child rights, including prevention of child labour.
- Invest in children’s climate education and green skills, and youth training and employment opportunities in emerging green sectors.
- Include children, families and community representatives in participatory approaches to just transitions.
- Access to effective remedies for children and families affected by climate policies or transitions, including accountability mechanisms that are accessible to children.
Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)
Children’s rights to education, access to information and meaningful participation play an instrumental role in protecting children in the face of climate change and empowering them. Resilient education systems are better able to protect children and adolescents from the impacts of climate change.

What can the expert dialogue and negotiations on Action for Climate Empowerment during SB60 recommend?

• That “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” be widely disseminated and considered by all Parties and relevant stakeholders at national level.
• Children’s climate change education is integrated in all curricula and teacher training, increasing children’s awareness and preparedness for climate change as well as their agency and ability to contribute to the just transition.
• Make sure that children are asked for their opinions and that these are taken seriously when making and carrying out plans about climate change, with ways for children to safely and easily say what they think.
• That accurate climate-related information is widely-disseminated and made available in formats that are accessible to children.
Gender
Climate change is not gender neutral. It amplifies already existing gender inequalities with the most marginalized communities experiencing the greatest impacts.

Women and girls often face increased domestic burdens, such as water and fuel collection, which increase significantly due to climate-related impacts.

Girls’ education and safety are particularly at risk in the context of climate-related disasters and resource scarcity, which may disrupt schooling, force them into child, early and forced marriage or child labour, and increase the risks of sexual and gender-based violence.

What can expert dialogue and negotiations on Gender during SB60 recommend?

- That climate policies, action and finance address the unique and heightened vulnerabilities of girls, adolescent girls and young women to climate change impacts and amplify the perspectives and solutions from girls-led organisations. This focus should inform countries’ preparation of their NDCs, NAPs and national reporting.
- An enhanced focus on girls under the review of the Lima Work Programme and five-year Gender Action Plan.
Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
At the moment, the lack of children's representation in NDCs (NDCs) undermines efforts to address how children are impacted by climate change.

Less than half of current NDCs globally incorporate child-sensitive elements and a mere 3% were developed through a participatory process involving children.

What can the expert dialogue and negotiations during SB60 recommend?

- To integrate children’s rights, wellbeing and perspectives as central elements in the development, implementation and monitoring of revised NDCs 3.0.
- To incorporate child-sensitive financing strategies in NDCs, including for mitigation and adaptation measures for children and their communities.
Data and knowledge gaps
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) holds a critical role in setting the research and policy agenda for climate change adaptation and mitigation, yet its reports contain a striking lack of focus on children, who are often described as a vulnerable group but without specifying and providing specific details about their age, gender or other factors.

What can the expert dialogue and relevant discussions during SB60 recommend?

- Enhanced focus on key data/knowledge gaps that hinder Parties’ ability to address the impacts of climate change on children, and measures to strengthen collection of age-disaggregated data and research.
- An invitation to the IPCC to integrate research and evidence on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children, as well as effective interventions, in its Seventh Assessment Report (AR7) and Special Reports.
So, what are the next steps following the Dialogue?

- To keep the attention on children and relevant solutions, it will be critical to maintain focus and momentum on emerging recommendations, including at COP29 and beyond.

- Parties can agree to continue considering relevant data and evidence, share good practices, and enhance capacity with respect to child-responsive climate policies, action and finance.

- At the national level, Parties can commit to accelerating inclusive, child- and youth-centred climate policies and action by joining the nearly 50 government signatories of the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action providing a framework for national dialogue and action.
Additional resources and tools:

• UNICEF’s Full SB60 and Expert Dialogue on Children Policy Briefing:
  UNICEF at the 60th Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies | Climate, Environment, Energy, and Disaster Risk Reduction

• For more terminologies, check the Young Climate Activists Toolkits:
  They provide an introduction to Climate Glossary, Climate Governance, the Paris Agreement, Tools for Climate Action, and other topics.
  • Latin America and Caribbean Region
  • Middle East and North Africa Region

• Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action
• General comment No. 26 (2023) on children’s rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change.
• Child Friendly NDC | About - Making Climate and Environment Policies for & with Children and Young People
• Explore Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
• Child-Sensitive Climate Policies For Every Child
THANK YOU!
MERCI!
شكراً!
Gracias!
Obrigado!