



13 CLIMATE ACTION



unicef  for every child

KEY ASKS FOR 2020 SDG VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change and environmental degradation are equity issues that undermine the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently reported, urgent action is needed to combat climate change and its impacts on current and future generations.

It is more and more evident that realizing children's rights as embedded throughout the SDGs – access to economic opportunity, nutrition, health, education, equity, water, energy, and peace – are contingent on taking action to address and adapt to climate change.



KEY ASKS

UNICEF encourages governments conducting a Voluntary National Review (VNR) to ensure their reports on SDG 13 are:

- **Making children the centre** of climate change and environmental strategies and plans; and addressing their needs and concerns. For instance, adopting child-sensitive national climate change plans that recognize children as key stakeholders.
- **Recognizing children as agents of change** and provide a platform to elevate their views, opinions and concerns, identifying solutions, and promoting environmentally sustainable lifestyles – setting an example for their communities. The participation of young people is both a necessity and also part of their fundamental rights ([Article 12, Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)).
- **Protecting children from the impacts of climate change** which requires increased focus and financing on adaptation and increasing the resilience of the services that children depend upon most - such as water, health, education and nutrition.
- **Reduce greenhouse gases and promote sustainable energy investments** so that global temperature increases are limited ideally to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Greenhouse gas emissions are rapidly increasing, and the world is not on track to meet its commitments to avoid global warming. Ambitious targets and actions to curb emissions will benefit hundreds of millions of children. Prioritising sustainable energy and low carbon solutions, such as decentralized solar energy, cleaner cooking fuels and energy conservation practices in public facilities, will not only assist in curbing greenhouse gas emissions but simultaneously ensure access to clean, reliable and modern energy services.
- **Address environmental degradation and reduce the effect of harmful pollutants on children:** Emerging and alarming evidence is beginning to show the direct impact of air pollution on children. Exposure to toxic indoor and outdoor air pollution kills over 600,000 children under the age of 15 every year. Every day approximately [93 per cent of children under 15 – a full 1.8 billion young people - breathe dangerously polluted air](#). It also affects children's cognitive development. This is further perpetuating poverty and inequity, with the most disadvantaged children and communities often at the greatest risk. Air pollution is exacerbated by the use of fossil fuels – a key driver of climate change.
- **Accelerate and scale up investments to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity of children to climate impacts.** The SDGs [and Sendai framework](#) specifically reference the urgent need to strengthen resilience to natural and climate related disasters and shocks (drought, floods, epidemics and storms). Climate adaptation and climate-related disaster risk reduction measures must be implemented for and with children: climate resilient school structures in vulnerable zones, youth dialogue to enhance social cohesion, and participatory climate risk mappings are examples of working for and with children to achieve climate resilient development in risk-prone settings. Ensure climate-disaster response includes investments in child protection, education, health, nutrition and WASH.
- **Reduce inequity to promote resilience to climate change.** The poorest children and their families are, and will be, most affected by climate change. Programmes to develop policy, raise awareness, build institutional capacity and support communities to adapt to climate change and strengthen their resilience must prioritize the poorest and most marginalized children, families and communities who are disproportionately affected. Reducing inequities now – providing access to safe water and adequate sanitation; good nutrition and food security; strong and accessible health systems; and well-functioning child and social protection systems– will give disadvantaged children a better adaptive capacity to cope with climate impacts.



MONITOR -- THE IMPORTANCE OF DISAGGREGATED DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE

To accelerate strategies and actions on the above priority areas for children and climate action, data is necessary. Climate change related data/evidence on areas most relevant to children is scarce, specifically on interlinkages between climate and child health, nutrition, education, displacement, migration, etc. Collecting and disaggregating SDG 13 Targets and Indicators is vital in understanding how and where children are being left behind in the context of addressing climate change.



INVEST -- SOCIAL SPENDING AND PROGRESS ON RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH

Recent estimates suggest that the cost of climate inaction is trillions of dollars more costly — and deadly — than the financial costs of cutting carbon pollution. Increasing the money available to deal with climate change is both urgent and necessary. It will provide the resources to protect children from the worst impacts of climate change through adaptation, and will also ensure a safer future for all future generations through low carbon development. Long-term climate finance must be distributed and targeted in such a way that those most vulnerable, such as children, benefit from adequate investment to cope with the growing impacts of climate change. UNICEF encourages governments to:

- **Allocate climate funding** (domestic/international) to promote and scale up investments/actions for children.
- **Work in partnership with the private sector** to develop and incentivize innovative approaches and technologies to benefit children most at risk from climate impacts and environmental degradation.



ACTIVATE -- AWARENESS BUILDING & MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH

UNICEF encourages governments to improve climate education, awareness and participation especially among children and adolescents. Personal behavior changes are central to popularizing more sustainable choices around the globe -- including through household energy use, transportation and food choices, recycling and waste-reduction behaviors, and other climate-friendly decisions.

Oftentimes, educating and engaging children, adolescents, and youth leads to wider household and community changes and therefore is a critical intervention to result in wide-scale shifts. Empowering young people with knowledge can also lead to innovations – including through technology or creative approaches to reduce greenhouse gases or otherwise promote climate action. Their education and engagement on the issue as current change agents and future decision makers, entrepreneurs, consumers, teachers and parents will help ensure the sustainability of our efforts.

Children, adolescents and young people are already some of the fiercest advocates for climate action and environmental sustainability. A UNICEF poll conducted among more than 5000 children and adolescents across over 60 countries found that almost 80% considered climate change to be one of the most pressing issues facing them today. This signals an unprecedented level of interest and willingness among children, adolescents and youth to take and help shape climate action.

UNICEF encourages national partners to involve and empower children, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, in processes regarding the implementation and review of SDG 13 through participatory means including to:

- **The process for preparing the 2020 national review should directly involve children and adolescent girls and boys, especially the most marginalized or excluded.** For example, through consultations (on and/or offline), surveys or polls, focus group discussions, etc. UNICEF together with civil society, child-focused organizations and other partners could support the government in that process. The results of these efforts as well as the methods employed should be described in the VNR report, including the number of young people involved in the process.
- **Actively involve children, adolescents and youth, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, in local and national climate change planning processes and policies** through consultation and other participatory means, and as part of ongoing efforts to make children, adolescents and youth aware of these issues, inspire their positive action and expand the space for their participation in accountability mechanisms and activities. (e.g., National Climate Change Adaptation Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions). This should be part of a continuum to regularly, meaningfully and consistently engage children, adolescents and youth as agents of change to influence behaviors and social norms amongst themselves, their households and their communities. It goes beyond engagement just for the purposes of reporting periods, but rather systematizing the engagement of young people in a variety of ways and across media and communications channels, including for example: digital platforms (including U-Report), participatory theatre, intergenerational community dialogues, community & children's radio, participatory video, school clubs, TV Edu-tainment and child-participatory research.
- **Provide spaces for children, adolescents and youth to learn about, discuss and take action on the SDGs, including Climate change and other environmentally-oriented SDGs.** UNICEF can support this effort due to our existing work in this space and creating child-friendly education and entertainment materials through our foundational partnerships on the [World's Largest Lesson](#) and [Comics Uniting Nations](#). UNICEF's [Youth Activate Talk Methodology](#) is also a platform from children to express their ideas on the SDGs through a variety of mediums.