



## **COP30 Proposal**

### **Children's Action Plan**

This concept note aims to promote a Children's Action Plan (CAP) within the scope of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, which establishes goals and actions to promote child-sensitive climate change and its implementation by the UNFCCC, and the work of the Parties, the secretariat, United Nations entities and all stakeholders ensuring the meaningful participation of children in the UNFCCC process.

#### **Context**

The climate emergency debate or negotiations does not take children into account. Girls, indigenous, black and quilombola children, children with disabilities, migrants and those who experience intersecting and compound forms of discrimination and marginalization are those most affected by a problem they did not create. The impacts of the climate emergency affect their physical and mental health, access to education, culture and their livelihoods. However, in the 30 years of the UNFCCC's existence, no decision taken in this forum has focused on the protection of children.

The growing global movement of children and adolescents demanding climate action demonstrates that this population has essential opinions and recommendations about how the climate crisis should be addressed. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Children finalized General Comment 26, a document with mandatory guidelines on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change, for which more than 16 thousand children and adolescents were heard in 121 countries. The document clarifies the obligations of States, companies and civil society, individually and collectively, to protect children's rights, which includes a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Despite this, children and their human rights have been noticeably absent from national and international climate discussions, commitments and policies. Events and summits, including COP, rarely include children.

COP27, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022, noted for the first time in the cover decision the important role of children in promoting responses to climate change and recognized the need to include them in decision-making. To be taken seriously – and to ensure that it does not simultaneously increase ecological anxiety by placing unjustified responsibilities on the shoulders of children – it is necessary to create a safe environment for the effective and equal participation of children and adolescents, hence the importance of this Action Plan for Children.

## Rationale

More than [1 billion children](#) – almost half of the world's 2.6 billion children – live in conditions of extremely high climate risk. More than one in four deaths of children under 5 years of age is directly or indirectly related to environmental risks. Therefore, reinforced and specific measures must be envisaged for vulnerable groups or those with specific needs, as clearly stated in the latest IPCC reports, and in particular for children, who are most affected by the climate crisis.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights states that “children are disproportionately affected by climate change due to their unique metabolism, physiology and developmental needs.” Furthermore, although children have the same general human rights as adults, the Convention on the Rights of Children, ratified by all UN members except for one, provides for these rights as well as additional rights that are specific to children, taking into account their unique vulnerabilities and evolving capabilities.

In this context, as a cross-cutting priority, language must consistently refer to children, paying particular attention to policy coherence within the United Nations system (SDG 17.14), especially the Convention on the Rights of Children, which is the most ratified international document in the world.

Considering the provisions that guarantee the primary contemplation of children, their rights and best interests in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, in order to make all decisions cohesive and with long-term effects, the Parties, the secretariat, the constituted bodies and relevant organizations involved in the UNFCCC process must develop an appropriate action plan to ensure climate justice for children and, at least, the respect and protection of the rights of children who may be affected by climate change, or by the responses to climate change. When children are not considered in the design of climate actions, as the context above shows, not only their right to participation is denied, but the measures themselves can have a negative impact on children's lives and violate other rights. Particular attention should be paid to protecting and improving the development of pregnant women and young children, especially those affected by inequality and discrimination.

Children, in all their diversity, have the fundamental right to be heard and to participate in decision-making processes that impact their lives. This right is expressly provided for in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Children, in Resolution 45/30 of the UN Human Rights Council entitled "Realization of the Rights of Children through a Healthy Environment" (Paragraph 9) and in General Comment 12 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Children (Chapter 11).

Therefore, not only is it important that the best interests of children are at the center of negotiations, taking into account the necessary coherence within the United Nations system, but it is also crucial that children have the right to represent their own interest by participating in these spaces with safety and quality. It is necessary to consider carefully the facilitation of equitable opportunities for child-sensitive participation, taking into account context and aspects of information access, a variety of platforms to participate.

## **Goal**

The Action Plan for Children aims to promote knowledge and understanding of child-sensitive climate action - not only taking into account their rights, but also their specific development needs, their voices and intergenerational equity - as well as coherent integration into implementation of the UNFCCC and the work of the Parties, the secretariat, United Nations entities and all interested parties at all levels, as well as the full, equal and meaningful participation of children in the UNFCCC process. Parties to the UNFCCC must bring coherence between the climate agenda, the work of the UN Committee on the Rights of Children, General Comment 26 and the UN Secretary-General's renewed focus on children, young people and intergenerational equity to incorporate effective action on children's rights within the scope of the UNFCCC process.

## **Proposed roles**

The Action Plan for Children sets out objectives and activities in six priority areas designed to promote knowledge and understanding of child-sensitive climate action and its coherent integration into the implementation of the UNFCCC and the work of Parties, the secretariat, UNFCCC entities and UN and all stakeholders at all levels, as well as the full, equal and meaningful participation of children in the UNFCCC process.

### **1. Children's participation and leadership**

Goal: Parties' delegations working at the COP should allow children to participate in all COP processes as part of the official national delegation (Party badge) and create the space and opportunity for children's safe and meaningful participation as Observers. For children's voices to be heard, it is necessary to carry out a risk assessment and develop a comprehensive plan for the protection of children and ensure that information related to safety and security is appropriate and accessible to children.

As there is already a wealth of knowledge and good practices in the children's rights community on appropriate and effective methodologies for meaningful and accessible participation by children, this accumulated knowledge could be used in international cooperation with relevant bodies that support this institutional learning process. It is important to consider that the UNFCCC Secretariat would not have to create or start from scratch in this context, but rather rely on tested practices from other sectors.

### **2. Training, knowledge generation and communication**

Purpose: Climate Empowerment Action (ACE) is a term adopted by the UNFCCC to designate work under Article 6 of the Convention (1992) and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. These articles aim to empower all members of society to engage in climate action through education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and international cooperation. Consideration of children's needs and priorities must be included in the ACE agenda and children's participation must be guaranteed in negotiations. This should highlight

the links between climate change and other global environmental crises, including ocean-land links, and support children and young people in understanding proposed solutions to climate change, both technology-based and nature-based. Furthermore, an Action Plan for Children will contribute to the implementation of child-related measures set out in the [ACE action plan during COP27](#), namely (i) organizing a joint session to discuss ways to improve understanding of the role of children in accelerating ACE implementation; (ii) promote regional and local networks and platforms that support ACE, encouraging children's involvement; (iii) Map and compile existing guidelines and good practices with regard to early childhood education and empowerment in climate action, with special attention given to gender equality and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

### **3. COP location suitable for children**

Purpose: To improve children's participation at COP, the UNFCCC and the COP Presidency must ensure that children's participation is actively included before, during and after COP, systematically creating space and opportunities for children's safe and meaningful participation in all COP discussions, panels and processes and for observing relevant negotiations, as well as for parents and caregivers in relation to young children. Therefore, it is necessary to structure and implement procedures and policies to safeguard children. COPs can be overwhelming (with intense negotiations, a large and noisy venue, long days and meetings) and children's welfare needs to be considered and supported. Risks related to travel, abuse, retribution, privacy, bullying, intimidation and exposure to social media must also be considered. It is necessary to work together with children to define the risks they may face and mitigation strategies, as well as create an inviting place for children and their caregivers, including nursing, play spaces, outdoor and green spaces, among others. In this direction, the [COP Fit for Children](#) report provides an assessment and recommendations based on the experience of past COPs.

### **4. Implementation and child-sensitive climate action measures**

Purpose: To ensure that upholding children's rights is at the heart of the global response to climate change (e.g. children's rights as a guiding principle, that children's voices are considered and involved in designing/monitoring, and that children's equity is a key consideration, along with children's specific needs and vulnerabilities, investment in key child-related sectors such as child protection, health, education, etc.). This should be comprehensive in scope, including adaptation, mitigation, finance and loss and damage, while also highlighting areas for future action (e.g. [ocean-based climate action](#)), with equal attention to technology-driven initiatives and nature-based approaches to climate change, adaptation and mitigation. Climate action plans (e.g. NDC and NAP) must ensure that the care of young children is a priority, including health, nutrition, responsive care, safety and security, and early learning, including early ecological education.

### **5. Measures in response to children affected by inequality and discrimination**

Purpose: To ensure that children who are members of marginalized communities or communities in vulnerable situations, where inequalities and cross-discrimination exacerbate

the harms of climate impacts and vice versa are duly considered and that the equitable participation of children from marginalized communities is ensured, so that they are included in global responses to climate change. This should be based on the collection and analysis of disaggregated data and should include data by child age, gender and disability.

## **6. Monitoring and reporting**

Purpose: Improve monitoring of the implementation of measures in response to the needs and best interests of children and coherence between the climate agenda, the work of the UN Committee on the Rights of Children and the UN Secretary-General's renewed focus on children, youth and intergenerational equity to incorporate a greater focus on children's rights in the UNFCCC process. Reports need to guarantee deadlines and frequency to constantly evaluate and provide feedback to the community on the results of actions implemented by the Parties in relation to children's rights.

## **ABOUT ALANA**

[Alana](#) is a group of socio-environmental impact organizations that promote and inspire a better world for children. A sustainable, fair, inclusive, egalitarian and plural world. A world that celebrates and protects democracy, social justice, human and children's rights with absolute priority. A world that takes care of its people, its forests, its seas, its air. As a Brazilian and Global South organization, Alana is a system of three interconnected, interdependent spheres of convergent action, guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The joining of an Institute, a Foundation and an Impact Entertainment Business Center. A unique combination of education, science, entertainment and advocacy that mixes dream and reality, research and pop culture, justice and development, articulation and dialogue, political advocacy and well-told stories.