



March 1st, 2024

Mr Volker Türk

High Commissioner for Human Rights

Geneva, CH 1211

Geneva 10, Switzerland

Subject: Alana Institute, Plan International and CLICA's written contribution to the Call for inputs to the High Commissioner's report on how climate change can have an impact on the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl.

Dear High Commissioner,

This submission, made by Alana Institute, Plan International Brasil and Coalition for Climate, Children and Adolescents (CLICA), presents contributions on how climate change can have an impact on the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl. Alana Institute¹ [www.alana.org.br] is a Brazilian-based global organization that focuses on promoting integral development and children's rights through advocacy, litigation, and communication at national and international levels. Since 2022, the Alana Institute has Consultative Status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Plan International Brasil [plan.org.br] is a humanitarian, non-governmental and non-profit organization that promotes children's rights and equality for girls. The Coalition for Climate, Children, and Adolescents - CLICA [www.clica.org.br], is an articulation of Brazilian civil society aimed at defending the rights of children, both present and future generations, to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

This submission will initially focus on data regarding the impacts of climate change on the right to education for girls and subsequently provide guidelines and measures to address these impacts.

¹ If you need more information, please contact: leticia.silva@alana.org.br.

I. Information and data on the impacts of climate change on the right to education for girls

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, today's adolescents will be even more affected by the effects of the climate crisis in the future, ranging from increased respiratory diseases, malnutrition, forced displacement, all forms of violence and hunger, and mental health issues, to the breakdown of family bonds². However, an intersectional lens is necessary to ensure that children's rights and their best interests are primarily considered as mandated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In addition to specific considerations regarding age, region, and socioeconomic conditions, other specificities such as gender, race, and ethnicity must be taken into account, as girls, particularly black and indigenous, have their rights most impacted by climate change³.

According to the Climate Landscape Analysis for Children and Adolescents in Brazil conducted by Unicef in 2022: the convergence of environmental and economic pressures and the influence of organized crime heighten the risks of sexual exploitation, especially of girls and women in areas of the Amazon with limited access to public services⁴. In 2019, the highest rates of girls under 14 being pregnant in the country were recorded in five states in the Legal Amazon (Roraima, Amazonas, Acre, Pará, and Amapá) – and in these cases, violence is presumed. The Northern Region had 2.43 pregnant girls per thousand – almost double the national average of 1.29 per thousand.

According to the study “Climate Change and Girls' Education: Barriers, Gender Norms and Pathways to Resilience⁵”, one of the main consequences of climate change for the lives of girls is compromised educational life and poverty. This study, heard from 78 girls in eight developing countries, reveals how extreme weather events damaged school infrastructure and impassable routes to schools are causing significant disruptions to girls' access to education. These disruptions have long-term consequences, such as an increase in child marriage, gender-based violence and unintended teenage pregnancy.

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Climate change 2023: Synthesis Report. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_FullVolume.pdf. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

³ UNICEF. Children, Adolescents and Climate Change in Brazil. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/media/21346/file/criancas-adolescentes-e-mudancas-climaticas-brasil-2022.pdf>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

⁴ EL PAÍS/BRASIL. Through the 'prostibares' of Amazônia, how prostitution networks work in the jungle. Available at: <https://brasil.elpais.com/internacional/2020-07-31/pelos-prostibares-da-amazonia-como-funcionam-as-redes-de-prostituicao-na-selva.html>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

⁵ PLAN INTERNACIONAL. Real Choices Real Lives: Climate Change and Girls' Education Barriers. Gender Norms and Pathways to Resilience. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/climate-change-girls-education/>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

In addition, girls face growing challenges, which include increased household chores, reduced study time and financial difficulties. The report also states that, on average, girls and women are poorer than boys and men; black and mixed-race individuals are poorer than white individuals and, therefore, have less capacity to adapt to climate change or prevent disasters. It is not yet possible to say with more precise data that climate change is directly linked to child marriage in Brazil, but the consequences of climate change, especially on the economic situation of families, favors this phenomenon, notably in the most vulnerable regions of the country such as the North and Northeast, and in the 14-17 age group.

It is estimated that 80 percent of people displaced by climate change are women⁶, impacting mothers and their sons and daughters. An example of this situation is ongoing in the Legal Amazon. In an attempt to escape contamination and violence caused by the advance of illegal mining that poisons rivers and food with mercury and land grabbing in the region, many women and children become environmental refugees in their own country⁷.

According to the study “Climate change and educational attainment in the global tropics”⁸, when a child begins to experience food insecurity due to the effects of climate change – such as drought and subsequent food scarcity in their region – their cognitive and physical development are limited, resulting in academic setbacks. The report indicates that the number of years a child attends formal education is linked to their exposure to high temperatures or excessive rainfall, as it can lead to shorter periods of schooling. A report from Plan International⁹ highlights that girls are more vulnerable since they tend to be the first ones withdrawn from school to assist with domestic work.

II. Guidelines and measures to respond to the impacts of climate change on the right to education for girls

General Comment (GC) No. 26, published by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child¹⁰, addresses the rights of children and the environment, with a particular focus on

⁶ UN. Climate change exacerbates violence against women and girls. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/07/climate-change-exacerbates-violence-against-women-and-girls>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

⁷ UNICEF. Children, Adolescents and Climate Change in Brazil. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/media/21346/file/criancas-adolescentes-e-mudancas-climaticas-brasil-2022.pdf>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

⁸PNAS. Climate change and educational attainment in the global tropics. Available at: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1817480116>. Accessed on February 29, 2024

⁹ PLAN INTERNACIONAL. 5 ways climate change is disrupting girls’ lives. Available at: <https://plan-internacional.org/case-studies/5-ways-climate-change-is-disrupting-girls-lives/>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

¹⁰ UN. General Comment n.º 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change. Available at:

climate change. The document details how the right to education (Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC) relates to the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The document also emphasizes that poverty, economic and social inequalities, food insecurity, and forced displacement exacerbate the risk that children will experience violence, abuse, and exploitation. These factors increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual violence, exploitation, and recruitment into criminal, armed, and/or violent extremist groups.

The GC 26 recognizes that education is instrumental in protecting children's rights and the environment, as well as in increasing their awareness and preparedness for environmental damage. The Committee highlighted that the right to education is highly vulnerable to the impact of environmental harm, as it can result in school closures, school dropout, and the destruction of schools and play areas. Additionally, it asserts that states should recognize and address the disproportionate indirect and knock-on effects of environmental degradation on children's education, paying special attention to gender-specific situations, such as children leaving school due to additional domestic and economic burdens in households facing environment-related shocks and stress.

Especially in Brazil, a group of researchers conducted a study in the Rocinha favela, a community in Rio de Janeiro, on education, gender, and adaptive capacity to risks and disasters¹¹. One of the research findings was that education is a key element in responding to situations of female vulnerability. Additionally, it highlights the difficulty of addressing this issue at the national level due to the lack of specific data and research in the field. In this sense, the production of disaggregated data by gender is an important measure to overcome this barrier and, consequently, the development of more informed public policies.

Another important measure that the High Commissioner should take into consideration as a concrete way to overcome these barriers is the establishment of nature-based education¹². Nature-based education is an ecosystem of blended educational strategies encompassing environmental education, indigenous knowledge, climate and biodiversity education, education for sustainable development, outdoor education and

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/crccgc26-general-comment-no-26-2023-childrens-rights>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

¹¹ COUTO, Gabriela de Azevedo. Climate related disasters in Brazil through a gender lens: *Sobrevidas* and Female Voices. National Space Research Institute. Available at: <http://mtc-m21d.sid.inpe.br/col/sid.inpe.br/mtc-m21d/2023/03.10.18.53/doc/thisInformationItemHomePage.htm>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

¹² Children and nature. Nature-based schools. Available at: https://criancaenatureza.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/EBN_Acessivel-1.pdf. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

experiential education, as an educational approach towards nature-based solutions leading to and fostering a sense of interconnectedness with the natural world and an understanding of how human activities impact the environment while mitigating the impacts of climate change and adapting to the new conditions, by expanding green and resilient areas in schools and prioritizing the health and well-being of the school community. To recognize the importance and actively act for environmental protection, girls need to have contact with nature. A report from Plan International¹³ emphasizes the importance of education in building the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary for engagement and the development of climate policies. An environmental education can empower girls to lead movements for climate justice.

In addition, research has reported that naturalized schoolyards favor physical activity for girls, who traditionally have less opportunity for movement in more traditional playgrounds and therefore have more contact with nature. Only 3% of the assessed low-income Brazilian preschoolers are compliant with the 24-hour movement behaviors guidelines¹⁴. Research shows that regular physical activity enhances well-being & attentiveness in the classroom and green schoolyards can promote physical activity by offering a variety of active play options¹⁵.

Finally, it is important that the following measures are taken to empower girls in these matters: 1) reshape climate education: implement a gender transformative climate curriculum and comprehensive teacher training to empower girls as climate leaders; 2) empower girls in decision-making: involve them in climate decisions, giving them a voice in policy development, especially for the continuum of education; 3) fund girls' climate education: increase funding for gender-transformative climate education and prioritize rebuilding resilient school infrastructure; 4) change social norms for girls' education: challenge norms by emphasizing the value of girls' education in community adaptation plans and awareness-raising initiatives.

¹³ PLAN INTERNACIONAL. Real Choices Real Lives: Climate Change and Girls' Education Barriers. Gender Norms and Pathways to Resilience. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/climate-change-girls-education/>. Accessed on February 29, 2024.

¹⁴ MARTINS, C. M. L. et al. Adherence to 24-hour movement guidelines in low-income Brazilian preschoolers and associations with demographic correlates. *American Journal of Human Biology*. Vol. 33. July 2021.

¹⁵ Brink et al. (2010). Influence of schoolyard renovations on children's physical activity: The Learning Landscapes Program. *American journal of public health*. Vo. 100. 2010, p. 1672-1678.