

# CHILDREN AND THE UN CLIMATE COPS

A look at the past, the  
present, and the future

VERSION FOR CHILDREN

INITIATIVE:

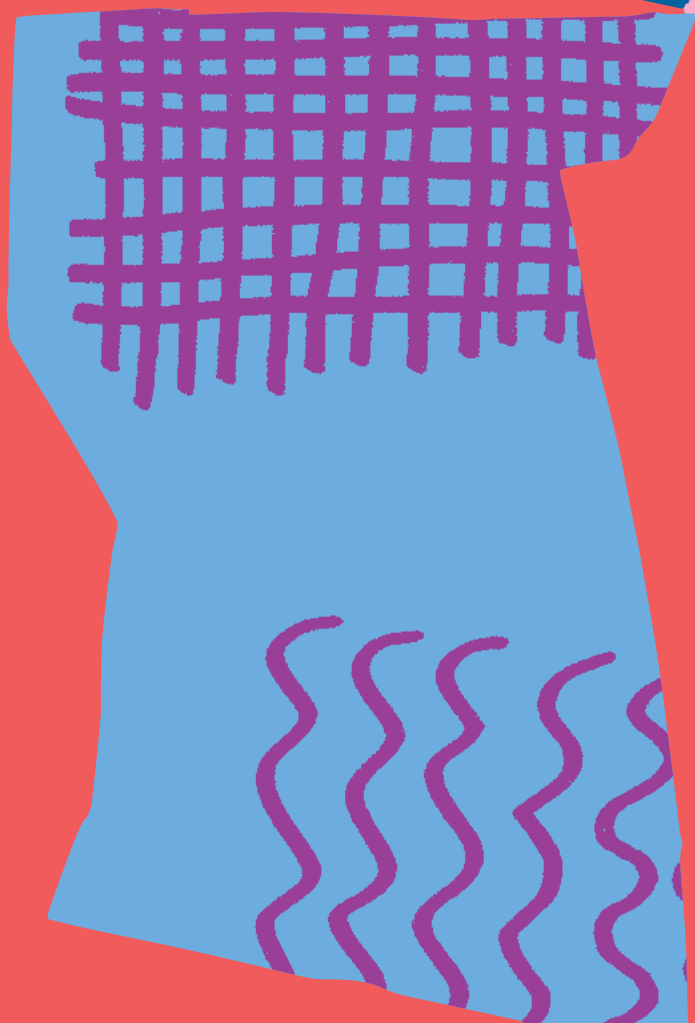
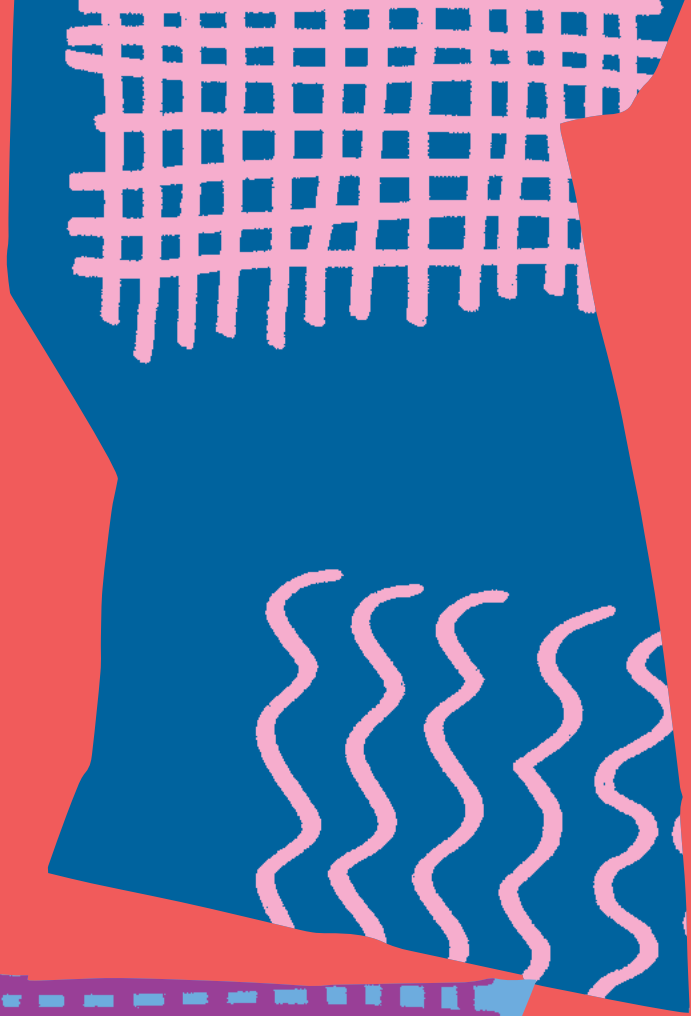


PRODUCED BY:



SUPPORT FOR THE CHILDREN'S EDITION:





# CHILDREN AND THE UN CLIMATE COPS

A look at the past, the  
present, and the future

VERSION FOR CHILDREN

INITIATIVE:



PRODUCED BY:



SUPPORT FOR THE  
CHILDREN'S EDITION:



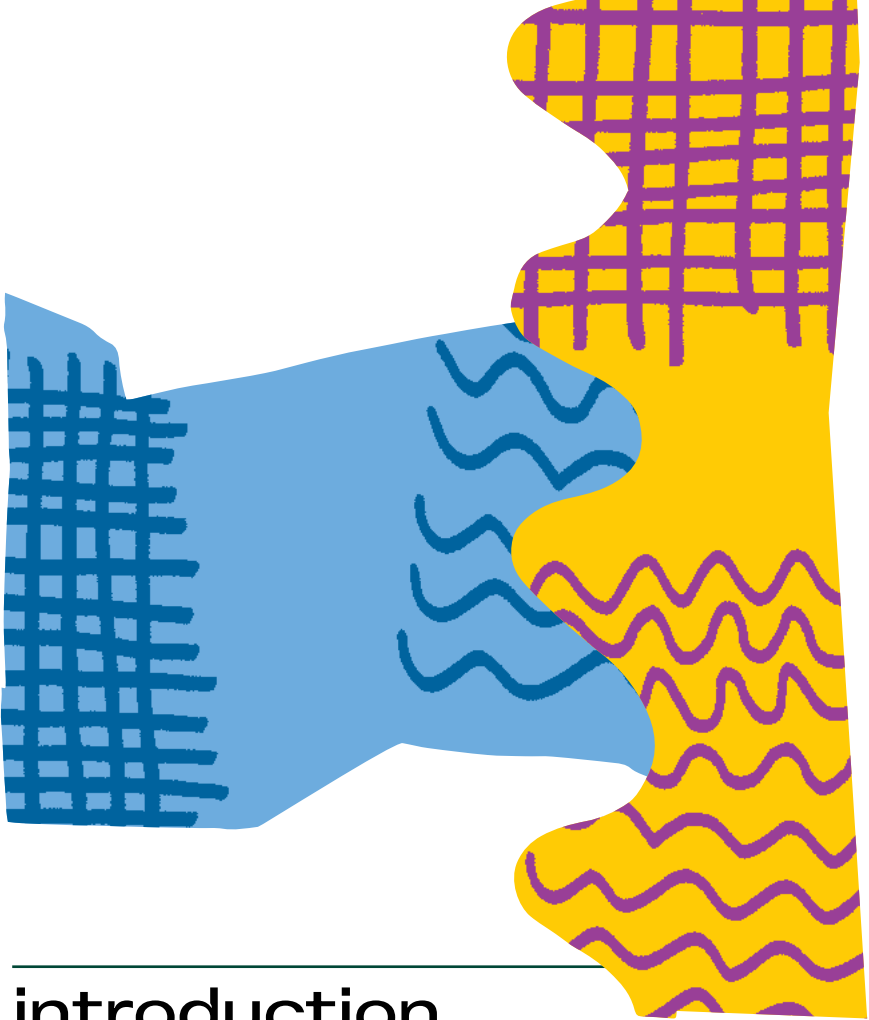


---

# summary

---

- 5 INTRODUCTION**
- 6 WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS DOCUMENT**
- 7 TIMELINE: CHILDREN AT THE COPS**
- 9 CHAPTER 1:  
WHAT THE RESEARCH FOUND**
- 17 CHAPTER 2:  
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**
- 24 SOME DATA THAT CAN HELP YOU TALK  
ABOUT CLIMATE**
- 27 GLOSSARY**



---

## introduction

---

This is an invitation for you to get ready for one of the most important debates of our time: the future of our planet. Climate change is already happening, and now is the moment for the world to decide how to act to face its effects and protect life in all its forms.

Now is the time to bring new ideas, to question what's already being done, and to propose real actions that include children (every human being below the age of 18 years, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) as an essential part of climate decisions.

The future is being decided right now, and it needs you.



---

## what you will find in this document

---

The debates on how to face climate change have been happening for many years. Even so, for a long time they didn't properly take into account how children live and experience this major challenge.

Experts from **LACLIMA Institute** and **Alana Institute** noticed this and joined forces to understand how this group has been included in the discussions on climate change. To do so, they developed the study “**Children and the UN Climate COPs: A Primary Consideration for Their Future in the Present.**”

Here, you'll learn what they discovered in this research. You'll also find several important pieces of information to help you take part in the debate about climate actions that can transform both the present and the future.

At the end, you'll find a glossary, a list explaining some of the words and expressions often used in climate discussions. These terms appear highlighted in **turquoise** throughout the text.

## TIMELINE: CHILDREN AT THE COPs

Since 1995, the United Nations (**UN**) has held a Conference of the Parties (**COP**) every year so that countries can discuss and make decisions on the topic. As you'll see below, some COPs have played a very important role in including children in this agenda.

**2002**

**COP8**

NEW DELHI, INDIA

For the first time, youth is identified as a priority in climate education programs, learning from an early age how to protect the planet.

**2010**

**COP16**

CANCÚN, MEXICO

Children are mentioned for the first time in the UN's climate decisions.

**2012**

**COP18**

DOHA, QATAR

The importance of children and youth is highlighted in climate education, communication, and the development of new leaders who can inspire and guide future generations.

**2015**

**COP21**

PARIS, FRANCE

The **Paris Agreement** states that climate goals must consider both those living today and those yet to be born.

**2019**

**COP25**

**MADRID, SPAIN**

Girls are recognized as a group more affected by the impacts of the climate crisis and therefore must have greater opportunities to learn, participate, and lead climate action.

**2021**

**COP26**

**GLASGOW, SCOTLAND**

The **ACE** Program is created, setting guidelines for climate education and children and youth participation, including traditional knowledge.

**2022**

**COP27**

**SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT**

Children and youth are called **agents of change** for the first time, recognized for their power to transform the world through their actions and ideas.

**2023**

**COP28**

**DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

It is officially declared that countries have a duty to protect children from the impacts of climate change, ensuring their health, education, and safety.

**2024**

**COP29**

**BAKU, AZERBAIJAN**

Countries at the UN decide to assess whether children and youth are truly being protected in the context of climate change, especially regarding health and education. Girls are again mentioned, as they need special attention in climate actions due to facing greater discrimination and violence.

**EXPERT DIALOGUE ON CHILDREN AND CLIMATE**

**SB 60, BONN**

First official event focused on children, with a recommendation to include children's rights in all COP themes.



---

1

what the  
research found

---

The study was created to understand how children have been considered in climate decisions. To do this, the researchers analyzed all COP decisions between 1995 and 2024, as well as in Rio 92, a global meeting held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 that addressed climate and sustainable development.

The researchers selected words related to childhood and youth and searched to see if they appeared in the decisions of these climate events. The words chosen were: youth, children, girl, young people, and future generations. Check out how many times these words appeared in climate decisions over time:

YEAR	YOUTH	CHILDREN	GIRL	YOUNG	FUTURE GENERATIONS
<b>From 1992 to 2010:</b> hardly mentioned	8	2	0	1	9
<b>From 2011 to 2017:</b> on the rise	21	12	0	0	4
<b>From 2018 to 2024:</b> mentioned more strategically	123	77	13	8	4



### DID YOU KNOW?

Until 2010, UN climate decisions included children within “youth,” a group that, according to **YOUNGO’s** criteria, consists of people up to 35 years old.

It is important that children are considered as a primary consideration, that is, placed first and foremost, in all matters that affect them, in accordance with Article 3 of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, including those related to climate and the environment, in line with General Comment No. 26 of the **Committee on the Rights of the Child**. To achieve this, measures to tackle climate change need to:

- **be more specific when referring to children;**
- **produce separate data on children and youth;**
- **create spaces for children to participate and be heard;**
- **ensure support for projects focused on children.**

Below, learn what the research discovered about children in climate policies.

## **A. MORE CONCERN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**

In the early COPs, children were hardly mentioned. When they referred to young people, they used the term “future generations.”

In 2021, COP26 in Glasgow finally recognized that young people are important in taking care of the planet’s climate.

More recently, in 2023, COP28 in Dubai took another step: it decided that countries must join forces to adapt to climate change and protect both current and future generations. With this decision, the following year, in 2024, the Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate took place for the first time, recommending the inclusion of children’s rights in all COP agenda.

These advances show that COPs are increasingly signaling that children and young people need to be heard and included now, not just thought of as “the future.”



## **B. CHILDREN AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**

In 2002, young people were treated as protagonists for the first time: COP8 in New Delhi established that they should learn about climate issues so they can participate in decision-making processes.

Ten years later, in Doha, the United Nations Joint Initiative on Children, Youth, and Climate Change was mentioned for the first time. This initiative was a UN project with youth organizations and encouraged children and young people to participate in and lead climate actions.

In 2021, COP26 in Glasgow recognized the importance of children and young people participating in the **UNFCCC** and began recommending that they be included in country delegations.

The following year, COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh started considering children and young people as agents of change. It also required that young people, women, and children be represented in climate negotiations. Egypt additionally appointed a young person as **Youth Climate Envoy**.

In 2023, COP28 in Dubai created the position of **Youth Climate Champion** to ensure that children and young people participate in UN climate meetings and are heard in climate decision-making. This COP also called for future climate events to work in partnership with YOUNGO, a group representing children and young people worldwide at COPs.

## **C. CHILDREN ARE PART OF CLIMATE JUSTICE**

The Paris Agreement established that climate decisions must be based on **human rights** and **intergenerational equity**. The agreement also stated that countries must address climate change with future generations in mind and in a fair manner.

In addition, almost all countries in the world agreed that climate actions must also protect children's rights, considering the future of everyone. As early as 2019, at COP25 in Madrid, the rights of Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and communities also began to be taken into account.

But it was only in 2024, in Bonn, Germany, that the first special meeting took place to discuss how children are disproportionately affected by climate change.

## **D. CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED IN CLIMATE EDUCATION EFFORTS**

Starting with COP8 in 2002, in New Delhi, young people were included as a priority audience in climate education programs. With quality education, they can be informed and take part in decisions on the climate agenda.

Many years later, at COP26 in 2021, in Glasgow, ways were introduced to help children and young people engage with climate issues, such as the **Youth Forum**, which takes place every year.

## E. SPECIFIC DATA ON THE HEALTH AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

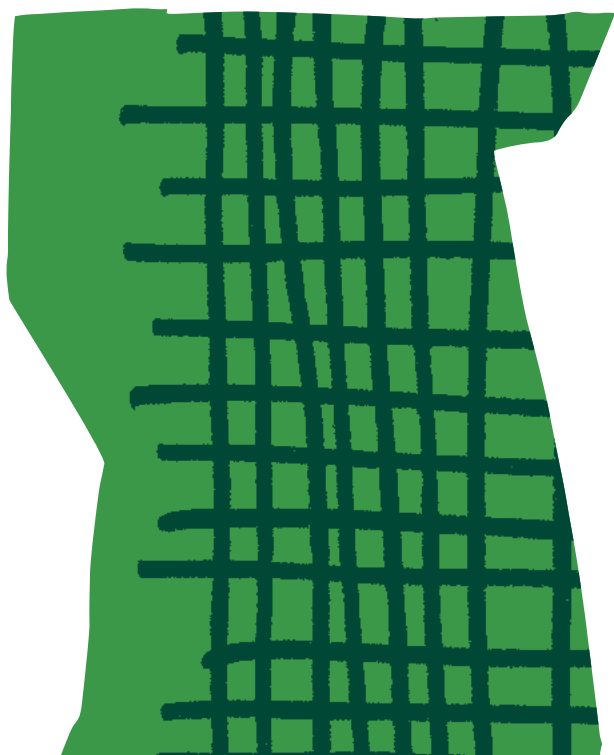
The importance of gathering data on the health and education of children and young people was only recognized in 2024, at COP29 in Baku.

This COP also gave special attention to girls, who are more at risk from climate change. In addition, it recommended collecting information on social inclusion, Indigenous peoples, human rights, and gender issues.

## F. CHILDREN AND ADAPTATION DISCUSSIONS

COP24 in 2018, held in Katowice, encouraged for the first time that children should participate in **climate adaptation** actions.

The following year, at COP25 in Madrid, girls began to be recognized as leaders in **climate resilience**, especially in science, technology, and education for climate adaptation.



## **G. CHILDREN AND CLIMATE FINANCE**

In 2023, at COP28 in Dubai, it was decided that resources should support the groups most at risk, such as women, children, young people, Indigenous peoples, and those who had to leave their homes due to climate challenges. In this way, the response to climate change could become fairer and more balanced.

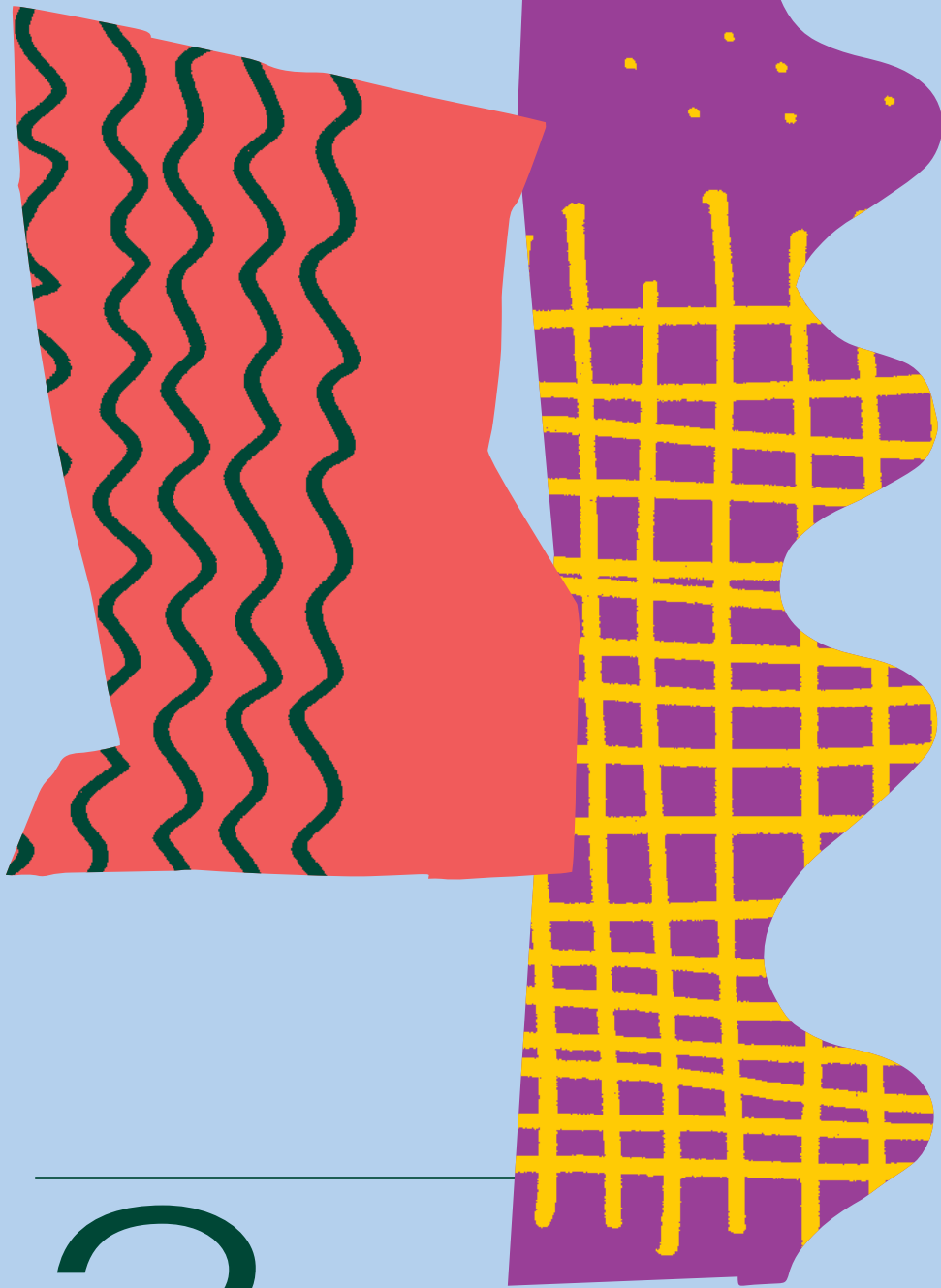
The Dubai COP also requested that the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** increase investment in its program that funds small projects led by young people, women, and girls.

The following year, COP29 in Baku reinforced that women, girls, children, and young people must be considered in investments for climate-related projects.

## **H. INDIGENOUS CHILDREN ARE STILL NOT WELL CONSIDERED**

In 2021, COP26 in Glasgow stated that human rights must be considered in climate impacts, highlighting children, girls, Indigenous peoples, migrants, people with disabilities, and vulnerable communities.

At COP28 in 2023, in Dubai, traditional knowledge began to be taken into account in climate decisions. Indigenous youth were recognized, but Indigenous children were left out.



---

2

proposals to include  
children in decision-  
making processes

---

Now is the time to prepare for the future.

You already know that children need to take part in climate discussions. This means that governments, companies, negotiators, schools, and all of society must listen to what children have to say on this topic. **It is a right guaranteed by law.**

At COP30, children must have the opportunity to share their ideas about the climate. That's why, below, we've put together important information on seven topics that address the needs, perspectives, and rights of children. We'll call these topics "pathways" because they are routes that need to be built for an idea to turn into action.

Choose the paths that best match your interests and get ready to take action!



**A TIP**

While reading, write down everything you find important, because you can use this information later in the debates.

## **ADAPTATION PATHWAY: HELPING THE WORLD ADJUST TO THE NEW CLIMATE REALITY**

- Adaptation policies define what we need to do to face climate change. In these policies, children must be recognized as a group that is highly and disproportionately at risk.
- Adaptation policies need to include data on gender, age, race, ethnicity, and the communities where children live, so that the best climate actions can be planned for each group.
- Children need to help build the adaptation plans for their communities. To ensure their safety, participation methods should be designed according to their age.
- Funding for adaptation should be invested in programs to:
  - **Adapt schools to climate change;**
  - **Protect squares and parks so children can use them;**
  - **Ensure quality meals in schools;**
  - **Support mental health after climate disasters.**

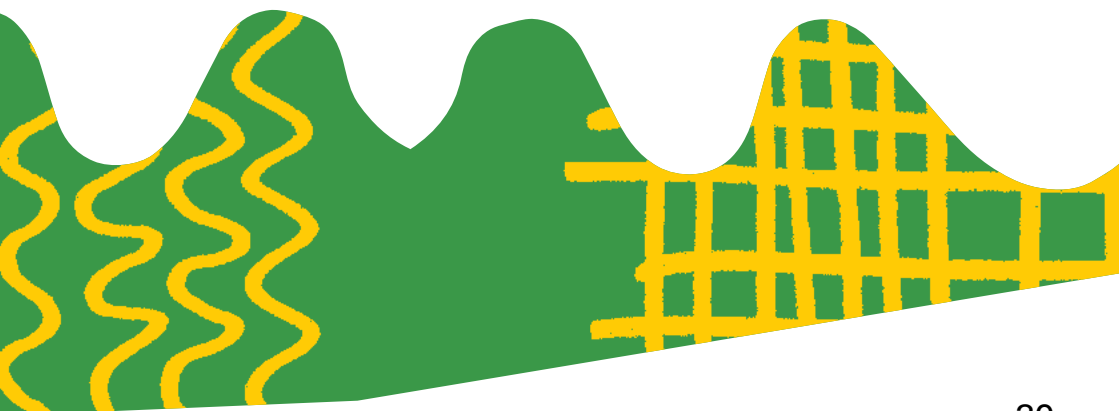
## **GENDER PATHWAY: ENCOURAGING CLIMATE ACTION FOR GIRLS**

- Girls face higher risks to their health, nutrition, safety, and access to education because of climate change.
- Just like boys, they can help change the climate reality in their communities.
- It is necessary to create accessible and safe spaces for girls to participate in climate agenda decisions.

- Part of the funding for climate action should be used to:
  - Increase the safety of girls;
  - Improve girls' climate education;
  - Educate girls to become leaders in their communities engage with climate issues.

## **MITIGATION AND JUST TRANSITION PATHWAY: INCLUDING CHILDREN IN GLOBAL COMMITMENTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE**

- Children are also affected by changes in the economy. Therefore, their needs must be considered in plans to build a more just and sustainable society.
- Governments and companies need to prioritize projects that benefit children when evaluating initiatives to offset air-polluting emissions.
- All actions to address climate challenges should be monitored to assess their impact on the health and education of children.
- Nature-based Education is an important source of **green skills**.
- Children need to be consulted and considered in the **NDC process**.



## **CLIMATE FINANCE PATHWAY: INCLUDING CHILDREN IN FUNDING CLIMATE ACTION**

- Children need to be the group that benefits the most from available funding for climate projects, especially when they are at higher risk. Some projects can even be led by them.
- Organizations working on climate issues need to ensure that the money is being used properly.
- Children need to help decide how to invest project funds and should participate in monitoring these projects.
- Smaller-funded programs should support projects dedicated to children in local communities. Even with limited resources, these actions can make a big difference.

## **LOSS AND DAMAGE PATHWAY: ENSURING CHILDREN PARTICIPATE IN LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND**

- Actions to address climate change must take into account that children are heavily affected by the consequences of climate disasters, such as having to leave their homes or being unable to attend school.
- The **Loss and Damage Fund** is a pool of money to help countries most affected by climate change. This fund should prioritize schools, shelters, and health services that support children.
- Children need to participate in the creation of the fund and monitor how the money is used.

- The fund should plan its spending transparently, providing clear data on how children are affected according to their age, gender, and where they live.
- Institutions such as **UNICEF**, **UNESCO**, and organizations working in the regions most in need should be partners of the fund.
- Loss and damage policies need to support climate education and mental health. To help rebuild the lives of children, they can offer scholarships and create projects that connect them with their culture, as many have to leave their homes due to climate disasters.

## **ACTION FOR CLIMATE EMPOWERMENT: PUTTING CHILDREN AT THE CENTER OF CLIMATE ACTION**

- Children need to be the main actors in the six areas of **Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)**: education, training, awareness, public engagement, access to quality information, and international cooperation.
- They should help define the success goals of climate actions, especially those from indigenous communities, marginalized areas, and other groups at higher risk.
- To listen to children, governments and organizations must use age-appropriate resources, such as workshops, games, student debates, or well-designed online tools.

## **ACTION AGENDA PATHWAY: DEFINING THE NEXT CLIMATE ACTIONS**

- In the mobilization actions decided during COP30, children need to be clearly mentioned because they are essential for developing climate solutions.
- The documents produced at COP30 should include specific targets to enhance the climate safety of children, such as:
  - **Access to clean energy in schools;**
  - **Safe mobility for children living in urban areas with extreme heat;**
  - **Adaptation of daycare centers and child health facilities.**
- COP presidencies should create special actions for children focused on their education, protection, and participation in debates and decision-making. In addition, presidencies must commit to actions that prioritize the rights of children.



## SOME DATA THAT CAN HELP YOU TALK ABOUT CLIMATE

# 2.4 billion

people in the world are children, representing approximately one-third of the global population.<sup>1</sup>

---

Every day, humanity releases more than

# 110 million

of tons of pollutants in the atmosphere.<sup>2</sup>

---

# 2024

 was the hottest year ever recorded.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the global

# GLOBAL WARMING

pollution comes from burning fossil fuels, such as oil.<sup>4</sup>

1 UNICEF; ILO. More than a Billion Reasons: The Urgent Need to Build Universal Social Protection for Children. Geneva; New York: ILO & UNICEF, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/135211/file/more%20than%20a%20billion%20reasons%3A%20the%20urgent%20need%20to%20build%20universal%20social%20protection.pdf>. Accessed on: 29 Oct 2025.

2 Statista. Global CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/276629/global-co2-emissions/>. Accessed on: 29 Oct 2025.

3 UN Brazil. UN Confirms 2024 as the Hottest Year on Record, About 1.55°C Above Pre-Industrial Levels. Brasília: United Nations Brazil, 10 Jan. 2025. Available at: <https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/287173-onu-confirma-2024-como-o-ano-mais-quente-j%C3%A1-registrado-com-cerca-de-155%C2%B0c-acima-dos-n%C3%ADveis-pr%C3%A9-industriais>. Accessed on: 29 Oct 2025.

4 STERN, Nicholas. The economics of climate change: the Stern review. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

If nothing changes, we risk

# LOSING UP TO 50%

of all terrestrial species within this century.<sup>5</sup>

---

Wealthy countries cause

# 10 times

more climate impact than lower-income countries.<sup>6</sup>

---

More than

# 1 billion

children—almost half of them—live under severe climate and environmental risk.<sup>7</sup>

---

Nearly

# 250 million

children had their studies interrupted by climate crises in 2024.<sup>8</sup>

---

In Brazil, almost

# 40 million

children are exposed to multiple climate risks.<sup>9</sup>

---

5 STERN, Nicholas. The economics of climate change: the Stern review. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

6 UNITED NATIONS. Rich Countries Cause 10 Times More Climate Impact than Lower-Income Countries. UN News, Climate and Environment section. Available at: <https://news.un.org/pt/story/2024/03/1828467>. Accessed on: 29 Oct 2025.

7 UNITED NATIONS. "Future of Childhood at Risk Requires Greater Protection of Children's Rights, Says UNICEF". UN News, 12 Nov. 2024. Available at: <https://news.un.org/pt/story/2024/11/1840946>. Accessed on: 29 Oct 2025.

8 UNICEF. Nearly 250 Million Children and Adolescents Had Their Studies Interrupted by Climate Crises in 2024, UNICEF Warns. New York, 24 Jan. 2025. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/comunicados-de-imprensa/quase-250-milhoes-de-criancas-e-adolescentes-tiveram-os-estudos-interrompidos-por-crises-climaticas-em-2024-alerta-UNICEF>. Accessed on: 29 Oct 2025.

9 UN Brazil. In Brazil, 40 Million Children Are Exposed to Climate Risks. Brasília: United Nations Brazil, 28 Mar. 2023. Available at: <https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/206888-no-brasil-40-milh%C3%B5es-de-crian%C3%A7as-est%C3%A3o-expostas-riscos-clim%C3%A1ticos>. Accessed on: 29 Oct 2025.



---

# glossary

---

## **ACE (Action for Climate Empowerment)**

A set of actions to teach, engage, and inspire people – especially children and youth – in combating climate change.

## **Action Agenda**

A set of commitments created by the COP Presidency to implement measures that address climate change.

## **Agent of Change**

A person or institution that creates solutions to transform society and inspires others to act for a better future.

## **Climate Adaptation**

Actions to prepare society to protect itself from the impacts of climate change, such as droughts, floods, or heatwaves.

## **Climate finance**

Money provided by countries, companies, or organizations to support projects that tackle climate change or help people adapt to its effects.

## **Climate Justice**

Ensuring that those most affected by climate change receive greater support and protection to face their challenges.

## **Climate Resilience**

It is experiencing a difficult climate-related situation, managing to recover, and moving forward.

## **Committee on the Rights of the Child**

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, a group of 18 experts in children’s rights from different parts of the world, has written a document called a General Comment No. 26, which explains to States how children’s rights are related to the environment and climate change, and what they must do to protect them.

## **COP (Conference of the Parties)**

The annual meeting of the countries that are part of the UNFCCC to discuss and decide what actions should be taken to address climate change.

## **Energy Transition**

Transition from using energy produced from fossil fuels (such as oil and coal, which are highly polluting) to renewable sources (such as the sun, wind, and water, which are less polluting).

### **GEF (Global Environment Facility)**

An organization that funds projects around the world to protect the environment, such as conserving forests and combating pollution.

### **Green Skills**

Knowledge and abilities to carry out activities that protect the environment and tackle climate change.

### **GST (Global Stocktake)**

An assessment conducted every five years to determine whether countries are meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement in tackling climate change.

### **Human Rights**

Rights that all people have, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, race, or economic situation. Some human rights include living in safety, having access to education and healthcare, and the freedom to express oneself.

### **Intergenerational Equity**

The commitment to make good decisions today so that future generations can also live in health and well-being.

### **Just Transition**

Process of transitioning to a more sustainable economy that protects workers and communities while reducing emissions.

### **Kyoto Protocol**

An international agreement from 1997 in which almost all countries in the world committed to reducing the emissions of gases that cause global warming.

### **Loss and Damage Fund**

A financial reserve of the UNFCCC created to help the countries most affected by climate change recover from the impacts of disasters.

### **Mitigation**

Any action that helps reduce the effects of global warming, such as using clean energy and planting more trees.

### **NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions)**

A plan that each country submits to the UN outlining its targets for reducing climate-changing gas emissions. Countries must update and strengthen these targets every five years.

### **Paris Agreement**

An agreement signed in 2015 in which almost all countries in the world committed, among other measures, to reducing carbon emissions so that global warming does not exceed 1.5°C. It is the most important international agreement on the environment and climate.

**UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)**

UN agency that promotes education, science, culture, and communication to build more just and sustainable societies.

**UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund)**

UN agency that protects the rights of children and adolescents, such as access to health, education, nutrition, and protection.

**UN (United Nations)**

An international organization that works for peace and global development. Out of the 195 countries in the world today, 193 are part of the UN.

**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an important agreement by countries to promise to protect children’s rights. The Convention explains who children are, all their rights, and the responsibilities of States to protect, promote and fulfill children’s rights.

**UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)**

Agreement signed in 1992 by almost all countries in the world to combat climate change. Participating countries meet every year at the COPs to review what has been done and decide on the next steps.

**Youth Climate Champion**

Young person selected to facilitate the participation of other young people and children in the COPs. They help organize actions and ensure that youth are involved in decisions about climate change.

**Youth Climate Envoy**

A young person selected to bring the ideas, concerns, and solutions about climate change developed by youth to international meetings. The initiative existed between 2022 and 2023.

**Youth Forum**

An annual meeting where young people discuss ideas and propose solutions to address climate change. It usually takes place during the COPs.

**YOUNGO**

**(Young and Children’s Non-Governmental Organizations Group)**

A group that brings together youth organizations from around the world to give voice to their and children’s demands in climate negotiations. It is the main channel for youth participation in COP decisions.



**BOARD OF  
DIRECTION**

**ALANA**

Flavia Doria  
Isabella Henriques

**LACLIMA**

André Castro Santos  
Caroline Rocha

**ORIGINAL VERSION**

**ORGANIZED BY**

JP Amaral  
Leticia Carvalho Silva

**AUTHORS**

André Castro Santos  
Eneas Xavier  
Maria Gabriella Souza

**CHILDREN'S VERSION**

**WRITING AND EDITING**

Plain Language Consulting:

Clara e Simples

André Castro Santos

Camila Guimarães Hessel

Fernanda de Andrade Santos

Fernanda Peixoto Miranda

Kinda van Gastel

Laís Fleury

Letícia Carvalho Silva

Zsuzsanna Rutai

**GRAPHIC DESIGN,  
LAYOUT, AND  
ACCESSIBILITY**

Tereza Bettinardi

Guilherme Mohr

Helaine Gonçalves

Josi Campos

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

To the members of Alana's  
Children for Nature  
Fellowship.



*DIGITAL ORIGINAL VERSION*  
[bit.ly/policy-paper-en](https://bit.ly/policy-paper-en)



*DIGITAL CHILDREN'S VERSION*  
[bit.ly/cops-climate-version-children](https://bit.ly/cops-climate-version-children)

**INITIATIVE:**



**PRODUCED BY:**



**SUPPORT FOR THE CHILDREN'S EDITION:**

