

Looking Ahead:

# THE CLIMATE CRISIS,

Climate Justice, and  
CHILD PROTECTION



© UNICEF/UN0436094/Prinsloo



The climate crisis is the defining crisis of our time. The costs and consequences of our collective action and inaction will be felt most deeply by children – impacting their rights, protection, and well-being.

Now and for decades to come, climate change will exacerbate child protection risks and threats to the safety and mental health of children, and further inequity through its intergenerational impacts<sup>33</sup>. It will contribute to increased conflict, displacement, food insecurity, financial hardship, structural violence; as well as more frequent and intense drought, heat waves, floods, fires, and other climate-related disasters. The climate crisis will strain the capacity of local systems, exacerbate stressors on families and communities, and contribute to increasing conflict and public health emergencies<sup>34</sup>. The greatest impacts will primarily be on low-income countries, impeding their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>35</sup>. Although the climate crisis affects all children, it affects them differently. These differences, linked to inequity, varying types of vulnerability, and other diversity factors, must be addressed to achieve equitable climate justice for all children.

The Alliance recognises that achieving a future for children free of violence, and where their rights, protection, and well-being are assured, is **inextricable from the climate crisis**.



The climate crisis links to, and motivates action on, all four priorities within this strategy: centring children and their protection within climate action can contribute to achieving climate justice for children, helping to promote children's voices, prioritise their needs, and encourage their leadership. Further, mitigating and responding to climate impacts requires *multi-sectoral* and collaborative approaches at all levels. Child protection actors can build on approaches used to *prevent* child protection risks, adapting protective factors to help children, their families and communities, better prepare for, strengthen their resilience to, and mitigate the negative impacts of the climate crisis. As climate impacts affect all people, communities, and countries, albeit differently, work to address climate must include a focus on climate justice and equity, and be led locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally, the embodiment of *localisation's* "as local as possible, as international as necessary".



Jonathan Hyams / Save The Children

Children and child- and youth-led movements are already leading the way in many local and global initiatives. Global actions in response will be the ultimate test of *accountability* to the world's children<sup>36</sup>.

However, like many other humanitarian sectors and actors, child protection has many questions when it comes to climate action:

### Overarching questions:

- What does the climate crisis mean for child protection and the future of humanitarian action?
- How can humanitarian and climate actors and donors work to ensure that climate financing supports child-, youth-, and community-led initiatives, on whom the impacts and burden of the climate crisis are disproportionately felt, and avoid reinforcing existing inequities in humanitarian financing and leadership?

### Climate action for children's rights, protection, and well-being:

- How can child protection actors best ensure the centrality of children and their protection within the climate action agenda – and that children's participation and agency is placed at the centre of climate-related decisions that affect them?
- How will child protection interventions need to change and adapt to better respond to climate-related disasters, and how can the child protection sector prepare for this change?
- How can the strength of child protection prevention strategies and approaches to working with and contributing to stronger, more resilient communities and equitable national systems be leveraged to support action for climate justice?

### Actions on social responsibility and reducing the child protection sector's impact on the environment:

- As humanitarian actors look to understand and define what 'greening humanitarian aid' will look like, what will greening child protection mean? How can The Alliance and its members adopt greener practices?
- A post-COVID-19 world provides the opportunity to not only build forward better, but to build forward *greener*. What does this mean for child protection?



The need to act on the climate crisis is urgent and increasing daily. With its focus on the centrality of children and their protection, The Alliance will play an important leadership role within the child protection sector on the climate crisis, and contribute a child protection and child rights lens to climate action and climate justice. The Alliance can emerge as a thought leader for the child protection sector, and invest in the exploration and reflection required to answer questions around the climate crisis, including linkages to programming, child rights and participation, and social responsibility. Through its advocacy and actions, The Alliance can work to increase understanding, visibility, and prioritisation of the impacts of the climate crisis on children within humanitarian action, and the need to ensure equity for all children in climate justice. The Alliance will invest in and establish a Child Protection, Climate Crisis, and Climate Justice Initiative to lead its work, and to identify actions The Alliance, and the child protection sector more broadly, can take to meet their obligations on the climate crisis and hold themselves accountable to children. These actions may include activities such as:

- **INTEGRATING** and **ELEVATING** the voices and engagement of children and youth – of all genders, abilities, and backgrounds – through its platforms;
- **INVESTING** in research and generating evidence, smart practices, and learning to feed into advocacy and policy around child protection, the climate crisis, and achieving equitable climate justice for children;
- **IDENTIFYING** innovative approaches to working jointly with other sectors on climate adaptation, resilience, preparedness, and responding to climate impacts; and
- **EXPLORING** other activities and opportunities for collaboration that seek to ensure the centrality of children, their protection and their voices, within climate action.

Addressing the  
climate crisis will be the  
**ultimate test of accountability**  
to the world's children.