



**BORN INTO THE CLIMATE CRISIS**  
**WHY WE MUST ACT NOW TO**  
**SECURE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

Children and  
Young People's report



Save the Children

## Child participation statement

This report has been developed with the support of a dedicated Child Reference Group, comprised of 12 children aged between 12–17 years old from Albania, Bangladesh, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kosovo, Norway, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the United States, and Zambia. We thank these children – and all child advocates for climate action globally – for their time, their thoughtful recommendations, and their continued commitment to defending the rights of children in the face of a **climate crisis** not of their own making.

Please note that definitions for all words highlighted in **bold** are included in the Glossary.





## Poem on Climate Change

**Justina**

15 year-old-girl, Zambia

*My soul is so grieved*

*My heart is so hurt,*

*Because of the change, obstruction, destruction known as “Climate change”.*

*Oh! Climate Change how sweet and lovely is the melody and sound it has,  
yet the negative impact it has brought on the environment.*

*I [as] a child of this generation,  
I want to voice out on the impact climate change has brought.*

*This has given children less participation in this nation,*

*Excessive rains causing floods, which bring about diseases such as cholera,  
by the affected water which is untreated.*

*Poor rains causing drought, leading to food shortage which is causing hunger on children  
as a result leads to less concentration on lessons on their education.*

*Excess rains leading to poor attendance on school going children.*

*Poor rains leading to load shedding giving people no option but to  
practice deforestation for charcoal use all in the name supplementing electricity.*

*Huh! My words are failing to come out*

*My tears are failing to drop because of the condition and situation.*

*If we can be the causers, we can be the solvers.*

*Out Loud I Appeal*

*All decision makers take afforestation into consideration.*

*I appeal and cry again.*

*To all decision makers to raise awareness on climate change and  
children’s participation to the nation, because it states an (Africa fit for children.)*



# Introduction

The **climate crisis** is having a huge impact on the world, resulting in severe consequences for current and future generations of children, and their rights.

The wealthiest half of states are responsible for 86% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, compared to the less wealthy half, that are responsible for just 14%<sup>1</sup>. Even though their countries have contributed less to **climate change**, children in **low- and middle-income countries** will be impacted the most by the **climate crisis**<sup>2</sup>.

We know that human activity is responsible for the fast warming of the planet. Wide scale destructive activities – like the use of **fossil fuels** and cutting down trees – are contributing to **climate change**. As a result, things like rising greenhouse gas levels, the rising temperature of oceans, and melting ice caps have already reached seriously high levels. This is leading to **extreme weather events**, like droughts, floods, and wildfires – all of which are directly related to **climate change**.

If the world does not act to reduce emissions, and limit global warming to no more than 1.5°C above the levels they were at before fossil fuels began to be used for industry (**pre-industrial levels**), children in **low- and middle-income countries** will face the most dangerous impacts of the **climate crisis**.

**‘Alone we will not be able to achieve it’**

**Laura**  
16-year-old girl  
OPCION/REDNNyAs  
Chile

*When you go out and appreciate the outside, you face a grey scale, and an air full of pollution, you come home, and if you are part of that underprivileged "1 in 3 in the world", who do not have drinking water to recover from daily fatigue, your situation is risky, we are assured of a pollution-free environment, but where is it?*

*Global warming: Born as a result of little or no ecological awareness in current laws, that has us here, that is why we get involved, and that is why children and adolescents want to make themselves heard.*

*Raise awareness and educate from the beginning of school, raise renewable energies, take care of water and make it accessible to all, inspect factories and transport: Our air is damaged! And establish control of garbage, through the 3Rs.*

*We will do our part, raising awareness among our peers, and mainly, close adults so that they recognize the problem and become aware of it, because alone we will not be able to achieve it, we need joint work and real support from adults, even more so you, the decision makers, because today we are at risk, we have problems and ideas. We are today and without action we will not have tomorrow.*



# Impact of the Climate Crisis on children

In 2015, countries from around the world gathered in Paris to agree to an international treaty on **climate change** – the **Paris Agreement**. Under the **Paris Agreement**, countries agreed to develop **Nationally Determined Contributions**, which are documents outlining what actions a country is going to take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and help prevent the impacts of **climate change**.

Based on the promises made in these **Nationally Determined Contributions**, research developed by an international team of climate researchers led by the Vrije Universiteit in Brussels, has looked at how children's exposure to **extreme weather events** will be different for those born in 2020 compared with those born in 1960<sup>3</sup>.

Even if countries complete the actions outlined in their **Nationally Determined Contributions**, this research found that a child born in 2020 will directly experience up to 2–7 times as many **extreme weather events** globally as a person born in 1960.

Compared to a person born in 1960, across their lifetime, a child born in 2020 will experience on average:

- 2 times as many wildfires
- 2.8 times the exposure to crop failure
- 2.6 times as many drought events
- 2.8 times as many river floods
- 6.8 times more heatwaves

The research also finds that the likely impact is higher for children born in **low- and middle-income countries**. This is because **climate change** will likely make existing challenges that children face in these countries much worse, and create new difficulties that will prevent children's rights being met.

**Climate change** is linked to the wider issue of inequality. This means that, for some children, the impacts of the **climate crisis** will be even worse. This will impact children like those who are at risk of facing more than one **extreme weather event**, those who live in conflict zones, or who already face inequality and discrimination because of their gender, disability, race, or other reasons.

The same research finds that, if global warming is limited to 1.5°C above **pre-industrial levels**, it will reduce the risk for children born in 2020:

- of exposure to heatwaves by 45%
- of exposure to droughts by 39%
- of exposure to river floods by 38%
- of exposure to crop failures by 28%
- of exposure to wildfires by 10%.

By reducing the risk of exposure to **extreme weather events** the impact of the **climate crisis** on children will be reduced, and they will be better able to realise their right to access basic needs and services – like food, education, and healthcare – and their right to participate in decisions about their future.

**'It is very hard to learn when the sun is hot'**

**Mohamed**  
14-year-old boy, and  
**Shukri**  
14-year-old girl  
both from Somalia

*Climate changes causes many negative impacts to us and the entire community. For example, when the sun is too hot as a result of cutting down trees and clearance bushes. Furthermore, our house are made of make-shifts or semi-permanent buildings that doesn't protect us from the hot sun.*

*During the cold and rainy seasons there is lots of obstacles we face. Many towns of Somalia have impassable roads making it very hard for us to attend schools, visit health centres and the price of food goes up making it hard for our families to buy food. Also, our houses can't withstand the heavy rains and anytime might be flooded.*

*Our temporary learning space releases rainwater and during the hot and dry season it is very hot and hard to stay in it which might cause our learning to stop.*

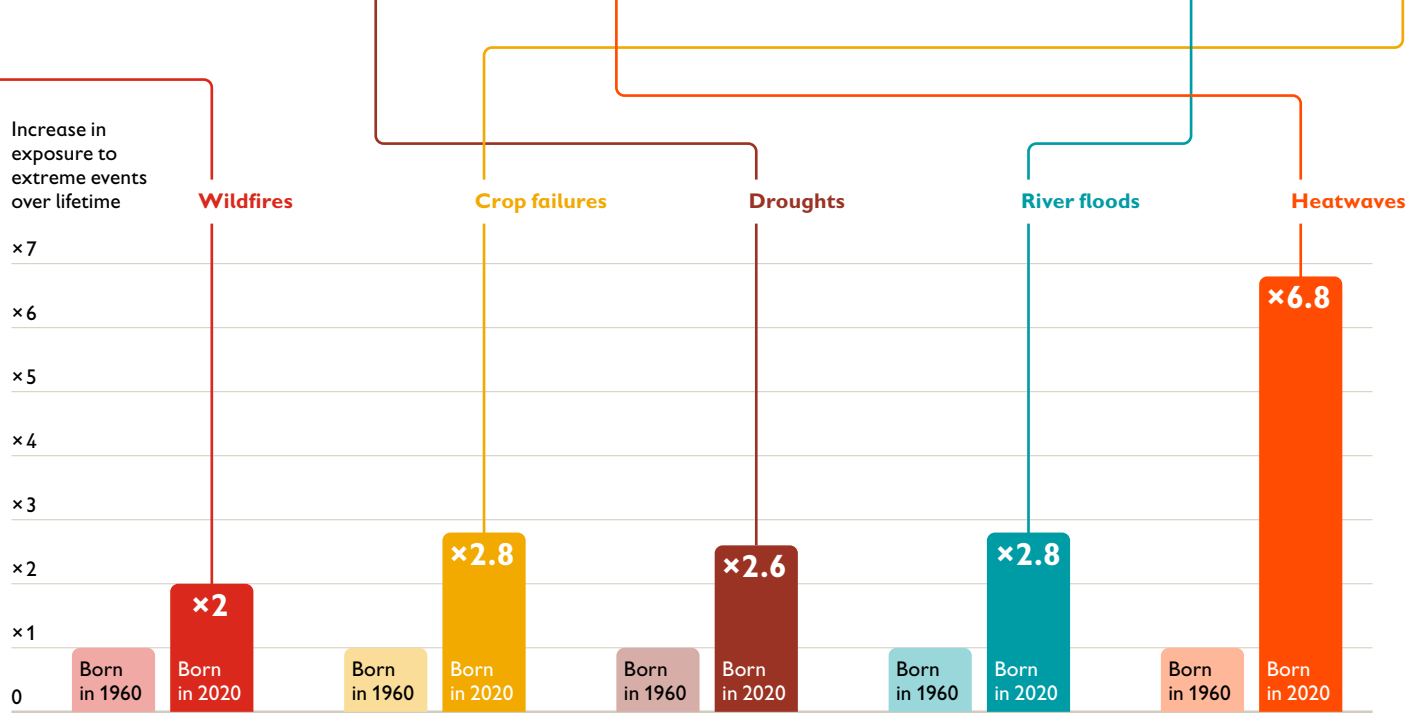
*We would like Save the Children to work together with the government and ensure that our environment is preserved so that we children can have a better place to live and play in.*



Kate Stanworth/Save the Children

# Projected impact of the climate crisis on children under Paris Agreement pledges

Andrew Hulme

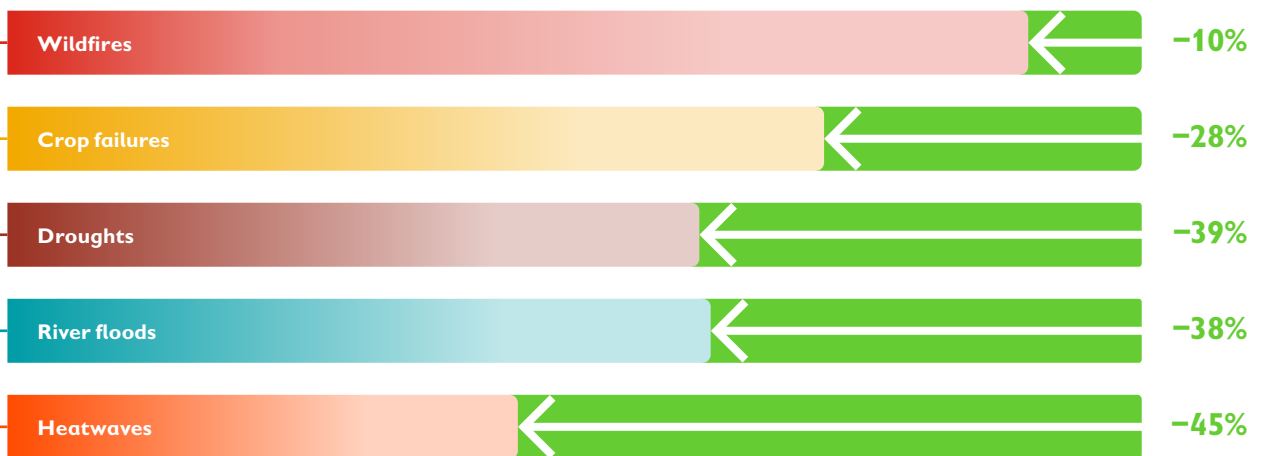


**Figure 1**  
Lifetime exposure to extreme events under Paris Agreement pledges for children born in 2020 compared to that of a person born in 1960



# Reduced impact on children if increase in global warming is limited to 1.5°C

Andrew Hulme



**Figure 2**  
Potential reduction of additional lifetime exposure to extreme events of children born in 2020 by limiting warming to 1.5°C instead of higher temperature under Paris Agreement pledges.

# Children's participation in climate decisions

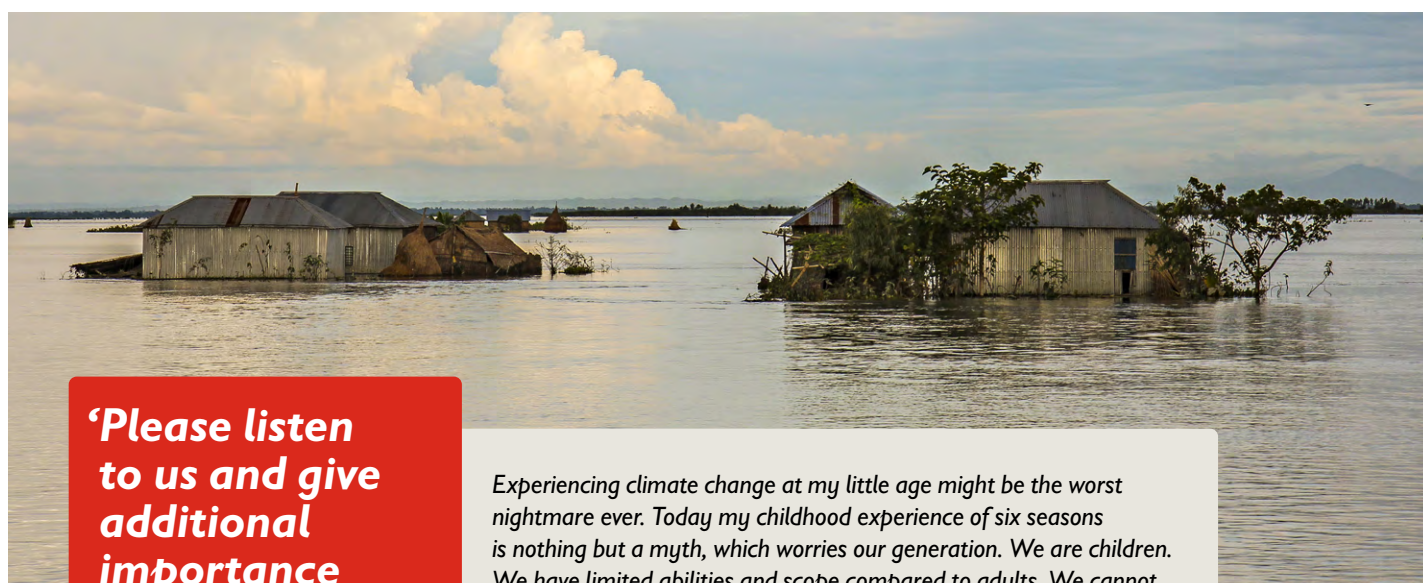
Around the world, children are taking bold action to stand up for their rights and the climate – organising strikes, petitions, and campaigns to demand action from governments.

Under Article 12 of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, children have the right to be heard – also known as the right to participate<sup>4</sup>. This includes having access to information about issues that will impact them and are important to them, being able to express themselves and have their voices heard, and having the chance to be involved in making decisions that affect them.

Even though children will be impacted the most by the **climate crisis** now and in the future, their right to be heard and participate is often not met, and children are left out of decision-making processes relating to climate change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it even harder for children to share their concerns and demands publicly, as they are prevented from organising events, protests, and strikes. This particularly impacts children that are most affected by inequality and discrimination, as they face additional barriers to participation. It is crucial that children are given the opportunity to participate safely, and have their voices heard in climate decisions at all levels.

**Under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to be heard – also known as the right to participate.**



Save the Children Bangladesh

**‘Please listen to us and give additional importance to our voice. We promise you to become part of the solution’**

**Diya**  
16-year-old girl  
from Bangladesh

*Experiencing climate change at my little age might be the worst nightmare ever. Today my childhood experience of six seasons is nothing but a myth, which worries our generation. We are children. We have limited abilities and scope compared to adults. We cannot make many decisions, we can tell our problems and pressure adults to find solutions. We are young, but we have the right to be heard. We have the right to have a safe and better future.*

*Global warming is rising day by day. Children of our generation are approaching a future with huge risks. We are facing the most impact of it when we are least responsible for it. Notably, children of the coastal regions are more exposed to disasters. If we do not take any solution early and work together to reduce climate change, countries like Bangladesh will be under the sea within the next 50 years.*

*As a child representative from a disaster-prone country, I am requesting that the leaders and decision-makers please listen to us and give additional importance to our voice. We promise you to become part of the solution.*



# Recommendations

To address the impacts of **climate change** and to deliver on promises made to children in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, governments of states who have contributed most to the **climate crisis** and other decision-makers must:

- Take urgent action now to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C above **pre-industrial levels**, including but not limited to rapidly moving away from the use of **fossil fuels**.
- Increase commitments to climate finance for both **mitigation** and **adaptation**, recognising that the **climate crisis** is a child rights issue that affects children first and worst.
- Recognise children as equal stakeholders and key agents of change in addressing the **climate crisis**, including by establishing mechanisms and platforms that allow children to participate in discussions and decision-making around **climate change**.
- Scale up **social protection** systems to help families and children to overcome the impacts of **climate change**, moving towards **universal child benefits** to improve child well-being.



Pablo Barnes / Save the Children

In developing this report, the Child Reference Group also identified their own recommendations. These are:

## Children's recommendations

- Decision-makers should take all information that they receive about **climate change** into account when making decisions about **climate change**.
- Reduce **fossil fuels** and move towards **renewable** and green energy.
- Governments should give more support to communities to cut pollution and **fossil fuel** use, and make sure that green and **renewable energy** alternatives are accessible for all people to use.
- Promote public transportation as a way to cut emissions. This could also make it easier for people to continue to access work and school even during **extreme weather events**.
- We need to make sure that every child can always reach their rights.
- Children are the leaders of tomorrow, and so children's voices always need to be respected, taken seriously, and included in decisions on **climate change**.
- Everyone, including parents, teachers, and leaders, needs to understand how climate is impacting children's rights, and children's right to participate in decisions on **climate change**.
- Child participation needs to be inclusive for all children, including children who may need additional support to participate.
- Children should be given good information to participate in decision-making processes on climate in a way that makes sense to them.
- People who work in **fossil fuels** industries need to have access to **social protection** as they could lose their job when we move to green and **renewable energy** sources.

## Glossary

### Adaptation measures

Actions that are taken to prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change. For example, building flood defences to protect from rising sea levels.

### Climate change

The long-term change in average weather patterns at the local, regional and global level as a result of human action. These changes have a number of effects, including droughts, floods, the melting of ice caps, and sea level rise.

### Climate crisis

A term used to describe the problems that are being caused or are likely to be caused by changes to the world's weather as a result of climate change.

### Extreme weather events

Unexpected, unusual, severe or unseasonal. They include things like droughts, heatwaves, floods, crop failures, and wildfire.

### Fossil fuels

A lot of the world's energy is produced by burning fossil fuels, such as oil, coal and gas. Burning fossil fuels creates carbon dioxide gas, which increases the overall temperature of the earth and is damaging to the environment.

### Low- and middle-income countries

Countries that have small or middle-sized economies.

### Paris Agreement

An international treaty on climate change, which countries agreed to at COP21 in Paris, 2015. The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming levels to well below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C, compared to **pre-industrial levels**.

### Pre-industrial levels

Before fossil fuels began to be used for industry, there was less CO<sub>2</sub> in the air and the earth was cooler – these are levels that we use to compare with current information about the climate.

### Mitigation measures

Actions that are taken to limit global warming and its effects. For example, making efforts to reduce emissions, such as changing from oil, coal and gas to renewable energy sources like wind and solar.

### Nationally Determined Contributions

As part of the Paris Agreement, governments agree to Nationally Determined Contributions, which are documents outlining the actions a country is going to take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in order to help prevent the impacts of climate change.

### Renewable energy

Natural sources of energy that can be used to create electricity and that will never run out, such as wind, sun, and water.

### Social protection

A group of laws, policies, and systems that are put in place by governments to help all people to achieve an adequate standard of living. This can include things like giving money to people who need it, or providing things like health insurance, free education, free meals at school, and other services that children might need.

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

An international treaty that contains all of the rights that children have because they are children. Almost every government in the world has officially agreed with the UNCRC. This means they have promised to take steps to make sure that your rights are supported and protected.

### Universal child benefits

A type of social protection that means that all families living in a country will receive money to support their child until they turn 18. This can help caregivers to buy food, pay for school or school equipment, and buy medicine or access to doctors. Universal means that these benefits are available to every child in the country, no matter what.

## Endnotes

1: Ritchie, H. 2018. 'Global inequalities in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions', *Our World in Data*. Available from <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-by-income-region>.

2: UN Conference of the Parties, 2013. *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its eighteenth session, held in Doha from 26 November to 8 December 2012 – Addendum Part Two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its eighteenth session*. Available from <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2012/cop18/eng/08a01.pdf>.

3: Methodology: The findings draw on five sources of data, including newly-generated simulations of climate impacts across five extreme event categories; the United Nations World Population Prospects; global mean temperature scenarios compiled in support of the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming

of 1.5°C; population reconstructions and projections; and country-scale cohort size data provided by the Wittgenstein Centre's Human Capital Data Explorer, <http://dataexplorer.wittgensteincentre.org/wcde-v2/>. The research calculates the exposure of an average person to climate impacts across their lifetime in 178 countries, 11 regions and the globe under climate action commitments originally announced by governments in NDCs developed after the introduction of the Paris Agreement. It then compares different age groups to calculate conservative estimates of lifetime extreme event occurrence as a consequence of climate change, while controlling for changes in life expectancy.

4: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12. Available from <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>.



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