

GENERATION HOPE

**2.4 billion reasons to end
the global climate and
inequality crisis**

EMBARGOED
UNTIL PUBLICATION DATE:
26 OCTOBER 2022



Save the Children

Save the Children exists to help every child reach their potential.

In more than 100 countries, we help children stay safe, healthy and keep learning. We lead the way on tackling big problems like pneumonia, hunger and protecting children in war, while making sure each child's unique needs are cared for.

We know we can't do this alone. Together with children, partners and supporters, we work to help every child become who they want to be.

Acknowledgements

This report was written by Lisa Wise with research and policy expertise from Miski Abdi, Shruti Agarwal, Lilei Chow, Irene Dotterud-Flaa, Oliver Fiala, Diego Aleksander Foss, Vicky Hill, Claire Leigh, Ruwayda Mohammed, Carly Munnelly, Chiara Orlassino, David Tumwesigye, Andrew Wainer, Jack Wakefield and Richard Watts. Data analysis of the number of children affected by the climate emergency and poverty was led by Oliver Fiala, working with Professor Wim Thiery and Derrick Muheki at Vrije Universiteit Brussel to whom we are grateful for climate data and modelling expertise and guidance. Analysis of qualitative data from the global listening project with children was led by Amanda Lenhardt, working with Frances Darlington-Pollock and Lavinia Loperfido. Analysis of the survey data was led by Chiara Orlassino. The children's summary report was led by Gabrielle Szabo, with invaluable inputs and steer from the Generation Hope Child Reference Group. The doodle illustrations in the report were developed by this group of children, and the main illustrations are by Joanne Dertili.

We would like to thank all of the Save the Children staff who have reviewed drafts and supported with inputs, as well as those who have provided strategic steer, including Angelique Orr, Ulrika Cilliers, Yolande Wright, Kirsty McNeill, Shaheen Chughtai, Davinia Ovet Bondi, Paul Mitchell and Ravi Wickremasinghe. We would also like to extend special thanks to external colleagues who reviewed the report and research in whole or part, including Alex Cobham, Sarah Colenbrander, Enrique Delamonica, Amy Dodd, Alex Jacobs, Katharina Lehmann Uschner, Dianna Melrose, Natalie Samarasinghe, Sindra Sharma, Thomas Tanner and Charlene Watson.

Particular thanks goes to Rebecca Shuker and Save the Children colleagues across the world who worked tirelessly to organise the global listening project. And, above all, thanks to the thousands of children who participated, whose rich insights and inspiring ideas have shaped and breathed life into this report.

Published by
Save the Children
1 St John's Lane
London EC1M 4AR
UK
+44 (0)20 7012 6400
savethechildren.org.uk

First published 2022

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Cover photo: Tenneh, aged 13, paddles a canoe to school in Pujehun district, Sierra Leone.
(Photo: Jonathan Hyams/Save the Children)

Design: GrasshopperDesign.net



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The climate and inequality crisis in numbers

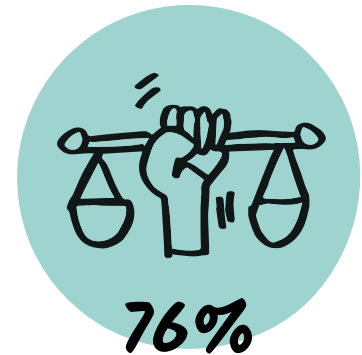
The crisis is having a profound impact on children's rights, especially for children most affected by poverty and discrimination.



children are living in poverty and exposed to high climate risk.



of children participating in our survey have noticed climate change or economic inequality affecting the world around them.



of global wealth is owned by the wealthiest 10% of people globally.

Children who are most affected and have done the least to cause the crisis receive the least investment and support.



The carbon emissions of the world's wealthiest 1% are

double

those of the poorest 50%.



is the gap in climate financing adaptation per person per year in the nine countries where children are most at risk of climate impacts.



Governments spend

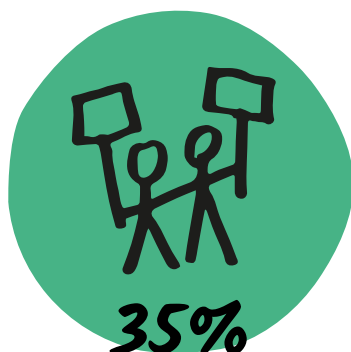
\$5.9 trillion

on fossil fuel subsidies each year.

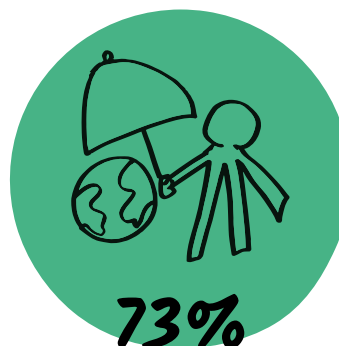
\$4.2 trillion

is needed per year to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in lower income countries.

Children are demanding change.



of children responding to our survey said they were already campaigning or wanted to start.

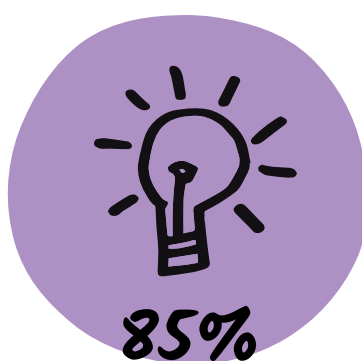


of children responding to our survey believed adults should be doing more to tackle the issues.

A greener and more just planet is possible if the climate emergency and inequality are addressed together and with urgency.



additional jobs could be created by transitioning to a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient economy.



- the fall in the cost of large scale solar power from 2010 to 2020.



in additional aid would have been available if major donors had dedicated 0.7% of GNI as aid in 2021.



would be saved every year responding to disasters if contingency planning, social protection and financial inclusion were improved.



is lost in public revenue globally each year to cross-border tax abuse. Stronger, fairer tax systems would make this available for investment in children.



Summary

66 We need to work together because we don't live in the same country, but in the same world. 99

Message shared by a boy participating in a Save the Children dialogue in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Climate change is commonly described by policy-makers, business leaders and media as the greatest threat to the future. But when Save the Children recently undertook our biggest-ever dialogue with more than 54,500 children from 41 countries on issues of climate change and inequality, they left us in no doubt that the climate threat isn't about tomorrow. For the world's 2.4 billion children, the climate crisis is a global emergency *today*.

In higher and lower income countries, children are experiencing and observing changes in weather patterns, like successive years of drought, and a rise in extreme weather events like flooding and cyclones. One 15-year-old girl in Colombia summed it up powerfully: **“Climate change is like a monster that destroys us. There are storms, hurricanes, it's very hot, there's a lot of rain. We are not taking care of the planet; we are filling it with garbage.”**

The climate emergency is deeply connected to inequality

Our dialogues with children confirmed that the climate emergency and issues of inequality are deeply connected, and cannot be dealt with in isolation from each other. Across the world, inequalities are deepening the emergency and its impacts on children, most notably across two key dimensions.

The first dimension of inequality is age. The climate emergency is a children's rights crisis. Children are bearing the brunt of the emergency because they are at a unique stage of physical and emotional development, putting them at greater risk during disasters and times of hardship.¹ As one 16-year-old boy living in Egypt observed, **“Children are more vulnerable than adults, so that the factories that produce smoke harm them.”**

Children also have longer to live with the rising impacts of global heating and climatic changes. Previous research in Save the Children's *Born Into the Climate Crisis* report found a child born in 2020 will experience on average nearly seven times more heatwaves in their lifetime compared with a person born in 1960, and nearly three times the exposure to crop failure.²

The second dimension of inequality is in income, wealth and power. Children in our dialogues observed that communities and households most affected by poverty, inequality and discrimination have the least protection and, when disaster hits, have less to spend on recovery. One 13-year-old boy in Gaza told us, **“Not all people are financially equal, not everyone has the privilege to be able to live in a safe home and those people are facing a greater danger.”** This is a grave injustice. Children who have done the least to cause the climate emergency – or design unequal economic systems – are suffering the most from their impacts.

Inequalities in income, wealth and power are often intertwined with social inequalities and discrimination by race, disability, indigeneity, displacement or migration status and sexual orientations, gender identities, expression and sexual characteristics. A number of children shared insights about how communities affected by inequality and discrimination have limited political influence to push for policies or changes in government and business practice that would better protect them and the planet.³ Indigenous People's communities and those facing racial discrimination were noted to be particularly marginalised. As one young woman from the Indigenous Sámi community in Norway shared with us, **“We meet a lot of resistance in pretty much everything we do or say.”**

By contrast, those who are profiting from industries that harm the environment often have more power to influence public spending, regulation and opinions in ways that undermine prospects for stronger climate, environmental and social policies. One simple plea by a 15-year-old boy in Sierra Leone speaks volumes: **“I want leaders to stop taking bribes.”**

The power dynamic at play here between climate change and inequality creates a vicious cycle. Children who already face hardship are pushed deeper into poverty and marginalisation. At the same time, incentives for changes in government and business policy and practice that would address the crisis are undermined. To turn the tide on the climate emergency, as a world we must recognise and understand its connections with inequality – and address the two issues together.

The numbers of children affected are staggering

New data analysis by Save the Children – presented for the first time in this report – shows that **774 million children around the world are both living in multidimensional poverty and exposed to high climate risk.**⁴

The implications of multiple, overlapping risks are starkly illustrated by the current global food, nutrition and cost of living crisis that is causing 354 million people in 82 countries to face severe lack of food.⁵ In the Horn of Africa alone it is taking a life every 48 seconds. Even in the world’s most affluent countries, many families are struggling to put food on the table.

Most children facing the dual threat of poverty and high climate risk live in lower income countries, with more than three-quarters living in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. A significant number – 121 million children – live in higher income countries, including 28 million children in the world’s most affluent countries.⁶ Across the globe, 183 million face the triple threat of high climate risk, poverty and conflict.

Of the more than 42,000 children who responded to surveys that we ran in 15 countries, **83% reported that they had noticed the impact of climate change and/or economic inequality in the world around them.**⁷ For example, in all regions, children in our dialogues noted rising food prices and the impact this is having. The insights they shared are heart-breaking:

- **“My own basic needs are often not met, and I am reluctant to ask my parents because I also know that my family’s**

economic condition is getting worse.” (13-year-old boy in Indonesia)

- **“Food is very expensive and my mother can’t buy some things.”** (10-year-old boy in Spain)
- **“The prices of things keep going up. How are we supposed to sustain ourselves and our families if they keep raising the prices?”** (18-year-old in Zambia)

The immediate cause of spiralling food and living costs is the conflict in Ukraine, coming on top of economic turbulence caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. But the global food, nutrition and cost of living crisis has deeper roots in climatic changes, inequality and wider conflict. The combined climate and inequality crisis is a risk multiplier, eroding children’s and communities’ resilience to shocks. If it is not addressed with urgency, the frequency and severity of humanitarian and cost of living crises like those we are seeing today are set to increase. Children in disadvantaged communities will pay the price. The fulfilment of children’s rights and achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are slipping further out of reach.

Children are not passive victims

Children are bearing the brunt of the climate and inequality crisis, but their views, actions and demands for change are among the boldest and most tenacious. In recent years, children’s and young people’s movements have helped to push the climate emergency up the political agenda. **73% of children who responded to our survey believed that adults should be doing more to address the issues, and 35% reported they were already campaigning themselves on the climate crisis or inequality, or wanted to start.** But many feel they are being ignored. As one 12-year-old boy in Nigeria said, **“We try to tell adults things about us and how the community is affecting us, but they don’t listen to us because we are small.”**

Children have insightful ideas for what needs to be done to address the crisis, based on their experiences and unique understanding of how children are being affected and therefore what should be done. As a 15-year-old girl in Guatemala told us, **“Giving young people a voice and platform to speak from would be the most useful thing; they already have the ideas.”** Many of the children we engaged with are frustrated at a perceived lack of action by governments, business and adults in their communities, and a number shared with us the impact that this has had on their mental health or that of their peers. **“The only thing I can think about is fear,”** said a 17-year-old boy in Italy.

But despite this, most children in our dialogues were firm in their belief that change is possible. This gives us hope. And it inspires us to translate hope into concrete action for a greener and more just planet. All adults have a responsibility to listen to and act on the demands children are making. States, in particular, must fulfil their responsibilities under the international human and children's rights frameworks, including the responsibility to take into account as a primary consideration the impacts on children of decisions that affect them. Businesses must also fulfil their responsibility to respect and support children's rights. These responsibilities have been neglected for decades. The world would look very different today had they not been.

But delivering change will not always be straightforward. It will require grappling with complexity, navigating trade-offs and making the difficult decisions needed to rewire our economic and social systems – by rewriting the rules and incentives that structure them.⁸ As children highlighted in our dialogues, this is a challenge that must be addressed through partnership – across sectors and geographies; between governments, civil society and business; and crucially, with children and their communities. As one child in India put it, **“Unity is the greatest strength of all, so we need to stand together in this fight.”**

Driving systemic change: five key entry points

The exact changes that are needed in policy and practice will vary according to context and must be defined in line with the responsibilities of states and business under the international human and children's rights frameworks, which includes consulting with children and taking their best interests into account. However, five key entry points to addressing the combined climate and inequality crisis have particular potential for driving systemic change. We have identified these by drawing on the ideas that children shared with us through our dialogues, together with experience from our programmes work, wider research and examples of innovative action already being taken

in communities across the world. The five entry points are:

- 1 **Double down on climate and inequality** through a unified approach. This must maximise potential synergies while at the same time reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and transitioning from fossil fuels at the pace required to limit global heating to 1.5°C.
- 2 **Invest in children** and their rights to health, nutrition, education, and protection from violence and poverty. This is a precondition for healthy economies and societies.
- 3 **Deliver justice at the climate and inequality frontlines to children and communities most affected** – through anticipating shocks and building resilience to them, adapting essential services to minimise disruption, and supporting children experiencing losses and damage as a result of the climate emergency.
- 4 **Listen to children** and act on their demands, ensuring they have meaningful say over decisions that affect their lives and the planet.
- 5 **Shift finance and power globally**, so that lower income and climate-vulnerable countries that have done the least to contribute to the global climate emergency have the finance they need to deliver on the key entry points listed above and have meaningful influence over the rules that govern the global financing system.

The scale, complexity and urgency of the climate and inequality crisis could lead to a sense of apathy and despair. We cannot allow that to happen. Instead, drawing inspiration from children's demand for change, adults must maintain a sense of hope and belief in a greener and more just world. And then use this to drive action, putting our unlimited human capacity for creativity and collaboration to work to end the crisis and push for the protection and fulfilment of children's rights. **“I think you can still take action, you can save it, but it is now or never,”** said one girl participating in a Latin America regional dialogue. We must listen and stand in solidarity with children; 2.4 billion reasons for urgent change.

Box 1 Our dialogue with children on the intersecting climate and inequality crisis.

Between May and August 2022, Save the Children staff engaged with more than 54,500 children from 41 countries through in-person consultations, interviews and surveys. Our aim was to listen to children about their experiences of climate change and inequality, and the changes that they want adults to make, in order to shape our own work and campaigning. While dialogues were structured by common guidelines and a set of core questions, colleagues engaged with children in ways that were appropriate to their local context and that supported children in their own activism.

While we did not aim for a scientifically representative sample, the dialogues reached different groups of children in higher and lower income countries in all regions, including children who experience discrimination as a result of sex,

race, disability, migratory status, income level, indigeneity or identity. Some of the children we spoke to had previous engagement with us through our programmes and campaigns, but many had not. Some were experienced campaigners, while others had limited prior knowledge of the issues. Most children we spoke to were aged 8–17, though some young people aged 18–22 participated.

The dialogues brought out rich insights, many of which appear in this report and which have informed our analysis and recommendations. These insights have deepened our understanding of children's experiences and priorities, and of how an international organisation like Save the Children can support the bold child activism that is under way in all corners of the globe.

A note on terminology

We use 'climate emergency' in this report, recognising – like many children, scientists and administrations – that the threat to humanity from the climate crisis necessitates urgent action.

We use 'inequality' to refer to inequalities in wealth, income and power. We recognise that these often translate into inequalities in opportunities and rights, and are often linked to discrimination by sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) and to social inequalities in race, disability, indigeneity and displacement or migration status. Many children experience intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

As we show in this report, the global climate emergency is deeply linked to longstanding

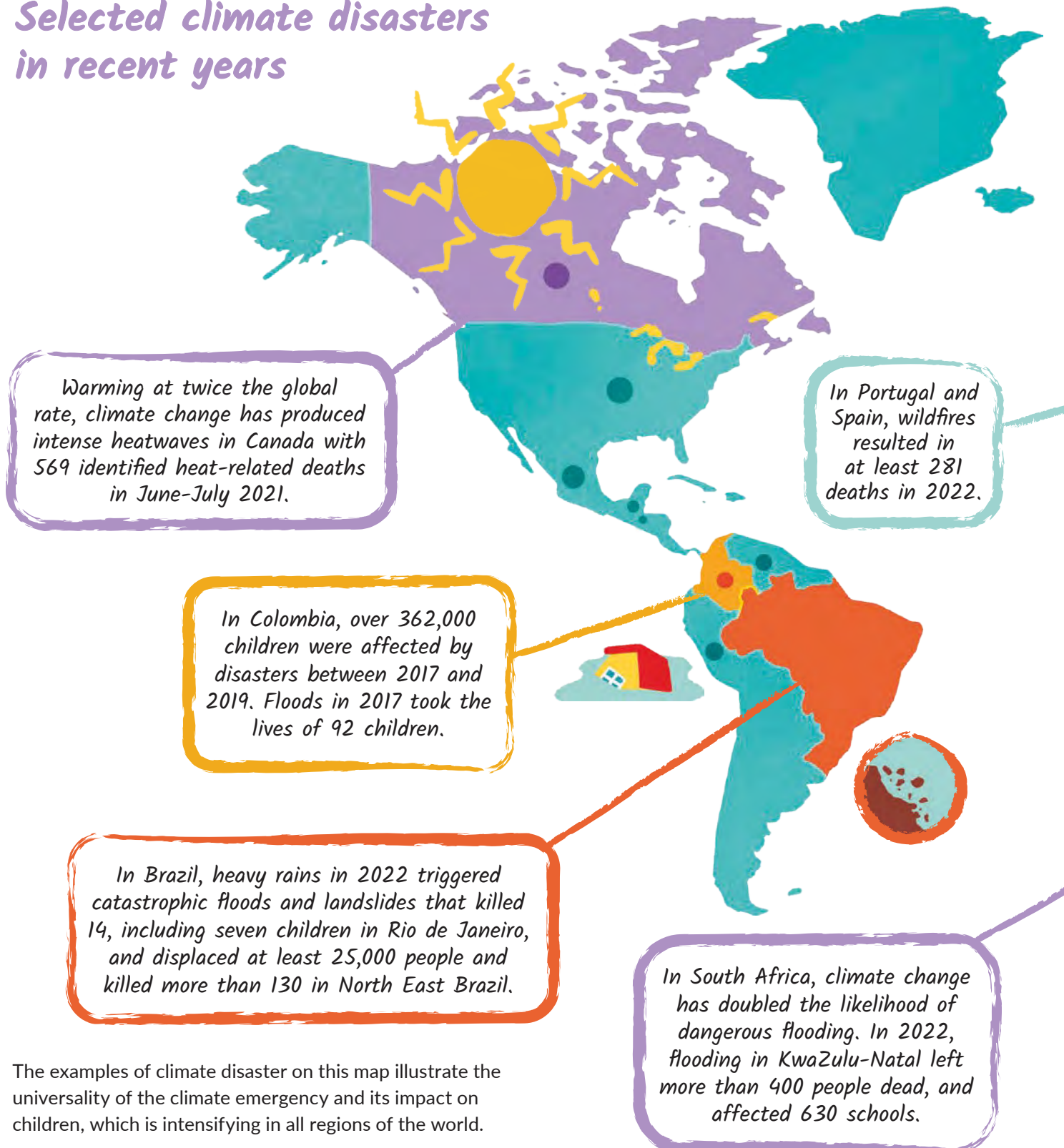
inequalities in power and wealth between and within countries and across the world. This has culminated in a climate and inequality crisis, which is disproportionately affecting children.

Throughout this report, we refer to the need for action to build a 'green and just' planet. We use these words to represent what children have told us about the kind of world they want to live in. A world where nature is restored, where the impact of disasters is reduced, and where everyone has clean air to breathe and clean water to drink and to wash or play in. 'Green and just' recognises that those who have contributed most to the climate and inequality crisis – and who have benefitted most from it – have the greatest responsibility to address it.

The climate emergency is a reality

for children across the world

Selected climate disasters in recent years



The examples of climate disaster on this map illustrate the universality of the climate emergency and its impact on children, which is intensifying in all regions of the world.

They do not include all the disasters that have been attributed to the climate emergency in recent years.

In Germany and Belgium, record rain in 2021 triggered devastating floods that caused a reported death toll of 183 in Germany, and 36 in Belgium.

Over 5,700 families have been displaced from their homes by drought in central and southern Iraq, including families previously displaced by conflict.

In Afghanistan, nearly 19 million children and adults are facing severe food shortages due to combined crises of drought, conflict and Covid-19. Children are frequently going to bed hungry, with girls reporting this almost twice as much as boys.

Cyclone Seroja in 2021 caused historic flooding and landslides that left 181 dead in Indonesia, 44 in Timor Leste and one in Australia.

Over 1,300 lives were lost in unprecedented flooding in Pakistan in 2022, with children making up a third of total fatalities. 33 million people, including 11 million children, have been severely affected.

In Mozambique, Cyclone Idai and Kenneth in 2019 left close to 2.5 million people, including 1.3 million children, vulnerable and in need of humanitarian assistance.

In Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia, droughts in 2022 have left more than 6.4 million people in need of food support. Droughts have been linked to a doubling in child marriages, the risk of school dropout tripling within three months, and has left more than 1.8 million children in need of treatment for life-threatening malnutrition.

● Countries that children participating in Save the Children's 2022 global listening exercise were from.

1

Introduction

The 2.4 billion children alive in the world today are bearing the brunt of climate change – an emergency that is already taking lives, eroding children’s rights and threatening the future of the planet. Children are suffering more than adults on average because their bodies are more vulnerable to temperature extremes or flooding, and they are at a critical stage in their biological, emotional and social development. They also have longer to live with the climate emergency, and will experience more disasters in their lifetimes.⁹ As detailed in the Save the Children report *Born into the Climate Crisis*, based on the original emissions reduction pledges that countries made under the 2015 Paris Agreement, **a child born in 2020 is likely to experience nearly seven times as many heatwaves in their lifetimes as someone born in 1960**, and over twice as many wildfires, crop failures, droughts and river floods.¹⁰ This generation gap is considerably higher in many low-income countries. In Afghanistan, for example, children could face 18 times as many heatwaves in their lives as their grandparents.

While an injustice in its own right, this differential impact of the climate emergency by age is only part of the story. As we discuss in this report, the emergency is also bound up with inequalities in wealth, political power and opportunity, giving rise to a climate and inequality crisis. Children most affected by poverty and discrimination are being hit hardest, entrenching inequalities within countries and globally.¹¹ Meanwhile, companies and countries that benefit from high-carbon or environmentally destructive activities have vested interests in using their influence to push for public spending and policies that allow them to continue on that path and that weaken political incentives for action on the climate emergency.¹²

In sum, the climate emergency and inequality cannot be dealt with in isolation. They must be tackled together, as a combined crisis, and with urgency.

66 Climate change isn’t something people get to choose to believe or not: it’s happening. **99**

12-year-old boy, living in an urban slum
Tamil Nadu, India



A child born in 2020 is likely to experience nearly seven times as many heatwaves as someone born in 1960.

66 Children or poor families are the most affected negatively from climate change because they don’t have the ability to handle the huge dangers. **99**

14-year-old boy, Gaza

66 Vulnerable groups, for example, those with disabilities or Afro-Peruvians, are more affected because they cannot raise their voices or carry out campaigns to disseminate information or don’t have funds to help them. **99**

16-year-old boy, Peru

Listening to children

While children are bearing the brunt of the crisis, they are not passive victims. Their views, actions and demands for change are among the boldest and most tenacious. They simply cannot be ignored.

In 2022, Save the Children embarked on the biggest listening exercise that we have ever undertaken, hearing from over 54,500 children from 41 countries about their experiences and ideas to shape our own work on climate change and inequality (see Box 1, page 9). This report is informed by the insights they shared with us, coupled with new data analysis and a review of literature and case studies concerning what can be done to address the climate and inequality crisis.

Our dialogues with children have confirmed to us that the crisis is a lived reality for many children across the world. But they have also inspired a sense of hope in us that the climate emergency and inequality can be tackled through a unified approach that addresses their shared underlying causes. This report explores these synergies and potential entry points for harnessing them, with a view to shifting the planet onto an alternative trajectory towards a greener, more just future.

Achieving the change that children are calling for will not be easy. But, as a 14-year-old boy from India told us: **“Hope is a thing that is the beginning of anything. If you hope to do anything there is no power that can stop you.”**¹³

Children’s experiences, voices and perspectives should inspire in all adults hope and belief that change is possible. And provide motivation to turn hope into action. Using whatever influence and connections adults have in their working and personal lives, they must all join together to build a greener and more just planet.

Among the children the world over who are calling for change are those who adults know and love – their children, grandchildren, friends and relatives. They are owed a response.

In a world of 2.4 billion children, there are 2.4 billion reasons to take action. Fast.

Tawana, 15, a climate activist from Zambia, says temperatures in her country are becoming more extreme. She and other children are raising awareness of the climate emergency with policy-makers.

66 I want people to learn we could do much more to save our environment just by making the decision. Sometimes people are just waiting for others to do it, but really, we just need people to make a decision to do something, because every parent wants their child to live somewhere that’s well. **99**

12-year-old girl, Canada



2

The climate and inequality crisis

In our surveys and dialogues with children, we asked them whether they are seeing changes in the world around them linked to climate change or inequality. **83% of survey respondents stated that they were.** The experiences and observations children shared with us were rich and diverse, varying according to children's location, background and previous level of engagement with these issues. Nevertheless, two key overarching insights emerged. First, children in all regions are observing and experiencing changes in weather patterns and disasters, and articulated the damage and harm this is causing in their lives and to other people's lives. Second, children care deeply about inequality, and many understand how it is connected to the climate emergency.

The climate emergency is having a profound impact on children's lives

Children are not only seeing the impact of the climate emergency in their daily lives, but also have a strong sense that this has been getting worse over time. Many children have experienced and are experiencing the devastating impact of climate change first-hand, such as extreme temperatures, flooding and drought. Other children are seeing children and communities in other countries who are suffering the impact of the climate emergency. Some described how what they are seeing happening has sparked feelings of anger at inaction and fear for the future, and spoke poignantly about the impact on their mental health.

In Africa and the Middle East in particular, children drew links between climate change and increased hunger, particularly its effects on agriculture. Children in countries that have been hit particularly hard by the current global food and nutrition crisis are seeing, hearing about or experiencing its extreme impact first-hand, including malnutrition-related sickness and death, suicides, child labour and child marriage.¹⁴ Children in all regions referred to rising food and living costs, with some connecting this to climate change (see Box 2).

66 My whole house was full of plants. We had squash, peaches, flowers and fruits. But we had to leave my house because everything dried up. We harvested crops and we had to move from one place. Now we are here. **99**

11-year-old boy in Mexico, originally from El Salvador

66 Some businesses are more wealthy than others.... They have money to build structures that are stable to be protected against natural disasters.... Poorer countries and businesses do not have that money.... Their businesses stay destroyed while the richer businesses continue. **99**

Child in South Africa

66 At 8 years old I didn't really think about why we needed all the trees. But for years since then I struggled with climate anxiety, and I couldn't sleep. I thought about whether I should even have kids, whether it was smart, if I would ever be able to go on holiday. I thought about huge, existential issues that no kids should have to deal with alone. **99**

18-year-old young woman, Norway

66 Due to climate change, parents are losing their only source of livelihood, which is livestock, and they are committing suicide. Children are left as orphans and they may die due to hunger. **99**

17-year-old girl, Kenya

Box 2 Economic turmoil, hunger and the cost of living crisis: a wake-up call for change

66 Everything has changed. Cost of living is high. For us now, if we do not sell we do not eat. Our people have nothing. 99

Child in Sierra Leone

With the global economy still struggling to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine has dealt it another blow. At the time of writing, economies across the world are struggling, inflation is rising, and food and energy prices are spiralling – hitting low-income households hardest.

For many, the global pandemic and the Ukraine conflict have compounded pre-existing food insecurity caused by conflict, the climate emergency and other factors. Delayed rains and extreme temperatures have been hampering food production in China, India, Europe and North America. The Horn of Africa is seeing its worst drought in four decades and preliminary data suggest that Europe is experiencing its worst drought in 500 years.¹⁵ As a result of these compounding crises, 345 million people – 84% more than pre-pandemic – in 82 countries now face a severe lack of food, placing their lives and livelihoods in critical danger.¹⁶ Children are at particular risk, with estimates suggesting that the number facing acute malnutrition could rise to 59 million by the end of 2022. Malnutrition is one of the biggest killers of children under five and impedes children’s mental and physical development.

This period of intense global crisis should serve as a wake-up call. One that spurs the immediate humanitarian assistance and poverty-relief measures that are needed. But one that also accelerates action to address the root causes that are making particular groups of children especially vulnerable to shocks like the pandemic and

impact on global food supplies of the conflict in Ukraine. Significant among the underlying causes is the climate and inequality crisis, which is a risk multiplier, eroding children’s and communities’ resilience to shocks, and pushing those already affected deeper into poverty.

Stagnating economies, high levels of inflation and rising energy prices are presenting a significant challenge for governments across the world, with some seeing the exploitation of new fossil fuels as a solution. Policies that protect the poorest people from the current cost of living crisis while addressing the corrosive impact of inflation on standards of living will be vital. However, the answer does not lie in more fossil fuel extraction. In fact the opposite is true. The science is clear that staying within 1.5°C of global heating will require the majority of known fossil fuel reserves to stay in the ground. Governments are already planning to produce more than twice the fossil fuels by 2030 than would enable the 1.5°C target to be met.¹⁷

Countries across the world should use the current moment as an opportunity to switch investment and subsidies into energy efficiency and renewable energy. In most countries renewables are now cheaper to deploy than new fossil fuel facilities.¹⁸ As we discuss in this report, expansion of renewables also has potential for co-benefits to help spur economic recovery and poverty reduction in lower and higher income countries alike, including job creation and better electricity supply and/or prices. If ever there was a time to break from business as usual, it is now.

Many children linked changing and extreme weather and increased incidence of disasters to health issues caused by heat exposure, water access and increased prevalence of diseases such as cholera. The negative impact on education was a common theme, with participants discussing challenges faced in accessing school, concentrating, or doing sport in extreme temperatures and degraded environments. Pollution, air quality and waste were among the top concerns children raised globally.

Children care deeply about inequality and see the damage it is causing

Our dialogues revealed that children are acutely aware of inequalities in the world around them. Poverty is a lived reality for many children we heard from, manifesting in difficulties in accessing education and health services, adequate nutrition, decent housing, and clothing. Children often described these problems in relative terms, illustrating inequalities through explaining how some are worse off than others. Children generally saw these differential impacts as an injustice. Some highlighted the greater capacity that wealthier companies, people and countries have to protect themselves from crisis.

A number of children highlighted the interconnections between poverty, inequality and the climate emergency, (“**tangled together like a bowl of spaghetti**,” in the words of one 14-year-old boy in the UK; or, as a boy in Kenya put it, “**Poverty is a brother to climate change**”). Children noted that some are more at risk from the impact of the climate emergency than others, with children from low-income households, girls, those with disabilities and children displaced from their homes most frequently cited as being more at risk. In our survey, the 2,499 respondents who identified as having a disability were twice as likely to have noticed both climate change *and* inequality affecting the world around them as other respondents.



In 2020, the world saw the steepest rise on record in the share of global wealth held by billionaires.

At the same time, 100 million more children were driven into multidimensional poverty.

66 We do not have electricity, so we cannot heat in the winter or turn the fans around in the summer, even though the winter has become very cold and the summer is very hot. And we get sick a lot because the weather is fluctuating and the air is very polluted. **99**

13-year-old boy, Lebanon

66 It is not fair for any child to go through this harsh economic inequality and drought situation. I wish there is something I could do that is in my hand. I can only sit and watch and see where we will end after this. **99**

14-year-old displaced boy, Somaliland

66 Climate change has led to loss of soil fertility mostly as a result of the soil nutrients being washed away. For farmers to harvest more yields, they need to use fertilisers and this works for those who are rich. Poor farmers cannot afford to buy fertilisers hence less yields. **99**

17-year-old boy, Malawi

66 Many children will starve to death because they will not find crops to feed on. **99**

13-year-old boy living on the street, Egypt

66 It's too hot for me and my friends. The sun makes me dizzy and I can't walk outside. **99**

16-year-old boy with a disability, Egypt

66 As a result of climate change, girls like us are being subjected to child marriage, trafficking and sexual abuse due to different problems and situations. **99**

16-year-old girl, Bangladesh

These findings reflect wider research showing that poverty increases vulnerability to climate disasters – a fact confirmed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).¹⁹ Low-income countries, communities and households have the least to invest in measures to protect health, schools, livelihoods and essential infrastructure – whether from drought that causes crop failure, hunger and malnutrition; floods that damage homes, livelihoods, health facilities and schools; temperature extremes that affect educational attainment; or air and water pollution causing ill-health.²⁰ Lower income households are also more likely to live in areas that are affected by high climate risk, and are more likely to have to resort to harmful strategies in times of hardship, such as taking children out of school to work or marry, and lowering food consumption.²¹

In these ways, the climate emergency is pushing children who are already experiencing poverty deeper into it, while more affluent households are either better protected by governments, or can afford to protect themselves. Inequalities – from local to global levels – are becoming further entrenched (see next paragraph). Quite simply: those who have least responsibility for the climate and inequality crisis are suffering its worst impacts.

There is also a growing body of analysis suggesting that inequalities are contributing to the depth of the climate emergency and making it more difficult to address²² – a concern echoed by some children in our dialogues. **The world is highly unequal, with the wealthiest 10% owning 76% of total global wealth and the poorest half owning just 2%.** Income inequalities in most countries are rising, with the gap between the average incomes of the top 10% and bottom 50% almost doubling in the past two decades. As the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded in 2020, the world saw the steepest increase in the share of global wealth held by billionaires on record. In contrast, 100 million more children were driven into multidimensional poverty; global progress towards ending child labour stalled for the first time in 20 years; and more children are now displaced from their homes than ever before.²³

Inequalities in wealth and power within countries and globally are reflected in growing inequalities in emissions. **The world's wealthiest 1% are estimated to be responsible for more than twice the combined share of emissions of the poorest 50%.**²⁴ Emissions gaps are growing. The top 1% of emitters is responsible for 21% of the increase in emissions since 1990, whereas the bottom 50% has been responsible for 16%.²⁵

66 The economy affects education as well. There are even parents who cannot afford to fulfil their children's education, they do not hesitate to marry off their children even though they are at an early age. They said, 'Let her husband take care of her.' **99**

15-year-old girl, Indonesia

66 The impact on school attendance at the time of the floods? We cannot go to school and food is less, due to changes in the climate. The result of not going to school will be the loss of education. **99**

Boy in Iraq

66 Economic inequality is like a disease... and it is a threat to human rights. It is a great threat to all children and young people today... In Albania, wealth is concentrated in very few people. **99**

15-year-old girl, Albania



The world's wealthiest 1% are responsible for more than twice the combined share of emissions of the poorest 50%.

Evidence, particularly from high-income countries, shows how economic inequalities can undermine children's rights. For example, children who experience both monetary poverty *and* economic inequality perform worse on average in school.²⁶ Economic inequalities are also often linked to imbalances in political power.²⁷ As a number of children noted in our dialogues, this can manifest in lack of accountability, or corruption. Wealthy companies, and the individuals and institutions that have a stake in them, are better equipped than poorer communities to wield influence over public policy-making – for example, through political party or candidate funding, investing in lobbying or litigation, or influencing public beliefs through the media or think tanks. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the successful support over decades of fossil fuel companies for climate change denial and delay narratives.²⁸ These have helped to fuel suspicion among the public of government policies that aim to address the climate emergency, in some cases stoking fears that they will cause disproportionate harm to families through job losses and rising fuel costs.²⁹

In contrast, the poorest communities and children most affected by the climate and inequality crisis often have the least power to stop it.³⁰ A notable example is the marginalisation and criminalisation of communities who have campaigned against environmental destruction by large companies or governments, and the knock-on impacts these are having on their rights and livelihoods.³¹ Indigenous Peoples with a close or subsistence relationship with the environment are often marginalised through political under-representation and violation of their collective rights to lands, territories and natural resources and

66 I think it's more the responsibilities of companies and the government. Adults have been protesting and switching to electric cars and solar panels, but the press keeps putting the blame on normal people who can barely afford to pay their bills. **99**

Child in the UK

66 When you look at cutting down of trees it is the wealthy men that meet the poor men, fool them with money to cut timber in the provinces. Sometimes government says that we should stop it but corruption is the main issue affecting us in Sierra Leone. This issue is disturbing us. **99**

Boy in Sierra Leone

66 The level of economic inequality is a problem because it leads to corruption in public offices and poverty in communities. **99**

Child in Zambia



'Climate change and the life of a Royal Bengal Tiger' by Mustofa Nurul Absar, 11, Bangladesh



Ballasan*, 13, looks at her family's land in north-east Syria. They haven't had any harvest for the past four years because of drought. Her favourite fruit trees - which produced figs, pomegranates and greengages - have died.

to traditional practices, languages and knowledge. Indigenous Peoples make up about 6% of the global population, but 19% of people in extreme poverty.³² Another example is the disenfranchisement of people who are displaced from their homes by climate impacts and have limited political influence in their destination communities and countries, through lack of citizenship rights or informally through marginalisation and social stigma.³³

The relationship between economic and social inequalities, power and the climate emergency is complex, and is playing out in different ways in different countries. In many instances, these issues are interlinked with other factors that are weakening political incentives to act on the climate emergency. These include the transboundary nature of the challenge, and the perception that some of the more complex, structural reform measures that are needed can wait as the problem is long term.³⁴ Some countries are experiencing deepened social division over the issues, particularly where governments have taken measures that increase the costs of energy for poorer and working households in an attempt to regulate consumption of fossil fuels, without taking sufficient steps to achieve a just transition to renewable energy through protecting poorer households' income and livelihoods and ensuring access to affordable renewable energy.³⁵

These are not easy challenges to navigate. But children's ideas and inspiration - as featured throughout this report - can help both solve the problems and bring us together. It is time to listen to them.

66 It is important to gain more knowledge, that is the first step...It is important to think outside of the box and bring the [Indigenous] Sámi perspective in different ways... We meet a lot of resistance in pretty much everything we do or say. We are being viewed as 'development brakes', trying to stop innovation and new industries. No one likes being the stopper. We are always put in that box. **99**

From a discussion with young Sámi people, aged 21-22, Norway

66 Economic equality is when there is equal access for every community to take benefit from the development from the government. Whether it's for lower middle class or the upper class. There are still many people or authorities who ignore the lower middle class people who need help just because of economic inequality. **99**

16-year-old girl, Indonesia

3

Which children are most deeply affected by the climate and inequality crisis?

Save the Children conducted new data analysis to understand how many children face the dual impact of poverty and climate impacts and where they live. For the first time on this issue, our analysis has dug beneath the surface of national averages to look at more granular, subnational data.

We found that across the globe, nearly 1.9 billion children – four out of five – were at high climate risk, estimated to experience at least one extreme climate event per year, including heatwaves, cyclones, flooding, water scarcity, wildfires or crop failure. 954 million children are living in multidimensional poverty, severely deprived of good healthcare, nutrition, education, housing, water or sanitation.

While these numbers are hugely concerning in their own right, those most at risk are children who are members of both groups. **We found that a staggering 774 million children are living in poverty and affected by high climate risk.** Almost half of these children live in Asia (349 million) and a further 40% in

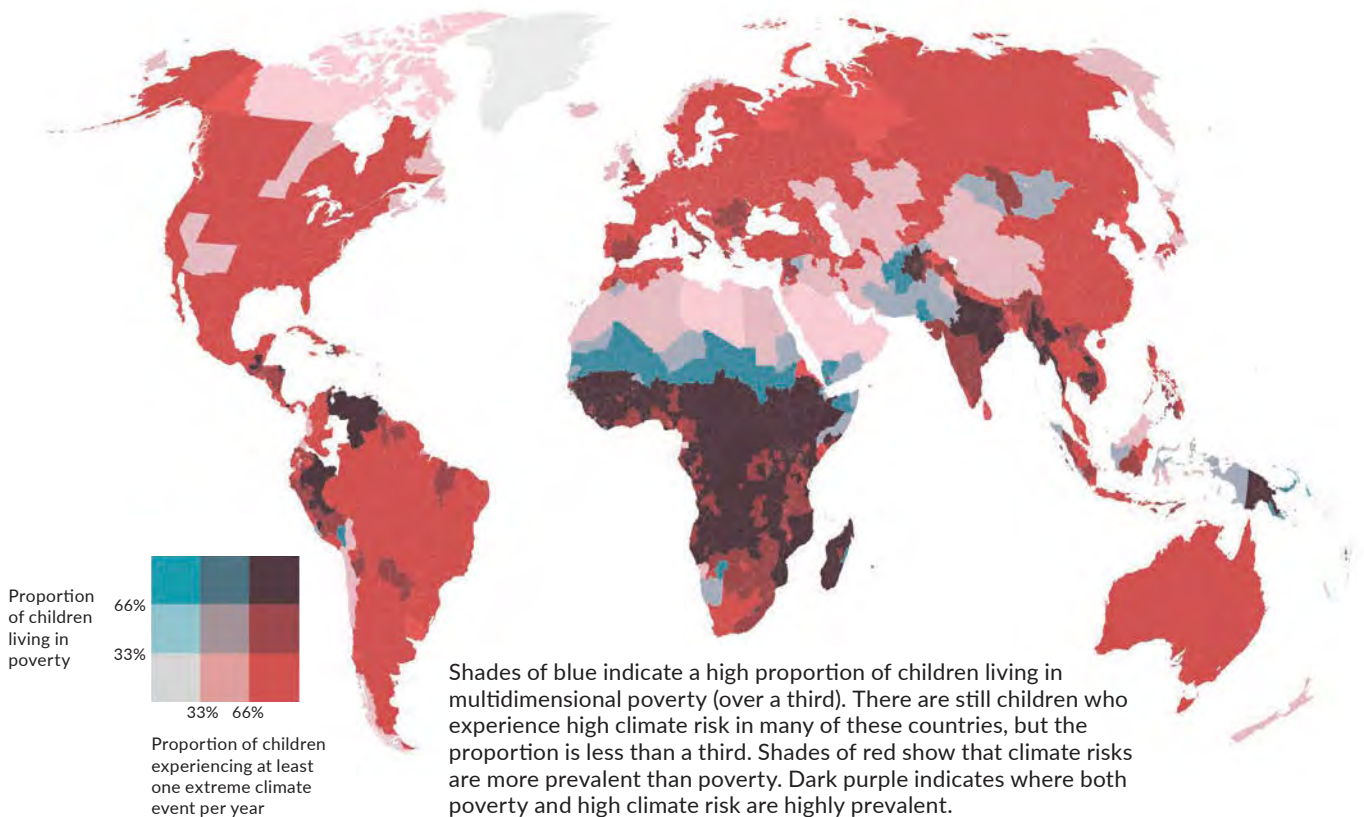


774 million children are in poverty and at high climate risk.

121 million are in higher income countries.

653 million are in lower income countries.

Figure 1: Where do children affected by multidimensional poverty and high climate risk live?



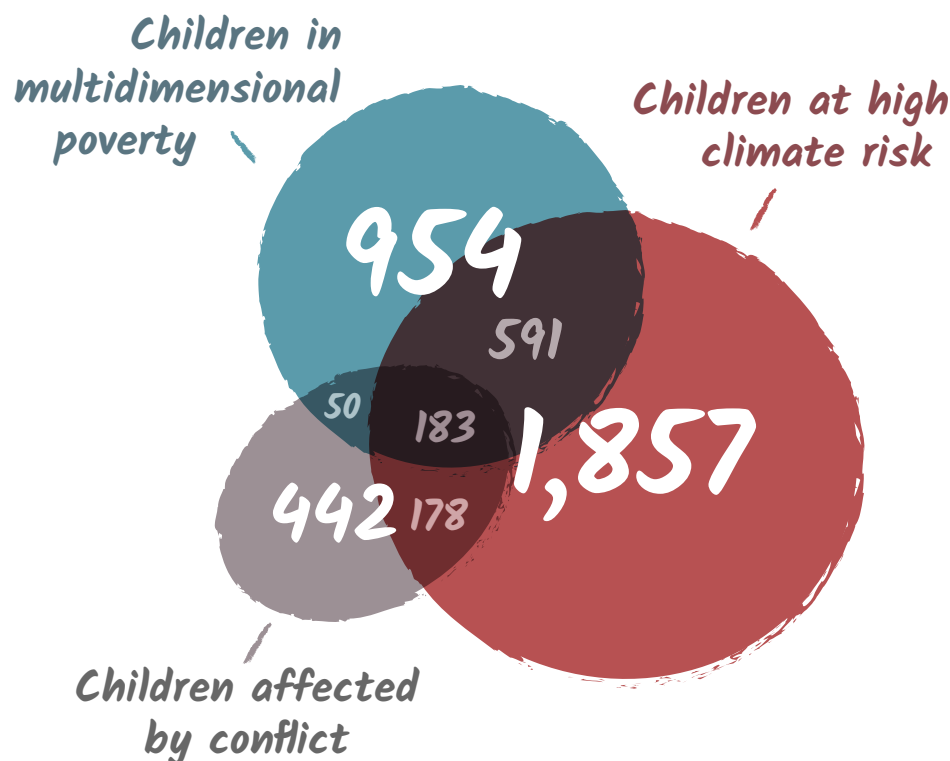
sub-Saharan Africa (161 million in West and Central Africa and 162 million in East and Southern Africa). 39 million live in Latin America and the Caribbean, 21 million in the Middle East and North Africa, and 13 million in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

While lower income countries are home to the vast majority of children affected by high climate risk and poverty, a significant number – **121 million children – live in higher income countries**, including 28 million children in the world’s most affluent countries.³⁶ These children will likely be pushed further into poverty in the years ahead as the frequency and intensity of climate-related crises continue to rise, likely contributing to the current trend of growing inequality within countries.

For many children, income and wealth inequality intersect with other inequalities along lines of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), race, disability, indigeneity, and displacement or migration status, increasing their exposure to climate and poverty risks (see Figure 2). Children growing up in slums and informal settlements are particularly affected by growing inequality in cities, and are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events (especially heat and flooding) due to poor-quality housing and neighbourhoods lacking basic infrastructure and services. Childhood today is mostly experienced in urban areas and of the 1 billion people living in informal settlements, around 350–500 million are children.

Communities affected by conflict and those who have been

Figure 2: How multidimensional poverty, the climate emergency and conflict risk intersect globally (millions of children affected)



66 Lack of money is pushing families to wed their daughters early, they can't afford another mouth to feed. Parents also only send their boys to school and keep girls for domestic work but also at risk of domestic violence and abuse. **99**

11-year-old girl, India

66 Children with special needs do not have access to education and are not considered to have equal rights as other children; they are constantly ignored and do not receive the assistance they need. **99**

14-year-old girl, Somalia

forced to migrate are at particular risk (see Box 3). A total of 36.5 million children were displaced from their homes by conflict, violence and other crises at the end of 2021 – the highest number since the second world war.³⁷ **Our analysis found that 183 million children across the world face the triple threat of high climate risk, multidimensional poverty and conflict.** More than half of these children live in only five countries: Nigeria, India, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Democratic Republic of Congo.



183 million children across the world face the triple threat of high climate risk, poverty and conflict.

66 We are all equal, we are people, and we create differences among ourselves. 99

Child in Colombia

66 Children born in developed countries or countries that have never experienced any civil war are less likely to be impacted by economic inequality as their country is more stable. 99

Child in Somalia

Box 3 Conflict, climate and inequality

People, institutions and systems in conflict-affected areas have limited capacity to adapt and respond to climate risks, particularly where conflict has damaged the local environment and its resilience to further shocks.³⁸ Climatic changes can worsen conflict risk, deepening resource scarcity and competition, damaging agriculture and infrastructure and displacing people from their homes.³⁹ Extreme weather and a changing climate can also undermine recovery from conflict. We heard from displaced children from Iraq, for example, that they cannot go home due to drought and limited agricultural opportunity.

The UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has expressed particular concern about children in Middle East and North African countries that are facing protracted conflict and water scarcity, and in the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia and South Sudan. Many children already in humanitarian need here are now being hit by climate-related security risks and food insecurity exacerbated by drought, floods and locust invasions.⁴⁰

The impact of the climate emergency on children around the world

Slums and informal settlements are at particular risk from extreme heat and flooding due to poor quality housing, infrastructure and services.

Girls bear the brunt when families struggle to cope in times of crisis, and are at risk of gender-based violence, for example when forced to travel further for water during drought.

Families on low incomes are at greater risk of food insecurity and poverty during times of crisis.

The climate emergency harms all of us in different ways and worsens inequality. Our different experiences and ideas can contribute to solutions.

Disasters magnify barriers already faced by children with disabilities, and they are often excluded from climate adaptation and disaster response.

The climate emergency and conflict are displacing people from their homes, exposing them to violence and abuse and disrupting livelihoods, education and access to basic services.

Environmental destruction and colonisation destroys resources and knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples.

SAFE EVACUATION

INCLUDE US IN DISASTER RESPONSE

4

Rewiring our political and economic systems to deliver a green and just planet

66 We all want a better future, where children have access to water, have trees, have a celestial sky. **99**

Girl in Peru

Our dialogues with children found that many are frustrated that adults are not doing enough to address the climate and inequality crisis. Over 70% of survey respondents believed adults should be doing more. Despite this, most children were firm in their belief that change is possible.

History demonstrates that humanity is capable of great things, with seemingly endless capacity for innovation and problem-solving. Until the Covid-19 pandemic struck, average living standards across the globe were on the rise. Life expectancy at least doubled in all world regions over the last century, absolute poverty more than halved between 1990 and 2015, and the global number of children dying in their first year of life had fallen fivefold since 1950.⁴¹ Technological advancement is starting to reduce the costs of tackling the climate and inequality crisis: solar and wind energy plants are now on average cheaper than new fossil fuel plants, and sales of cleaner, electric vehicles are on the rise.⁴²

However, much of the global progress in living standards in recent decades has been unequal and come at great environmental cost, giving rise to the climate and inequality crisis that we see today. Nevertheless, accompanying technological and social innovations suggest there is reason to believe that humanity can solve the climate and inequality crisis and decouple future progress from further growth in emissions and inequality.⁴³ This is what children are asking of us now and a challenge we must meet.

66 Adults no longer look for ways to stop overexploitation. It seems that they are not interested. **99**

16-year-old boy, Mexico

66 For my future, I dream of having our rights respected and to live a dignified life. **99**

10-year-old girl, Guatemala

66 I plant flowers wherever I go. That is how I make my voice heard. **99**

13-year-old Syrian girl living in Türkiye

66 I keep faith in humanity. If we just try, we can do it. **99**

Child aged 14–16, Norway



Save the Children UK's Youth Advisory Board. Ayesha, 16, says that they may be much younger than decision-makers but "we still have valid opinions and ideas on how we can make this world a better place".

PHOTO: JORDAN WOODGATE/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Who has responsibility to act?

In our dialogues, most children shared a belief that everyone has a role to play in addressing the climate and inequality crisis. Many agreed that raising public awareness and supporting campaigns that inform people about what they can do to make positive changes are important. Better stewardship of natural resources were common priorities for this work, as well as action against littering and for recycling and waste management.

Many children put particular emphasis on the **role that governments have** in meeting basic needs and using regulation and policy to drive change, including **63% of survey respondents**. This reflects states' obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the broader human rights framework, including the 2020 UN Human Rights Council Resolution on realising the rights of the child through a healthy environment, and the newly established UN General Assembly Resolution declaring access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment a universal human right.⁴⁴ States are already falling short on their obligations, including the obligation to consider impacts on children and the best interests of the child in decision-making. States' particular responsibilities in relation to climate change and children are currently being clarified through the development of a new General Comment to the UNCRC, which will help to guide national legislation and practice on how states should uphold children's rights in the context of the climate emergency.⁴⁵

Some children also identified actions they believed **business** should take, and **50% of survey respondents believed the private sector should do more**, reflecting its responsibilities to respect and support children's rights.⁴⁶ Many children saw a role for governments in sanctioning and regulating unsustainable business activity, particularly in relation to pollution, deforestation, waste management and exploitation of workers, including children.



73% of children responding to our survey believed that adults should be doing more to address climate change and economic inequality.

66 I think it is very clear that we must work together with children. As children, we must be involved and taken into account. To improve, it is not only the duty of the state or the authorities, but also citizens and people play a role, so you must have social awareness. There must be spaces for environmental education. **99**

From a discussion among 13–16-year-old girls, Peru

66 As a child, I can say that children have no role in climate change, but children are the most vulnerable. Therefore, I request the government and international policy-makers to take effective steps in this regard. **99**

17-year-old boy, Bangladesh

66 As a representative of children and adolescents we have seen so many cases of exploitation against working children and adolescents. Out of need they have to start working and employers are often thoughtless and just take advantage of our need. **99**

15-year-old girl, Guatemala

66 Those who are cutting trees should be arrested and made to replant trees that they cut down. We should also enact strong laws to protect the environment. **99**

13-year-old boy, Uganda

66 Hold [to account] the few large companies responsible for most carbon emissions released into the world. **99**

Child in the UK

Tackling complexity: partnership, clarity of focus and measuring what matters

In our dialogues, several children put emphasis on the importance of partnership. No single entity or individual has all the answers for addressing the climate and inequality crisis. Progress will depend on cooperation that harnesses and creates synergies between the expertise and experience held by different countries; by public, private and civil society organisations; and by communities and children. Partnerships should be underpinned by a willingness to take risks and innovate, and a commitment to be led by empirical evidence and course correct where needed.

As some children noted, success will also require us to delve deep into the rules and incentives that structure our social and economic systems. These must be rewired to firmly establish children's rights and planetary wellbeing as first order priorities. These systems are complex; there are no single or simple levers to pull that will solve the crisis immediately. It is therefore critical to maintain clarity about the goals we are aiming for, so that consensus can be built around them, focus maintained and trade-offs assessed.

One positive example of this happening in practice is the rising popularity of indicators other than gross domestic product (GDP) growth to assess the overall health of economies, including measures of wellbeing.⁴⁷ GDP was never designed to be an indicator of societal progress. The measure counts many activities that are harmful to the environment as a positive contribution to the economy – whether the felling of trees or carbon-intensive industry. It also excludes factors that make a significant economic contribution, such as unpaid care work (done primarily by women and girls across the world), and is blind to human rights abuses and poverty. Such environmental and social detractors and contributions need to be built better into our economic balance sheets, and must inform policy planning and decisions.

66 I believe that alliances should be made with organisations, mainly children's organisations, to know what the needs, problems and effects are to make decisions. We are the most affected, we must be considered when making decisions. **99**

13-16-year-old boy, Peru

66 Several countries think better than one, the more people the better, because there are more ideas and support, they could look for new strategies. **99**

14-year-old boy, Mexico

66 The community and the government must monitor each other and collaborate, because if not, nothing will change. **99**

17-year-old girl, Indonesia

66 I don't think the government is doing enough. All talk, no action. Prioritising economic success rather than wellbeing of planet and future. Focusing on what is best for them in the present situation with no scientific advice. **99**

17-year-old girl, UK

66 Even to help the environment, we have generated consumerism... many of these products are beyond the budget of the majority. **99**

19-year-old girl, Colombia

Box 4 The power of partnership

Save the Children is partnering with the University of Edinburgh, International Livestock Research Institute, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, and Community Jameel to run the Jameel Observatory for Food Security Early Action. This programme aims to connect cutting-edge technology and data surveillance on early signs of severe weather and systemic climate change

with community-driven data and interventions, with a view to reducing climate shocks leading to food crisis for vulnerable, livestock-farming communities. The Observatory has been designed to foster collaboration and broker knowledge, as well as communicate lessons and solutions that can be scaled up and adapted to other contexts.

It is therefore positive that countries such as New Zealand, Scotland and Iceland are now explicitly pursuing wellbeing as a key economic objective.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, some companies are moving away from maximising shareholder profit as a primary objective, establishing wider social and environmental goals. In 2019, 181 CEOs of large companies based in the USA signed a statement indicating a move towards the broader objective of creating value for all stakeholders, including workers and local communities.⁴⁹

Driving systemic change: five key entry points

The ideas that children shared with us in our dialogues for addressing the climate and inequality crisis were diverse, reflecting variations in children's lived experience. This diversity confirms that the exact policy approaches and business actions needed are context and sector specific. One child in South Africa noted the danger of imposing solutions developed in one country onto others without adequate consideration of local context and needs.

Our analysis of children's ideas and experiences, coupled with broader research and examples of practical steps that are already being taken in different parts of the world, suggest that five key entry points have particular potential for driving systemic change towards a greener and more just planet. These five entry points should be tailored according to context.

1 Double down on climate and inequality – through a unified approach that maximises the synergies between reductions in emissions and poverty

The science is clear that greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 to stand any chance of staying within internationally agreed global warming limits.⁵⁰ As one IPCC Working Group co-chair states: **"It's now or never, if we want to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, it will be impossible."**⁵¹

When asked what more should be done to address climate change and inequality, a number of the children we heard from in our dialogues put forward ideas that have potential to address both emissions and poverty simultaneously (see Box 5). The potential for harnessing synergies between poverty and emissions reduction through smart policy design is supported by a growing body of research and analysis. For example, one review identifies 28 climate mitigation solutions for lower income countries that have significant co-benefits and knock-on, ripple effects for human wellbeing. These span five policy areas: improving agriculture and agroforestry, protecting and restoring ecosystems, adopting clean cooking, providing clean electricity, and fostering equality.⁵²

66 Indigenous People are spending more time in nature than anyone else. We see the changes, and we feel them. In the ocean, on the plains, on land and in the water, through collecting berries. Our perspective is that it is not nature's job to make us rich and earn profits. **99**

From a conversation with young people in Norway, aged 21 and 22

66 The solutions favour the affluent, the First World countries... if we see that we don't want to use coal any more, what is the other solution that we have that will benefit the people of that particular country and also the children specifically? We only focus on First World countries, where it works, only to find that it doesn't work in the Third World countries. **99**

Child in South Africa

66 Adults should listen and have more proactive attention, more attention to the scientists. They do not pay attention. **99**

17-year-old girl, Chile

66 I think that the expansion of tree planting will play a major role in preserving the environment. **99**

15-year-old girl from Eritrea, living in Egypt

66 They must do forestation campaigns and plant trees, solar power, and if someone has several cars, he can use one car, or a bicycle where he can do sports and not pollute the air, and decrease throwing garbage. **99**

14-year-old boy, Lebanon

With global consumption of fossil fuels causing an estimated 86% of global CO₂ emissions over the past decade, urgent, accelerated phase-out of fossil fuels is critical.⁵³ The need for expansion of renewable energy was a common theme raised by children in our dialogues, with an emphasis on ensuring that it is affordable for all. Some children highlighted that transition to, or electrification via, renewable energy could help to create jobs; improve livelihoods, healthcare and education; reduce health impacts from pollution; and in communities dependent on firewood and charcoal, help restore ecosystems and reduce workload associated with activities such as gathering firewood and selling charcoal, particularly for girls and women.

One girl in Norway stressed that richer countries should refrain from buying other countries' climate quotas. This underscores the dangers of countries and companies effectively outsourcing their emissions, including through net-zero approaches that do not adequately address the need for polluters to make systematic cuts in emissions or transition to clean energy at the pace that science demands. As we discuss below, economies that have contributed the most to the causes of the climate and inequality crisis have particular responsibility to take urgent action, and to support lower income and climate-vulnerable countries.

66 Adults need to come up with a better way to handle their industries instead of polluting the air with their toxic pollution release. **99**

17-year-old boy, Somaliland

66 We want the possibility to buy sustainable products at a fair price for everybody. **99**

Child in Italy

66 Rich countries like Norway cannot continue to buy other countries' climate quotas and should to a much larger degree find new and sustainable solutions through the partnerships that have already been established, to lift and prioritise children in vulnerable areas, especially considering education. **99**

18-year-old young woman, Norway

Pohamba, age 14 (front right), campaigns for the rights of disabled children in Zambia. With support from Save the Children, he has lobbied the President of Zambia, senior government officials and the Chairperson of the UNCRC Committee.

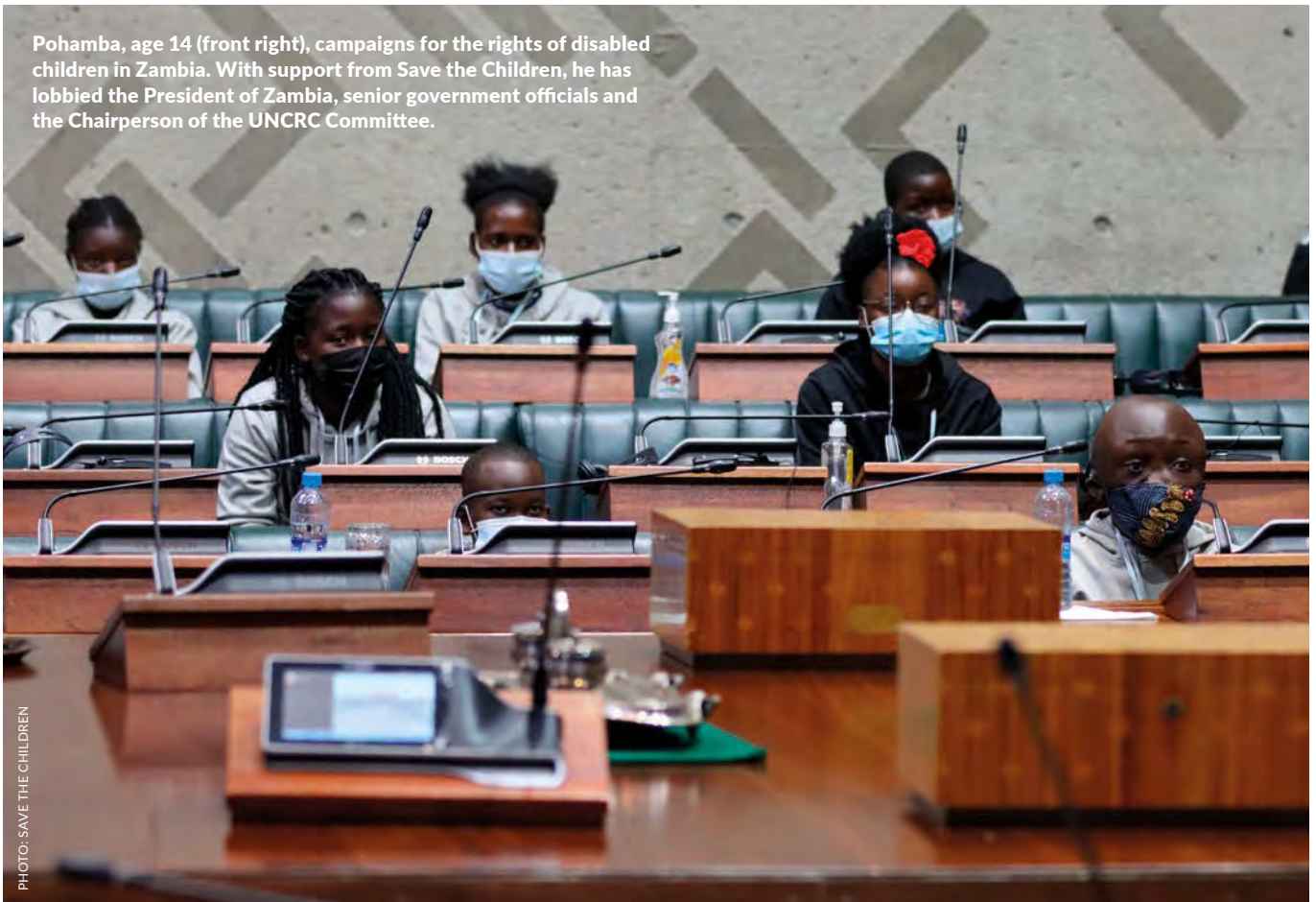


PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

One of the political arguments that is often made for inaction on fossil fuel phase-out is that it will be too expensive for the economy and damaging for the people on the lowest incomes.⁵⁴ However, solar and wind energy are now cheaper than fossil fuels for building new energy capacity in most countries,⁵⁵ and in many countries it would be cheaper to deploy new renewable capacity than to continue to run existing coal plants.⁵⁶ This offers potential for lower income countries with limited energy infrastructure to leapfrog fossil fuel dependency, while also saving on the costs of addressing the impact of fossil fuels on health and the environment and the costs of energy price instability. With careful policy design, and dramatically scaled-up climate finance, transition to clean energy could yield substantial benefits in higher and lower income countries alike, and bolster income security for poor families.

A lot could be achieved through re-channelling public and private finance from activities that are exacerbating the climate and inequality crisis towards solutions that will help to address it. Fossil fuel subsidies are a case in point. For example, in Australia, the government allocated AUD\$9.1 billion (USD\$6.2 billion) in federal subsidies to fossil fuel industries in 2020–21, compared with an official development assistance (ODA) or development aid allocation of AUD\$4.0 billion (USD\$2.7 billion) for the same year. Even with increased emission reduction targets following the election of a new federal government in 2022, progress will be undermined by expansion plans for new fossil fuel projects, which are supported by a wide range of subsidies. Globally, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the global fossil fuel industry benefits from \$5.9 trillion a year (or \$11 million a minute) in public subsidies, including direct support from government and indirect costs paid by government for the impact of fossil fuel emissions on health and the environment.⁵⁷

66 The government is not providing alternatives to charcoal burning so that the environment can be spared and improved. 99

Child displaced from their home in Malawi

66 Building more wind and water and tidal power. Putting in proper insulation in people's homes and heat pumps. Putting money in technology to mean we don't need to use petrol and oil. Sorting out a new fuel... Doing more on solar panels. These things will help and also create work for people and that should mean they have more money and so are less unequal. 99

Child in the UK

66 We do not have electricity in our homes, so we can't study at night. Even in our school we do not have it, so we do not learn about computers because they cannot operate without electricity. 99

Child in Zambia

66 It is important for the government to build solar panels to take advantage of natural resources. 99

12-year-old girl, Mexico



Core recommendation

Governments and business should work with children and communities to identify appropriate policy approaches, and apply a climate and inequality fairness test to new and existing policy. This would be in line with states' obligations to include an evaluation of possible impacts of any decision that affects children. It would also be in line with businesses' responsibility to conduct and report on due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for impacts on

human rights, including children's rights. Criteria should include whether policies are:

- addressing the climate emergency, poverty and inequality together, in line with children's rights standards for current and future generations
- sufficient for limiting heating to a maximum of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, including by rapidly phasing out the use and subsidy of fossil fuels, in line with fair shares according to historic responsibility for emissions.⁵⁸

Box 5 Additional options for a virtuous cycle to reduce emissions, poverty and inequality

Community-designed and led ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions

Children put particular emphasis on these issues in our dialogues, with forestation and protection of trees a common theme. Well-designed ecosystem protection and restoration can reduce emissions while supporting food security, bolstering incomes for local communities (for example, via community forestry and ecotourism), improving water quality and availability, and supporting better health.⁵⁹ For example, mangroves act as both a carbon sink and a protective barrier for coastal communities from storm surges, while also having the potential to diversify and enhance livelihoods to reduce child poverty.⁶⁰

It is critical that Indigenous Peoples and local communities participate in the design of initiatives and have secure tenure rights. Much can be learned from Indigenous Peoples' communities across the world with longstanding approaches to governing local economies rooted in regenerative and distributive practices and understanding of humanity's interconnectedness with nature.⁶¹

Investing in green jobs, livelihoods and reskilling

A call for better employment opportunities for parents and support to small businesses was made in several of our dialogues with children.

The International Labour Organization estimates that global transition to a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient economy could result in a net gain of 139 million jobs by 2030, including 32 million jobs for young people.⁶² Sustainable livelihood programmes can also be important for supporting communities to adapt to increasing climate risks and supporting regenerative and circular economies. Some children highlighted the need for financial and technical support to farmers – an important entry point for supporting agriculture and agroforestry approaches, which simultaneously increase production and dietary diversity while reducing emissions and broader environmental impact.⁶³

Upgrading homes

Some children pointed to the importance of good-quality housing to withstand disasters. As well as measures to increase the resilience of buildings to climate impacts, wider research suggests that schemes to improve energy efficiency can reduce risks and bills for households while reducing emissions and creating jobs. A retrofitting scheme

66 We need to plant enough trees to turn a neighbourhood into a forest. 99

14-year-old Syrian girl living in Türkiye

66 If the mangroves suffer, we not only affect nature, but also ourselves, our economy. Our city lives off the ecosystem. 99

17-year-old girl, Colombia

66 The local government should promote a green environment by planting plants and trees in appropriate and available spaces. 99

10-year-old boy, Nepal

66 Our leaders could give our parents more jobs so that they are able to provide for us. This will reduce poverty levels. 99

13-year-old girl, Kenya

66 A lot of people are looking for jobs. We ask government to create job opportunities. 99

Boy in Malawi

66 These are people who are not able to make a roof for the house. They don't have the money to make ceilings, so they make ceilings with towels. 99

Child in Egypt

in poorer areas of Cape Town, South Africa, helped create thousands of temporary jobs while reducing energy bills and supporting better health.⁶⁴ In the UK, investing £100bn in a four-year retrofitting programme could create more than 500,000 new jobs, reduce household energy bills by £418 a year on average, and reduce household emissions by 21%.⁶⁵

Smart use of fiscal policy and public money

Some children highlighted the importance of taxation for incentivising more responsible business and consumption. This can also raise funds for green solutions and poverty alleviation. For example, the policy to direct 15% of carbon tax revenues in the Canadian province of British Columbia to low-income households as tax credits, and 25% to programmes to benefit disadvantaged communities, helped to make the tax highly progressive, contributing to overall increases in income for the poorest 40% of households.⁶⁶

Unleashing the power of local

Cities, municipalities and local governments across the world are demonstrating what can be achieved through location-specific and participatory policy design. The C40 Global Youth and Mayors Forum has published a playbook to help strengthen youth engagement in climate action in cities, with case studies from Sierra Leone, the UK, the USA, Mexico and others.⁶⁷ Amsterdam aims to create an entirely circular economy to maximise the value and re-use of materials by 2050. This was inspired by the Doughnut Economics model for a minimum standard of living for all within planetary boundaries, with the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) platform supporting peer-to-peer learning and exchange.⁶⁸

Mayra, 14, and Ibsan, 12, sisters, live in Guatemala's 'dry corridor'. The climate emergency means it's becoming harder for families like theirs to get enough to eat.



139 million additional jobs could be created by transition to a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient economy.

66 There is a need to find companies that produce minerals that pollute the environment. They should pay a certain tax specifically allocated to them for the pollution that they are producing. **99**

15-year-old child, Zambia



PHOTO: LUISA DORR/SAVE THE CHILDREN

2 Investing in children

Throughout our dialogues, children urged governments to do more to ensure that their basic rights are fulfilled, with education, food and health raised as issues of particular concern. All too often, spending on health, nutrition, education and protection from poverty and violence are seen as a drain on the public purse; costs that must be rationalised when times are tight. Governments have a responsibility under the UNCRC to invest in services for children. This not only sets children up to fulfil their potential in life, but is an investment in resilience against the climate emergency, and in human capital, yielding considerable economic benefit. **The rate of return on investment in primary education, for example, is estimated at 22% in low-income countries.**⁶⁹

Better social protection was called for by a number of children in our dialogues, linked to issues of income and food security, education and health. Investment in national social protection systems that have children's rights at their heart is critical for reducing inequalities and protecting families from crisis. For example, the Child Development Grant Programme led by Save the Children in Nigeria was designed to provide evidence to encourage governments to run social protection systems at scale, providing monthly cash transfers to pregnant women until their children reached age two, combined with nutrition information and services. The programme achieved an 8% reduction in stunting compared with a control group, a 16% reduction in illness or injury, and a 60% rise in exclusive breastfeeding.⁷⁰ Social protection schemes include maternity and child benefits, social pensions, social assistance or cash transfers, public work programmes and agricultural insurance.

Investment in children can also be a green and an inclusive way of stimulating the economy. IMF research has shown that long-term gains from infrastructure investments are increased if they are accompanied by investments in human capital, suggesting that they should make up 50% of any investment package, including for green energy.⁷¹ Jobs that can help support a green and just future are all around us, including jobs in the 'children's workforce' such as teaching, healthcare and childcare. These jobs are low carbon and tend to be among the lowest paid. Ensuring decent working conditions and a living wage therefore has potential to spur economic inclusion and reduce inequality while keeping emissions low.⁷² Investing in early years education and affordable childcare has the double benefit of setting children up for success in life while enabling women, on whom, because of gendered norms, the burden of childcare generally falls, to undertake paid work should they choose or need to do so.⁷³

66 Adults need to join hands in order to ensure that children from economically unstable homes have access to bursaries to be able to study without worrying. **99**

17-year-old girl, Kenya



The rate of return on investment in primary education is estimated at 22% in low-income countries.

66 The government should also be able to pay for health services targeting the poor people so that when they are sick, they should be treated faster, especially for contagious diseases. **99**

Boy in Malawi

66 There should be a small package of assistance to ultra-poor households so that children from such homes should be able to go to school and finish their education. **99**

12-year-old girl, Malawi

66 Here in Kibra, the majority of children go to school hungry and return home to find no food or food with low nutritional value. This is caused by poverty and we ask government to give our parents jobs. **99**

14-year-old girl, Kenya

66 I would like more young women in jobs like psychologists, doctors, politicians, lawyers. **99**

18-year-old girl, Italy

This investment in children links to the broader importance of policies to promote an active labour market, workers' rights and family-friendly business in ensuring access to decent, secure work and a living wage for parents and caregivers, young people, and migrant and displaced people.⁷⁴ Decent work for parents was an issue highlighted by many children in our dialogues, with a number of children in lower income countries highlighting the need for livelihood alternatives to income generation from producing and selling charcoal.

Businesses have an important role to play, through paying living wages, respecting workers' rights and addressing impacts on human and children's rights and the environment across their value chains. Companies have a lot to gain from pursuing socially responsible and sustainable business models – including improved competitiveness, ability to attract and retain good employees and loyal and diverse consumers, and longer-term business sustainability.⁷⁵ More transparent, outcome-oriented and consistent reporting on environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks, impacts and transition plans helps consumers and investors to make better informed decisions about where to put their money and creates incentives for more responsible business.

Finally, child-centred budgeting and taxation are critical, supported by transparency and civil society participation and oversight, including by children. A strong redistributive tax system is important for both raising public revenue for investment in children and planet *and* addressing inequality. This is a message being amplified by the *Patriotic Millionaires* movement of wealthy individuals calling for systemic increases in wealth taxation – a call echoed by some of the children participating in our dialogues.⁷⁶ Tax policies must be carefully designed and enforced to ensure that large corporations and the most affluent in society make the largest contributions, that the incomes and livelihoods of less affluent households are protected, and that behavioural and corporate taxation disincentivise environmentally harmful business and consumer practice.

66 I want to study and learn and achieve my goals. I am a girl who lost my father since I was a little girl and I promised him that I would study and become a lawyer. **99**

15-year-old girl, Lebanon

66 It's high time the community realise that they are harming the environment that we children depend on to survive. As much as cutting trees and producing charcoal or having big industries that produce mass production goods are needed to earn a living, we should ensure we have another source of livelihood so that children can breathe fresh air and play in a healthier environment. **99**

18-year-old young woman, Somalia

66 Please increase the income of the workers. Sometimes I feel sorry for employees or other workers who have been told to work hard but their salaries are not suitable. **99**

17-year-old girl, Indonesia

66 Ensure the rich are taxed in the same way poorer families have to pay tax. Offer help to pay unaffordable bills and stop companies making huge profits while poorer people go without. **99**

Child in the UK

66 I wish society can be an equal place where the bridge between the rich and poor is minimised or eliminated completely. **99**

15-year-old boy, Kenya



Core recommendation

Governments must prioritise and ensure sufficient public investment to fulfil children's health, nutrition, education and protection from poverty and violence. This should be supported by measures to strengthen tax systems to optimise revenue generation,

progressivity and incentives for green business and consumption. Assessing, monitoring and addressing business impacts on children's rights should be a core component of responsible business practice and regulatory frameworks, with a focus on outcomes for children and their rights.⁷⁷

3 Protecting and securing justice for children at the frontlines of the climate and inequality crisis

It is clear from the experiences and observations that children shared with us through our dialogues that an immediate priority must be to protect and support children from the climate impacts they are currently facing, and to build resilience and preparedness for future shocks. How the climate emergency is affecting, or likely to affect, sectors and services that children depend on must be rigorously assessed. Measures must be taken by government and the private sector to align national development and climate policies, invest in systems to anticipate shocks, adapt services to reduce risk of disruption caused by climate change (referred to in climate policy as adaptation), and support those who experience climate-linked losses (loss and damage).⁷⁸ Ensuring an explicit and comprehensive focus on climate and children's rights in all planning, policies and frameworks is key.⁷⁹

Failure to prepare for and manage climate risks for climate-vulnerable countries and communities will cost far more to domestic economies and international humanitarian budgets than the cost of this planning – a lesson underscored by the Covid-19 pandemic and the current global food and nutrition crisis. During the pandemic, countries with established social protection systems were able to adapt quickly to deliver the relief necessary to support containment measures and cushion families from the worst effects of the pandemic.⁸⁰

Improving contingency planning, social protection and financial inclusion could reduce the annual cost of disasters by \$100 billion per year.⁸¹

Social protection systems with an explicit focus on protecting children from poverty and hunger, and which can be quickly scaled or adjusted in times of emergency (or in other words, that are child-sensitive and shock-responsive), are a critical component of effective, child-centred climate adaptation and loss and damage response. This is particularly important given that a significant portion of expenditure for many low-income households is being used to reduce risks from flooding, storms and other climate hazards, reaching up to 30% of all spending for rural women in Bangladesh.⁸² Cash-plus and adaptive systems that combine cash with information, capacity building and other support are particularly effective. Universal child benefits in the form of regular, unconditional cash or tax transfers paid to caregivers are the ultimate goal. These can

66 The only changes you see are in towns.... They should raise money for poor people... to let them be subsistence farmers. To help them create geothermal sensors so they can predict or even know the future climate that may affect them negatively so that they can prepare for it before it even occurs. **99**

Child in South Africa

66 We need financial, psychological and social support from large institutions or the government, and we ask them to make field visits to see and listen to children. In this context, a special committee can be established where children can go and express their opinions and needs, and place a donation fund to cover the damage that has affected some families and children. **99**

18-year-old girl, Oman

66 Community leaders must be aware of when the rain comes and tell the population so they can be prepared. **99**

Child aged 10–12, Guatemala

66 Climate change has also forced the government to concentrate too much on the management of disasters at the expense of other development like health. **99**

15-year-old girl, Zambia



Improving contingency planning, social protection and financial inclusion could reduce the annual cost of disasters by \$100 billion per year.

be an important bridge towards shock-responsive social protection for households, providing infrastructure for making additional payments in times of crisis.⁸³

Building resilience to climate and poverty risks, and supporting durable solutions for recovery, are particularly important for children and families who are displaced, refugees, or forced to migrate from their homes due to climate, conflict and other interlinked emergencies, including new and long-standing migrants, and also for people who wish or need to move but cannot. Rather than seeing migration through the lens of security risk, it must be understood as an adaptation measure taken by children and families, requiring anticipatory action, opportunity-building and support, including for mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.



Core recommendation

Governments should immediately scale up investment to protect children from immediate and slow-onset impacts of the climate emergency and linked crises, and support children experiencing loss and damage, with a particular focus on child-sensitive, shock-responsive social protection systems that can be adjusted to respond to crisis.

Box 6 Anticipating and planning for disaster to reduce impacts on children

In **Somalia**, Save the Children has supported four shock-responsive safety net pilots, working with local actors to use data for early warning of shocks that are likely to affect children's rights. The system allows cash to be delivered quickly, helping to save lives and livelihoods and save on costs of responding to emergencies after they have happened. Such mechanisms can act as a bridge between short-term humanitarian cash transfers and longer-term government-led social protection systems.

The **ARC (African Risk Capacity)** is a specialised agency of the African Union working to make humanitarian funding available to governments *before* a state of emergency is declared. Payouts are triggered when certain predictive metrics are met. In **Senegal**, the Start Network – a global network of NGOs, including Save the Children – purchased its first ARC Replica insurance policy in 2019 to protect against drought, alongside the Senegalese government, and a payout was triggered later that year.

Box 7 Making child-centred climate adaptation a reality

Through the six-year **Vanuatu Community-based Climate Resilience Project**, Save the Children, in partnership with the Government of Vanuatu and the Green Climate Fund, is taking the locally led adaptation approach to scale. The project is working to build the capacity of communities to address the specific threats the climate emergency holds for their lives and livelihoods through education and skills-building as well as practical actions to increase food security and the resilience of traditional livelihood strategies. Children were

a central part of the project's development and are key stakeholders in its implementation.

In **Bangladesh**, Save the Children has been supporting children, young people and people with disabilities to engage with Community and Urban Risk Assessments. The programme also introduced child participation into School Safety Plan processes, supported pupils to manage funds for adaptation measures in schools, and delivered a practical climate change education module.

4 Ensuring children have a meaningful seat at the decision-making table

Children are clear that fulfilling their right to be heard, as enshrined in the UNCRC, is critical for halting the climate and inequality crisis.⁸⁴ A desire to be listened to by adults and help to bring solutions to the table, and frustration that this rarely happens, was a recurring theme in our dialogues with children and is also reflected in wider research.⁸⁵

A number of children shared with us their experiences of being mocked or harassed by adults when talking about their ideas about the climate emergency in public, underscoring the need for efforts to institutionalise children's right to have meaningful, safe, systematic influence over issues that affect their lives. Children don't just want to be heard in a passive sense; they want adults to support their agency, with meaningful platforms and tools, supported by quality data, information and education.

Broader governance systems that respect children's rights are also critical, with children in a number of countries highlighting corruption and lack of accountability as major problems. These must support transparency and accountability, have legal protections against discrimination, and provide access to justice and rule of law, supporting children to use the legal system to uphold their rights.⁸⁶

Deliberative processes that bring citizens, including children, together, within and across communities, to make policy recommendations and decisions, can help to build social cohesion, trust and political engagement; enhance transparency; and increase dignity.⁸⁷ Analysts suggest this can help counter increasing cynicism in representative democracy. When people feel they have a say in decision-making, they are more likely to accept decisions even if counter to their own choices. Evidence also suggests that, when given the right information and support, citizens engaged in participatory processes often make choices that run counter to perceptions that politicians have of constituents' views. Decisions often prioritise the collective good, and even impacts for future generations over impact on their individual circumstances.⁸⁸ As one research study concludes, "Many citizens are ready to sacrifice for the greater good. We just need institutions that help them do so."⁸⁹

Children are not only the experts on their experiences, but can contribute to solutions. Child participation helps to identify and

66 Let ordinary people of the country have a say in what needs to be done. **99**

Child in the UK

66 We also need not only spaces to talk but safe spaces. Even when given space, we're children and sometimes adults don't take us seriously enough. **99**

12-year-old boy, El Salvador

66 I think the hardest thing is that adults, and especially the older ones, just don't have the same view of reality as we do. They hold all the power – just look at the average age of the people in our government – but when young people write in the paper or voice their opinion, we are being bullied by adults and especially men. **99**

18-year-old girl, Norway

66 They need to incorporate a topic about climate change into school curricula. **99**

12-year-old child, Egypt

66 Adults should fight corruption and stop collecting bribery before they give parents jobs, because bribery and corruption causes economic inequality – parents who don't have money to pay cannot get jobs and opportunities. **99**

Child in Nigeria

66 They know that if they sell land on the hill it could lead to accidents, but they still sell. If you tell them they ask you. 'Where are you coming from? When were you born to talk to me like that?' They will pay no attention to me. **99**

Boy in Sierra Leone

66 Legal protection is important. If you tell someone about your experience, you should be taken seriously. **99**

From a discussion with young Sámi people, aged 21–22, Norway

66 As children, we are never invited in their meetings about climate change and we really do not know what they are discussing. At community level, we are also not engaged, we are considered as children and that is all. **99**

Boy in Malawi

understand problems and make interventions more effective and sustainable.⁹⁰ It also helps unleash children's power to contribute to change and bring others along on the journey: children can wield considerable influence over the beliefs and behaviours of others in their family and community and among politicians. This can in turn help children to realise their agency, which is critical for guarding against cynicism, apathy and depression in the face of the climate emergency.⁹¹

66 As children we should talk. When we see that things have gone too far, we should talk. Even if it is to relatives. We the children of the world should monitor our communities and have the right to talk. **99**

Girl in Sierra Leone



Core recommendation

Governments, business and international institutions must take children's views on board in decision-making that affects children's rights and the planet. Mechanisms to support children to participate and make their voices heard must be established from local to global levels and be safe, inclusive and accessible for all children,

with particular support for children most affected by inequality and discrimination. All states should ratify the 3rd Optional Protocol to the UNCRC, allowing children to bring complaints directly to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for investigation.

Box 8 Upholding children's right to be heard

At the UN Human Rights Council in July 2022, Save the Children supported a 15-year-old girl advocate from Peru to address UN Member States at the Annual Day of the Human Rights of Women for the first time. This set an important precedent, and helped highlight how climate-related disasters, economic and other stresses exacerbate gender inequalities and put girls at increased risk of trafficking and gender-based violence, including child marriage.⁹² She called on governments to promote gender equality and freedom from violence in agriculture; respect their cultures and ways of farming and caring for the land; and guarantee safe spaces for participation in decision-making regarding climate change policies.

At the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), during the Covid-19 pandemic, Save the Children supported children to participate in hybrid events with policy-makers. At COP26 there was a distinct absence of children's voices, particularly of younger children

and those most affected by the climate and inequality crisis.

In Uganda, the government developed a National Child Participation Strategy in 2017, in partnership with Save the Children and UNICEF, children, and other stakeholders. The strategy has helped raise the profile of child participation as an important issue across government departments and is also available in a child-friendly version to support children to engage with adult decision-makers.⁹³

Zambia is also developing a new child participation policy in a similar vein.

In Albania, Save the Children supported the Albanian Ombudsman Institution to contribute to a child rights impact assessment of environmental policies and laws. The impact assessment examined existing and proposed environmental policies, legislation and changes in administrative services to determine their impact on children and their rights. The document focuses on the legal framework for

continued on next page

Box 8 *continued*

and institutional approach to climate change, with special attention to children's rights and the role of the Ombudsman. The report introduces a tool designed to assess the impact of policies and laws on children's rights, focusing on environmental policies, and was the first of its kind in Albania.

Initiatives to address the neglected needs of future generations in policy-making include the Welsh Commissioner for Future Generations and the 2021 announcement by the UN Secretary-General that he would appoint a Special Envoy for Future Generations.

5 Shifting finance and power globally

Achieving net zero by 2050 to avoid climate catastrophe globally is estimated to require \$3–5 trillion of additional spending a year.⁹⁴ Bridging the annual financing gap for the SDGs is currently **estimated at \$4.2 trillion per year in lower income economies.**⁹⁵ While the figures required are large, the costs of inaction are far higher. Better global allocation of resources to where they are needed most is key, including diversion of financing from harmful to helpful investments. The IPCC has stated that there is sufficient global capital and liquidity to close the global net-zero investment gap, calling for better alignment of financing flows with policy objectives.⁹⁶ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has made a similar argument in relation to the SDGs, highlighting that the funds required amount to just over 1% of global financial assets.

For many higher income countries, the national annual investment needed to address the climate emergency represents a relatively small percentage of GDP. For G7 countries this is estimated at around 2% of GDP, comparable to their average annual spend on defence at 1.9%.⁹⁷ The situation in lower income countries is very different, where costs for meeting the SDGs are much higher and prospects for robust economic growth in the current period of economic downturn much lower.

In all countries, domestic public resources, whether raised through taxation or other means, are critical. Under present growth projections, these are expected to increase by around \$314 billion in low- and middle-income countries by 2025. Successful efforts to bolster green and inclusive economic development offer potential to expand the tax base and bring in more revenue. This, coupled with strengthened tax systems, could grow domestic public resources even further.⁹⁸ But with continued economic turmoil globally and rising interest rates on international debt (see Box 9), prospects for many countries to achieve this kind of progress in the near term are limited. The immediate focus of the international community must therefore be on mobilising international resources to meet urgent investment needs in lower income countries,

66 Not only are we as South Africans affected by climate change. I think countries can come together with different skills... because we have different factors that affect us as countries. So when we come together they all have different ideas... that might help us as countries. **99**

Child in South Africa

66 This is an issue of a planet, not a country, that needs to be preserved. **99**

12-year-old girl from Syria, living in Lebanon



\$4.2 trillion a year is needed to achieve the SDGs in lower income countries.

A 'big push' of \$1.3 trillion a year would help get countries on the right track.

The global fossil fuel industry benefits from \$5.9 trillion in public subsidies a year.

laying the foundations for robust green and inclusive economic development, which would help to expand the domestic tax base in the longer term.

Analysts from the London School of Economics and the Brookings Institution have made the case for an immediate big push in financing in emerging market and developing economies of an additional \$1.3 trillion per year from public and private sources by 2025. This, they argue, would fund critical investments across four key areas – human capital, sustainable infrastructure, adaptation and resilience, and restoration of nature – laying the foundations for further investment in subsequent years to 2030 and beyond.⁹⁹ Box 8 outlines some of the key international financing components that should be part of this push.

Crucially, there is an urgent need for a stronger focus on the rights of children most affected by the climate and inequality crisis across all financing mechanisms. **Our own analysis shows that the nine countries where children are most at risk of climate impacts receive an average of only \$2.30 in climate adaptation financing per person per year, compared with an estimated need of \$11.40.**¹⁰⁰ Adaptation programmes received only 7% of total climate finance in 2019/20, despite them being so critical for protecting children’s rights, and a focus on children and their rights is lacking in the policy and results frameworks of multilateral climate funds.¹⁰¹



There is an annual climate adaptation financing gap of \$9.10 per person in countries where children are most at risk from the climate emergency.



“The sea level is still rising and reaching places that it has never reached before... It has really affected our gardens and our education.... I kindly ask the good people from other countries to help us.”
Jemma, 17, Solomon Islands

PHOTO: COLIN LEFASIA/
DAILY MIRROR

High-income countries and historical emitters have particular responsibility

While most of our dialogues with children focused on national and local issues, a number of children spoke about the importance of international cooperation. These children felt strongly that international cooperation is critical for addressing climate and inequality issues, putting emphasis on partnership. Several children shared their belief that richer countries, particularly those that have produced the most emissions historically and those that have perpetuated inequalities through international trade and colonialism, have particular responsibility for action.

There is an urgent need for a fairer international financing system that provides the support and opportunity lower income countries need and are requesting to pursue green and just development in line with the SDGs.

As some children noted in dialogues in Africa and Europe, the historical development pathways pursued by some of the world's most affluent countries laid the foundations for many of the global inequalities we see today, including through histories of colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, racism and skewed trade relationships.¹⁰² Countries that enriched themselves earliest are also responsible for a legacy of disproportionate carbon emissions. The United States, for example, is responsible for the largest cumulative emissions from fossil fuels since 1850, followed by China, Russia, Germany, the UK, Japan, India, France and Canada.¹⁰³ Both historically and in recent decades, economic approaches in many of the world's highest emitting countries have prioritised short-term economic gains over human and children's rights and the planet.¹⁰⁴ Over five Earths would be needed to sustain on a global scale the use of nature at the same rate as Qatar, Luxembourg, Bahrain, the Cook Islands, Canada, Estonia, the UAE, and the USA.¹⁰⁵

Countries that have benefitted the most from disproportionately high cumulative global emissions and extractive relationships with vulnerable communities and countries have the greatest responsibility to address the global climate and inequality crisis today. This must be pursued by accelerating cuts to emissions produced at home and abroad via imported consumer goods, delivering fair shares of the global emissions cuts needed to meet international global heating targets.¹⁰⁶ It must also include international leadership to reform the international financing architecture so that it better serves the needs of lower income countries, and a more robust and urgent response to requests from lower income countries for humanitarian, development and climate finance support.

66 The problem of unequal economic justice is the disparity between the poor and the rich. Rich countries have the means to invest and have the means to change the economic imbalances within their countries, but we don't. **99**

18-year-old young man, West Bank

66 The countries that have more responsibility are the rich ones. **99**

12-year-old boy, Madagascar

66 Some countries have more money than Zambia, so they need to help us handle some of the problems that we have faced with climate change. **99**

Child in Zambia

66 For some of us that do history in school, when they were coming in it was to find greener pastures. They colonised us for a reason: we are full of minerals; diamonds and gold. You go to Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia. These are some of the reasons they colonised us. **99**

Boy in Sierra Leone

66 Countries that have grown rich because of colonialism have a responsibility now, because they made their fortune by making other countries poor. **99**

Child aged 14-16, Norway

66 The large industrial countries are the real causes of the pollution, and the small countries bear the consequences of that. **99**

17-year-old girl from Eritrea, living in Egypt

Box 9 Achieving a big push in international financing: urgent actions to shift global financing to where it is needed most

1 Debt justice

Economic downturn and rising interest on debt repayments are undermining the capacity of many governments in lower income countries to make the investments that are needed to spur green and just development and meet the SDGs. Lower income countries have been estimated to spend five times more on external debt payments than on projects to protect people from the climate emergency.¹⁰⁷ The situation in some countries is particularly worrying. Our analysis suggests that in Uganda, debt interest payments overtook education spending in 2020, with the gap expected to rise until at least 2024. Debt interest payments are likely to overtake education spend in Bangladesh next year, with the same projected to happen in South Africa the following year.

What should be done? Weaknesses in the global mechanism for debt restructuring – the G20 Common Framework – must be addressed urgently, including measures to ensure private creditor participation.¹⁰⁸ This should be accompanied in the shorter term by emergency debt suspension for countries that need it, and in the longer term by establishment of a permanent, independent multilateral sovereign debt workout mechanism at the UN. These measures should be coupled with increased access to genuinely affordable and sustainable lending, including by maximising the concessional lending potential of multilateral development banks.

2 Tax justice

An estimated \$483 billion is lost in tax revenue globally a year due to cross-border tax abuse by multinational companies and individuals.¹⁰⁹ \$40 billion is lost by lower income countries (representing a much higher share of current tax revenue than revenue lost by higher income countries). The remaining \$443 billion lost by wealthier economies could help finance domestic climate and social policy as well as boost international development and climate finance budgets.

What should be done? Inadequacies in current efforts to make the global tax system fit for purpose must be addressed, including the

continued marginalisation of the voice and needs of lower income countries. All countries must invest more in tax and law enforcement, and efforts to end financial secrecy and routine use of tax havens must be strengthened, including through legislation to support pursuit of cross-border financial crimes. This must include progress on automatic exchange of information (data sharing between countries), mandatory public beneficial ownership registries (detailing who the real owners of assets are), and mandatory country-by-country reporting by companies of profits and costs. A global asset registry to link all assets to their beneficial (real) owners would be transformative in this regard, making it more difficult to hide ownership and wealth. Crucially, African finance ministers' calls for a UN Tax Convention should be supported.¹¹⁰ This has the potential to deliver each of the key financial transparency measures and to create the basis for a genuinely inclusive intergovernmental tax body to set fairer tax rules – including for multinational companies.

3 International public finance

High-income countries have collectively been failing to deliver on financing commitments in recent decades. This includes the promise many made to allocate 0.7% of gross national income as ODA (or aid), to provide \$100 billion in climate finance by 2020, and to reallocate the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) windfall that they received from the IMF in 2021 to countries that need it most. In June 2022, the total humanitarian financing gap was the highest it has ever been, standing at \$36.9 billion.¹¹¹ If donors in the OECD Development Assistance Committee had dedicated 0.7% of gross national income to ODA in 2021, an additional \$193 billion would have been available to support lower income countries.

What should be done? There is an urgent need to increase the volume, quality and impact of international public finance, including:

- meeting and scaling up international commitments on public finance, including for ODA, climate finance and SDRs

continued on next page

Box 9 *continued*

- increasing climate finance to go far beyond the unmet pledge to mobilise at least \$100 billion annually by 2020, using specified metrics to ensure child-sensitive investment and including a focus on children's rights, equity and inclusion of children's voices in all relevant systems and processes. This includes new and additional financial support, given as grants and based on principles of predictability, transparency, and embedding the Principles for Locally-led Adaptation. High-income countries and historical emitters must lead the way in contributing their fair share of climate finance flows. At least 50% of public finance should be channelled to adaptation, particularly projects that specifically benefit children most affected by inequality and discrimination.¹¹²
- providing new and additional funding to address rapidly escalating loss and damage, and backing the creation of a new loss and damage financing mechanism to support communities affected by climate disaster, with an explicit focus on children.¹¹³
- exploring transformation of the global aid system into one of global public investment, with all countries contributing, benefiting, and helping to govern the system.¹¹⁴

4 Private investment

Dramatic increases in private investment are needed to help spur green and just economic

transition globally, particularly for sustainable infrastructure.¹¹⁵ There is increasing demand from investors, insurers and lenders for investment and business opportunities that have positive environmental, social and governance (ESG) impact.¹¹⁶

What should be done? Governments that establish policy and legislation to make human rights and environmental due diligence mandatory should ensure that this, and other regulation to ensure responsible business conduct, integrates children's rights and is implemented in an inclusive, accessible and child-friendly manner.

- Efforts should accelerate to improve coherence of the plethora of standards and taxonomies for ESG investing, to ensure common standards and reduce risks of 'greenwashing' with closure of loopholes that allow for continued support of fossil fuels. Particular focus should be placed on clarifying standards for the S in ESG, including to address current neglect of children's rights.¹¹⁷
- Reforms should be undertaken to give pension holders greater say over where their money is invested, and over how intermediary asset managers exercise voting rights in companies they have invested in on their behalf, particularly on issues such as fossil fuel use, tax avoidance and worker pay.¹¹⁸



Core recommendations

- Governments and international institutions should work in partnership and with urgency to undertake critical reforms to the international financing system to make it work better for lower income countries, including making the global tax, debt, public finance and trade systems fit for purpose.
- Climate and development finance must be urgently scaled up, with at least 50% of public climate finance channelled towards climate adaptation, new and additional funding to address loss and damage, and a strengthened focus on children's rights across the board.
- Reforms relating to human rights and environmental due diligence and other measures to ensure responsible business practice should include children's rights and be implemented in an inclusive, accessible and child-friendly manner. An explicit focus on children's rights should be incorporated into government and business efforts to improve ESG standards and reporting in the private sector, with the financial sector making systematic use of these in decision-making.¹¹⁹

5

Conclusion

Addressing the climate and inequality crisis is a matter of justice and children's rights. It is also in the interests of *all* countries. The impacts of the climate emergency are intensifying in all regions. The climate emergency is also a threat-multiplier for children and households exposed to disaster, conflict and poverty risk. This has knock-on impacts on the numbers of people displaced from their homes, global supplies and prices of energy, food and other goods, and global political and economic stability – issues that transcend geographical boundaries and affect everyone.¹²⁰ Change is needed urgently. As one child in the UK told us, **“Adults should make decisions so things happen and change quickly – hard decisions so things change now.”**

Across the world, a growing movement of young activists is leading the charge for a green and just future. Now it's down to adults to rise to the challenge.

Together we can. Together we *must*.

Together we are Generation Hope.

Preventing climate change, by K. Siyak Theekshana Dias, 12, Sri Lanka.

“In this picture, you can see Mother Nature is sad because of cracked earth, deforestation, drought and extreme weather. The messages I would like to convey are that there is a strong bond between human beings and nature. People should be kind to nature and the environment. We must use green energy instead of fuel. If we protect nature, we will be protected by nature in return.”



“Hope is a thing that is the beginning of anything.

If you hope to do anything

there is no power that can stop you.”

- Boy aged 14, India

The status quo

Economies are dominated by business and activities that are increasing greenhouse gas emissions and inequality.

The climate emergency is intensifying.

Inequalities are becoming entrenched.

Children are most affected, especially those with the least power and wealth.

Powerful countries and companies are not doing enough.

An end to the climate and inequality crisis is possible.

Join Generation Hope.

Actions for a greener and more just planet



Urgently deliver reforms that address climate and inequality together.



Deliver justice to children at the frontlines of the crisis.



building human capital for the future

Invest in children – their health, education, and protection from poverty and violence.



Listen to children and act on their demands.



Shift finance and power to where they're needed most and to those helping to fix the crisis.



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⁷ The survey was run in 15 countries (Albania, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, Colombia, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, occupied Palestinian territory, the Philippines, South Korea and the UK). Most surveys did not aim to reach a sample representative of the population, and sample sizes varied, from 33 in Kenya to 20,128 in Indonesia. The summary statistics are therefore illustrative rather than scientific, calculated as an average

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¹¹⁶ For example, a survey of the 75 largest asset managers found that 48% of investors are developing an approach to the SDGs (ShareAction, cited in OECD, 2020, Op. Cit.). See also Carney, 2021, Op. Cit.

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GENERATION HOPE

2.4 billion reasons to end the global climate and inequality crisis

Climate change isn't a threat to the future. For the world's 2.4 billion children, it's a global emergency today.

Generation Hope sets out why this emergency is deeply connected to inequality – including compelling new evidence on the scale of the combined climate and inequality crisis. A staggering 774 million children face the dual threat of poverty and climate emergency.

While children are disproportionately affected by this crisis, they are not passive victims but a growing force for change. Their voices must be heard.

Generation Hope profiles insights shared with us by more than 54,000 children from 41 countries in Save the Children's biggest-ever global dialogue with children. Their ideas, activism and strength of belief set out in this report are not just an antidote to apathy and despair, but a much-needed impetus for action.

Drawing on children's experiences and insights, together with other research, *Generation Hope* identifies five critical entry points for building a greener and more just planet. As one child in India told us, "Unity is the greatest strength of all, so we need to stand together in this fight." Together, we can be Generation Hope.



Save the Children