

The Climate Crisis, Climate Justice and Child Protection;

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Initiating the dialogue; Child Protection Alliance annual meeting

"Climate action is not sufficiently child sensitive, or child informed, and rarely integrates child protection risks."

"There is a huge, timely opportunity for the child protection sector to influence evolving climate agendas -in particular anticipatory action- to reduce the impacts of climate change on children and especially girls."

"Child protection agendas must be sufficiently adapted for the changing environment."

These were some of the key take home messages highlighted by Plan International, at the [climate change specialist session of the Child Protection Alliance's annual meeting](#).

As highlighted by IFRC's 2020 policy brief on child protection and climate: *"We need to do better."*¹

Climate change exacerbating child protection risks

The recent launch of the Child Protection Alliance's 2021-2025 strategy at the Alliance's 2021 annual meeting included a session on 'The Climate Crisis, Climate Justice and Child Protection.' During the interactive event, the Alliance, its members and partners, initiated dialogue on how to better collaborate on this agenda moving forward; crucially to increase understanding, visibility and prioritisation of the impacts of the climate crisis on children, across humanitarian and development action.

Presenting alongside cross-sectoral technical specialists from the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (AoR), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UNICEF, World Vision and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, Plan International was invited to contribute perspectives to the newly evolving child protection and climate change agenda.

The session – attended by child protection experts from across the world- launched with the question;

'Climate change and child protection – what words come to mind?'

'Vulnerability'; 'Urgent'; 'Participation'; 'Opportunity' were some of the suggestions, as well as words flagging the need for more information *'unclear', 'overwhelming' 'how to integrate?'*

World Vision introduced the topic outlining how climate change exacerbates child protection risks, illustrated by a Kenyan case study. Lavenda Ondere, World Vision Kenya, explained that climate change impacts are already felt in Kenya, with increasingly frequent and severe droughts and floods, more erratic rain fall and higher average rainfall affecting food production and water availability. She described how prolonged droughts can lead to some families losing their source of livelihoods increasing violence against children; the stress can result in families forcefully marrying off children in exchange for resources; increased theft can put children and women at risk, who are often killed or raped in the process; lack of food and water can force migration to urban areas with children then forced into child prostitution and child labour to sustain basic needs.

Climate change adaptation to address impacts

Climate change adaptation (CCA) contextualised to address child protection risks was discussed as an integrated solution. Returning to the Kenyan case-study, Ondere outlined CCA examples in practice. Climate smart agriculture and diversification of livelihoods to beekeeping and eco-tourism are promoted to relieve the pressure on climate-sensitive livelihoods. Ecosystem restoration and agro-forestry to replenish fodder and pasture in the changing climate was another CCA approach, geared to reduce conflict over pasture where children are always victims.

Anticipatory Action; an opportunity to influence agendas

'Anticipatory Action', was explored next by a panel chaired by IFRC. Irene Amuron, the Manager for Anticipatory Action at the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate introduced anticipatory action, explaining it as the actions implemented in the window between DRR and response to mitigate a specific crisis. Actions are triggered by early warnings, linked to forecasts mechanisms, and risk analysis.

Positioned as a key mechanism to address climate change in the humanitarian sector, anticipatory action is not sufficiently child-sensitive or child informed. This presents a real opportunity for the child protection sector to influence broader agendas on climate, to reduce the impacts for children.

Ron Pouwels, Global Child Protection AoR, Global Coordinator highlighted the need for local level coordination with stakeholders across policy, practice and science; Plan International emphasised that the perspectives of children, especially girls and marginalised groups must inform anticipatory actions and shared some practical ways children can engage – from developing child-friendly early warning messages to creating family safety plans; Dr Amjad Mohamed Saleem, IFRC Manager for Inclusion, Protection and Engagement, stressed the need to consider intersectionality across approaches to improve child protection through anticipatory action.

Children's meaningful participation is crucial

Children's meaningful participation was then emphasised as a crucial cross-cutting component of developing adaptation and anticipatory action agendas to address child protection risks. Future dialogue on participation on the highly topical 'Loss and Damage'³ agenda was also proposed; to discuss how the child protection sector may want to position itself on this overall.

Led by Plan International, the presentation aimed to respond to the pertinent insights shared by youth climate activists earlier in the day. As highlighted by Faisal Nur Ali, Youth environment activist and researcher from Somalia, and by Priyanka Lalla, Environmental activist and child rights activist from Trinidad and Tobago, the spaces for meaningful participation of youth on climate at local, national and global level are lacking.

Recognising that 'The climate crisis is a child's rights crisis'² – and so children have a right to have their voices heard on decisions that impact them now and into the future is crucial. Children are also best placed to discuss their own situations. They should not be viewed as passive victims but instead have the potential to be powerful protagonists for change on climate action. Furthermore, there are many examples evidencing participation and protection intersect; acting against a harmful situation you are in, or may be in, creates a form of 'psychological protection'.

Practical approaches and opportunities; a global children's call for climate action

Practical resources being used in practice to advance children's meaningful participation on climate and child protection at local to global levels, were then outlined, including:

- [Child-centred Multi-Risk Assessment: Tool kit](#) – resources to ensure risk-informed programming including climate change and child protection tools
- [Y-Adapt](#) – an interactive curriculum supporting youth-led action on climate adaptation
- [Children's Climate Cards](#) – fun, do-at-home activities inspiring a children's call for climate action

Each resource promotes a 'multi-hazard' approach and introduces differentiated impacts of climate change; offering clear entry points to develop discussion on child protection risks.

The session ended with an invitation to partner with the '[Children in a Changing Climate Coalition](#)' to launch the new children's climate cards, adding a child protection lens; the goal of the cards being to generate a local to global 'children's call for climate action'.

Sources and definitions

1. IFRC (2020) *We need to do better; Policy brief for enhancing laws and regulations to protect children in disasters*, IFRC
2. UNICEF (2021) *The Children's Climate Risk Index*
3. *Loss and damage: Refers to the negative effects of climate variability and climate change that people have not been able to cope with or adapt to.* ([Loss & Damage \(unfccc.int\)](https://unfccc.int/loss-and-damage))