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# Showcasing impacts and youth-led action on mental health and climate change

COP29, Baku,  
Azerbaijan



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## Chair

- **Dr Harshita Umesh,**  
YOUNGO Health



**Showcasing impacts and youth-led action  
on mental health and climate change**

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## Speakers

- **Dr Emma Lawrance**, Climate Cares, Imperial College London
- **Dr Mercian Daniel**, The George Institute
- **Dr Amanda Clinton**, American Psychological Association
- **Ayomide Olude**, SustyVibes
- **Dr Alessandro Massazza**, United for Global Mental Health
- **Dr John Balbus**, Office of Climate Change and Health Equity



**Dr Emma  
Lawrance**



**Dr Mercian  
Daniel**



**Dr Amanda  
Clinton**



**Ayomide Olude**



**Dr  
Alessandro  
Massazza**



**Dr John  
Balbus**

**Showcasing impacts and youth-led action  
on mental health and climate change**



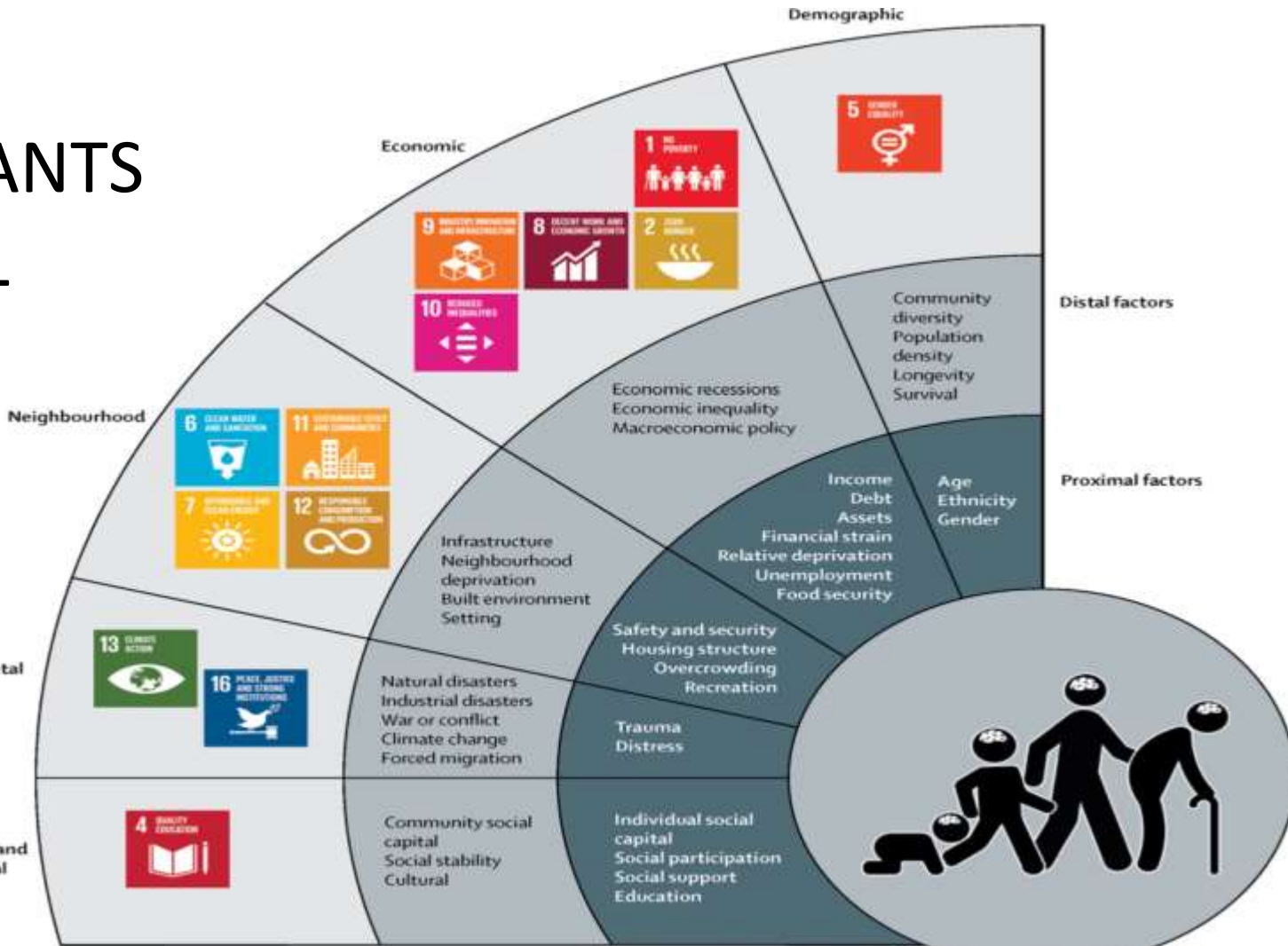
# CLIMATE CHANGE, MENTAL HEALTH AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE

# IT IS NOT JUST ECO-ANXIETY OR SOLASTALGIA!!!!!!

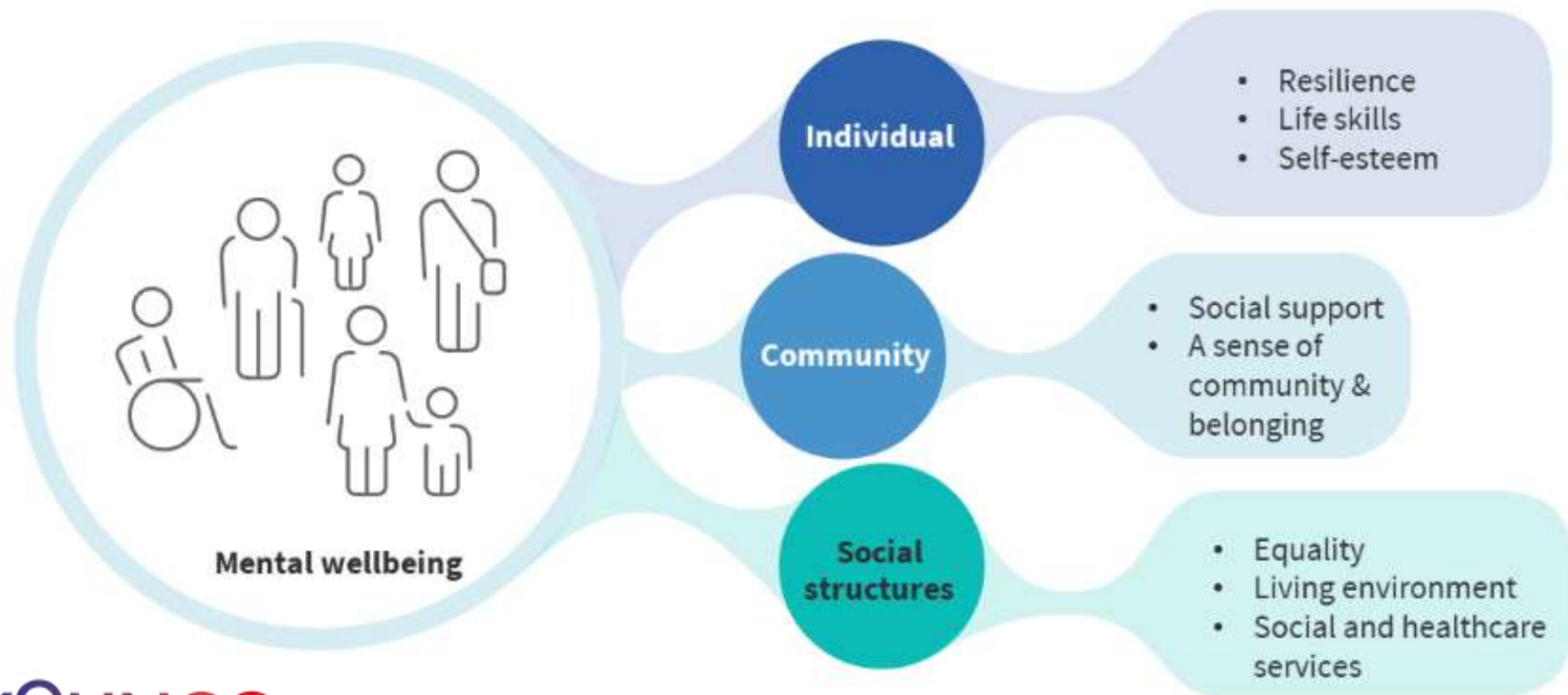




# SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF MENTAL HEALTH



# Mental wellbeing is built in daily life





# MENTAL HEALTH BINGO

## MENTAL HEALTH **BINGO!**

FOR BURNTOUT  
CLIMATE ACTIVISTS



YOUNGO

Felt frustrated after a negotiation	Talked about Fossil Fuel phase out	Participated in a climate strike	Felt mitigation efforts were insufficient
Planted a tree or cared for a plant	Got into an argument about the rising CO2 emissions	Survived on coffee during a conference	Read books about climate change
Overthought about extreme weather events	Memorized The Paris Agreement articles	Felt anxious about my role in helping address climate change	Talked about adaptation
Had a hard time writing a report	Bonded with another climate activist during coffee break	Posted about climate change on social media	Felt not listened

# ECO-RESILIENCE CAMPAIGN



**COME TOGETHER TO FORGE UNITY,  
ONE NARRATIVE AT A TIME!**

**#ECORESILIENCESTORIES CAMPAIGN**

Share your story



youngo.health and teap.africa

youngo.health Hello Changers! 🙌

We have an exciting news!

TEAP x YOUNGO Health WG is expanding the #EcoResilienceStories social media campaign for you all, the amazing youth activist 🙌

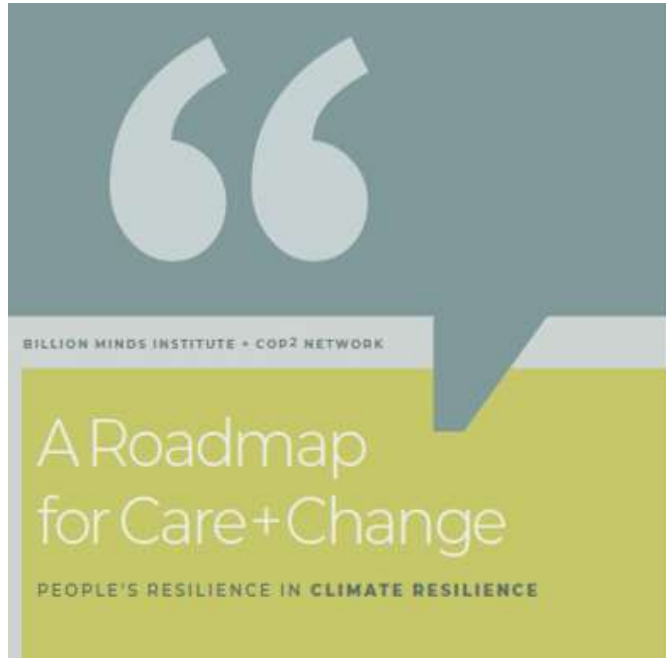
The campaign aims to collect stories of eco-anxiety and coping strategies from young people in the global south and share to promote youth lived realities.

We'd love to feature your experience in this campaign! If this resonates with you kindly fill this form - <https://tinyurl.com/EcoStories> or click the link in our bio 📄



21 likes

# cop2.org



# Be a Part of the Children and Youth Movement:



## Steps to Join:

1. Become a member of YOUNGO, UNFCCC via <https://youngoclimate.org/>
2. Fill the active membership form of the Health Working Group:  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSetsGGfIB\\_s5CTUTH-bFi1BpPAkcPNCs3luF2tvznj0omL59Q/viewform?usp=send\\_form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSetsGGfIB_s5CTUTH-bFi1BpPAkcPNCs3luF2tvznj0omL59Q/viewform?usp=send_form)



# Climate Cares Centre

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## Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Climate Emergency

Emma Lawrance, Climate Cares Centre Lead

@ClimateCares



**IMPERIAL**  
Institute of Global  
Health Innovation

Grantham Institute  
for Climate Change



"So, the future is not bright, it  
is black rather than bright,  
this is one negative impact"

- Young person from Sub-Saharan Africa in Connecting Climate Minds  
dialogue

We need an environment  
that fosters mental health  
and wellbeing for all.  
The **climate crisis** gravely  
threatens this vision.

*(Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development)*

# Interconnected crises: Climate change and youth mental health

## Climate Change

“Any further delay... will miss **a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future**”

– Planetary Health Check 2024; IPCC 2023

**Resilience...** not just the ability to maintain essential function, identity and structure, but also the **capacity for transformation.**

– IPCC working group II, 2023

## Mental Health

Mental ill health, the leading health and social issue impacting young people, **has entered a dangerous phase.**

**Global megatrends have increased mental ill health among young people.**

*The Lancet Psychiatry Commission on Youth Mental Health, 2024*

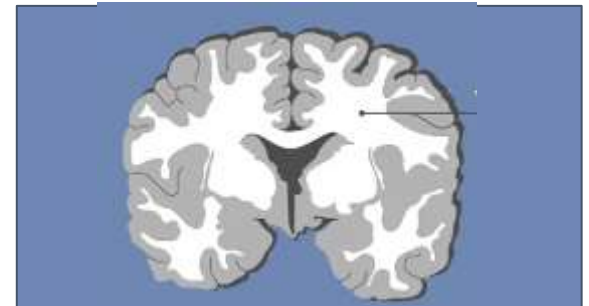
# The climate crisis is destabilising the conditions for good mental health for young people via interconnected pathways



**75%** of young people across 10 countries **feel the future is frightening**



Air pollution exposure in utero and early childhood increases risks of **depression, schizophrenia, neurodevelopmental disorders**



Exposure to **extreme temperatures in early childhood** can affect **white matter development**

*Hickman et al 2021; Lyons et al., 2024; Braithwaite et al., 2019; Costa et al 2020; Antonsen et al. 2020; Yang et al. 2023; Smolker et al. 2024; Granes et al., 2024*



# Climate change disrupts conditions needed for good mental health and wellbeing



Credit:  
Hameed  
"Ham" Khan  
and Eugenia  
Rojo

"The impact of climate change on our learning environment exacerbates existing mental health issues, limiting possibilities, wellbeing, and educational capacity."

*Connecting Climate Minds Youth Dialogue Participant*

“It is hard enough to cope with existing social problems, livelihood challenges and physical and mental health problems, without also **fearing for when the next climate event is going to strike or what opportunities will no longer be available to you.**”

*Connecting Climate Minds Youth Dialogue*



# Decision-makers are **failing** young people

"**Why does our heart break?** I think that feeling of no-one is getting it, and the **government is doing everything opposite.**"

*Connecting Climate Minds Youth Dialogue Participant*

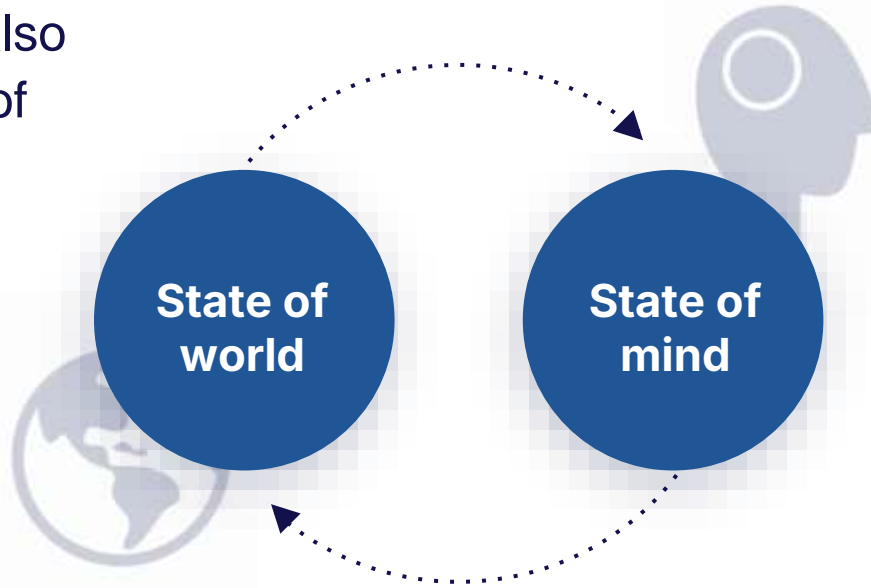
## Mortgaging the future comes with big mental health costs

Estimated increased mental health burden from climate hazards, air pollution and lack of green space will **cost \$US 47 billion by 2030**, and accelerate to **over \$500 billion by 2050**.

*Kumar et al 2023*

# Potential for a Virtuous Cycle

Our state of mind also **impacts** the state of our world.



Generating individual and system change requires an awareness of the **interaction between our psychological response to crises and taking action.**



Source: *SustyVibes*

# Climate action is mental health action

## Mental health benefits from...

### Individual

Involvement in **participatory and collective** climate actions

### Community

Integration of climate and mental health **education**  
Strengthening opportunities for **social connection**

### System

Reducing **inequalities, air pollution exposure** and increasing **green space access**

*Lawrance et al. 2022; Newberry Le Vay et al 2022; IPCC 2022*

# What do we need?

# Connection!



connecting  
**climate  
minds**

connecting  
**climate  
minds**

Connecting global *climate change*  
and *mental health research*

[connectingclimateminds.org](http://connectingclimateminds.org)

# Connecting Climate Minds Structure

## Regional Community Teams

across [Sustainable Development Goal regions](#).



## [Lived Experience Working Group](#)

working with young people, Indigenous communities, small farmer and fisher peoples.



## [Climate Cares Centre](#) and [Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre](#)

provided global coordination and methodology.



# Connecting Climate Minds Global Team



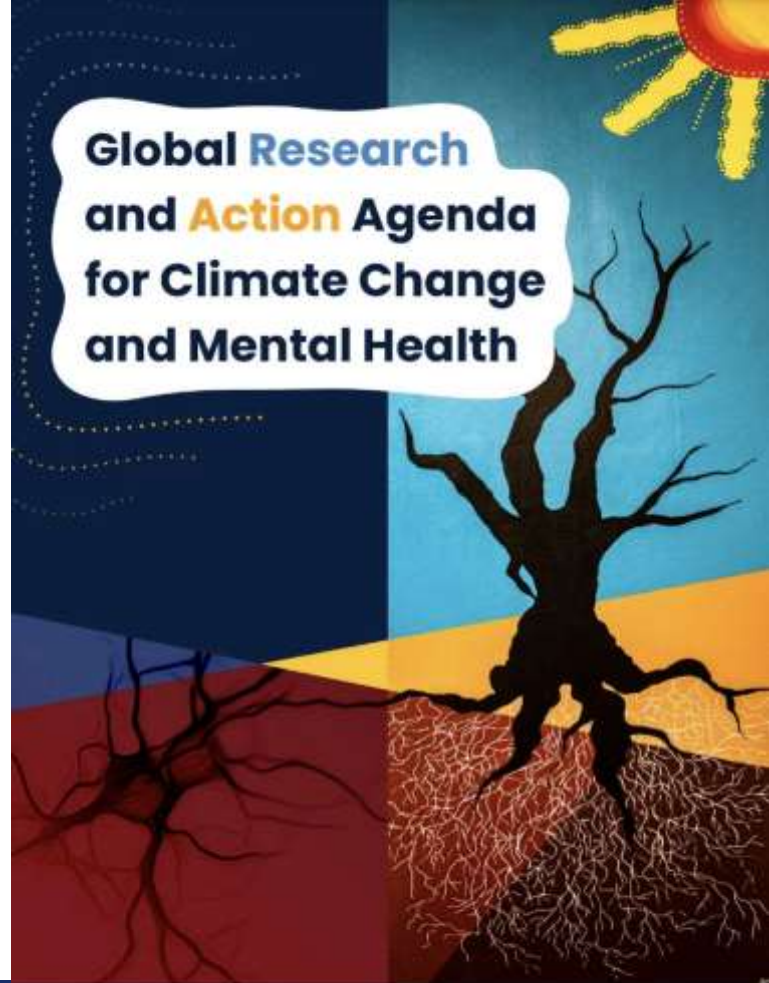


# Global insights

**Compounding mental health risks** and multiple, interacting pathways and mechanisms

**Relevant knowledge and solutions** held in diverse disciplines and cultures

**Diverse expressions** of mental health and of climate change → need for **foundational field building**



Global Research  
and **Action** Agenda  
for Climate Change  
and Mental Health

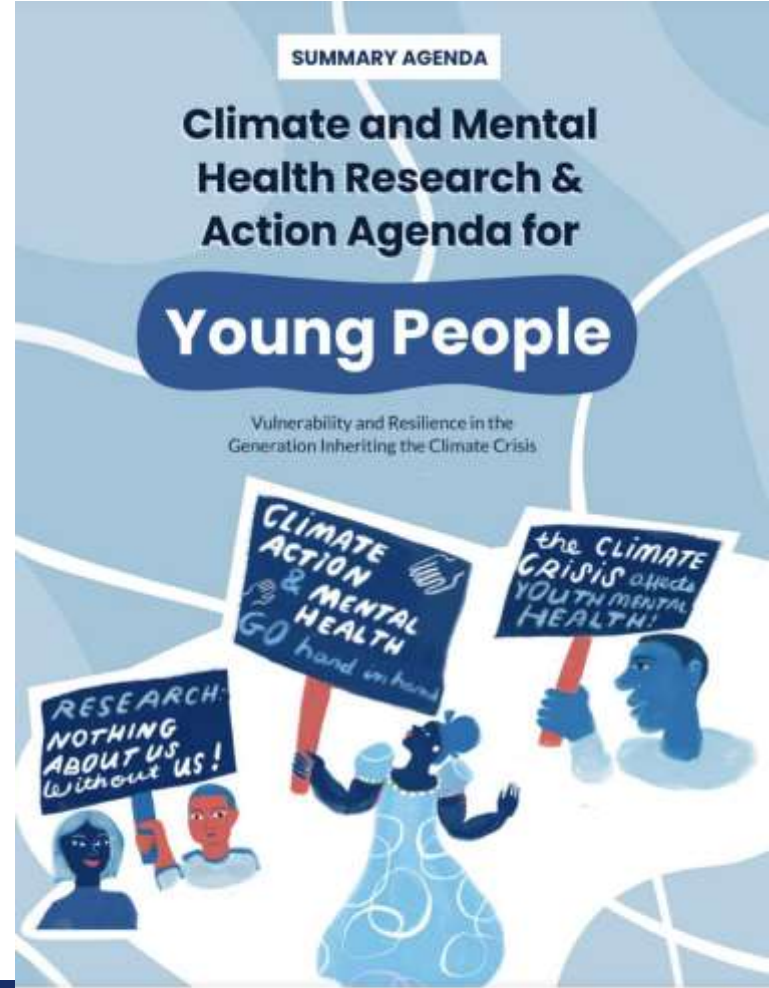
# Young People Agenda

## Priority research

- Mental health and wellbeing **terminology that resonates with climate-affected youth**
- Explore the **evolving nature of psychological impacts** and climate-related trauma
- Identify **climate actions** that integrate or align with **mental health benefits**

## Key actions

- Invest in **climate-mental health services** for youth
- Climate action, and **youth-inclusive policy making**



SUMMARY AGENDA

## Climate and Mental Health Research & Action Agenda for

# Young People

Vulnerability and Resilience in the Generation Inheriting the Climate Crisis



"Young people are showing the most serious warning signs and symptoms of a **society and a world that is in serious trouble**"

- *Lancet Psychiatry Commission on Youth Mental Health, 2024*



# hub.connectingclimateminds.org

The [Global Research and Action Agenda](#) report



[Lived experience stories](#) from around the world



[Case studies](#) showcasing existing climate and mental health research, interventions and policies



[Toolkits](#) for researchers, humanitarian decision makers and lived experience engagement



## SIGN UP TO THE HUB & CONNECT WITH OTHERS



The George Institute

for Global Health

*Better treatments. Better care. Healthier societies.*

## **The Psychological Impacts of Climate Change on Young People in India and Hong Kong**

**Mercian Daniel**

Senior Research Fellow, The George Institute, India

Mail – [mdaniel@georgeinstitute.org.in](mailto:mdaniel@georgeinstitute.org.in)



# Impact among marginalized young people

- Cross-sectional survey among 536 young people (aged 16-24) in urban slums of North and South India
- “Extreme weather events” had negative impacts, while actions for improving the environment had positive impacts
- Majority had climate agency, but did not translate into action
- Some concern about climate change, though not very high, as they weren’t directly impacted



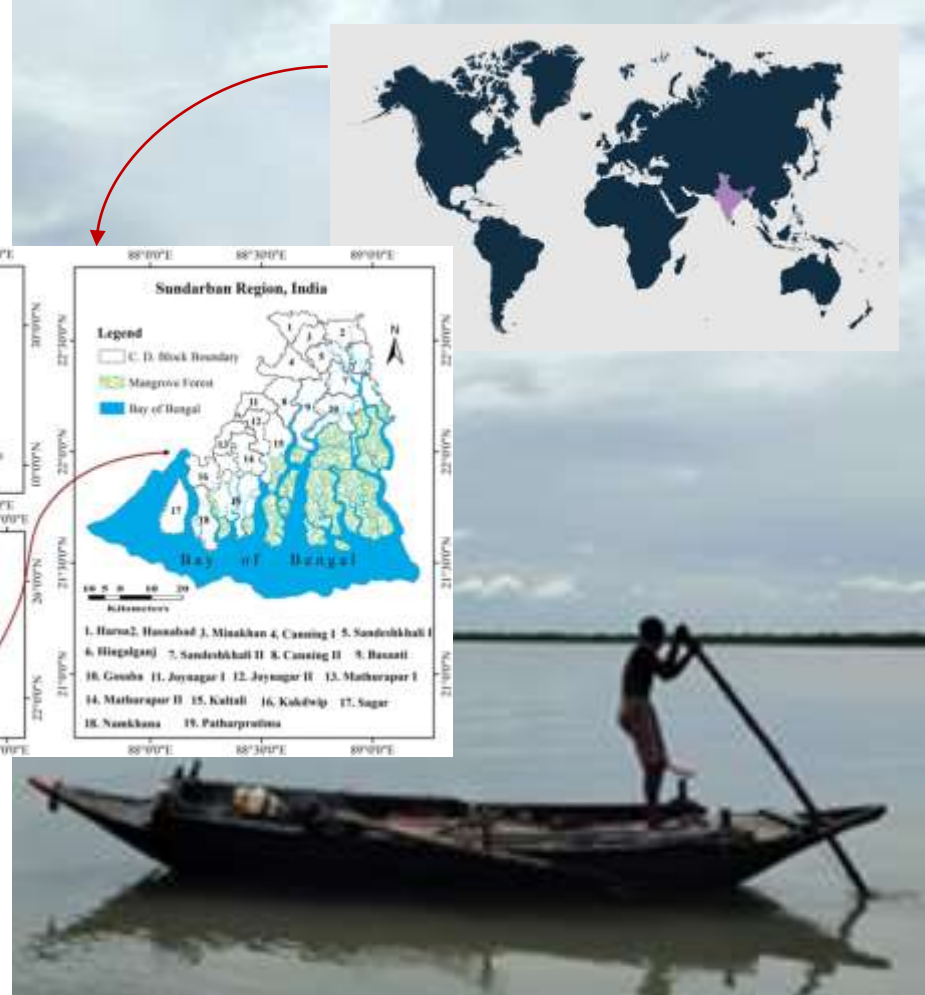
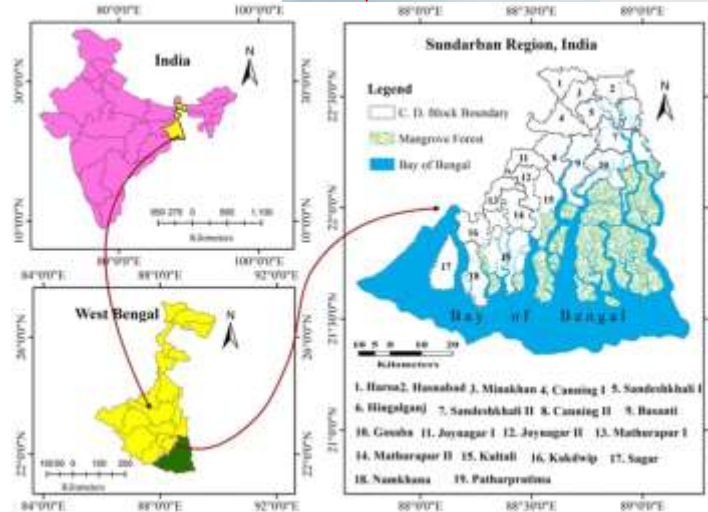
A cross-sectional survey of climate and COVID-19 crises in young people in Indian slums: context, psychological responses, and agency **The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia 2023;13: 100191**

Sarabjot Kaur, Yashika, Lalender Pooni, Anissa Dawat, and Pooja K. Mehta

Published Online: 20 April 2023

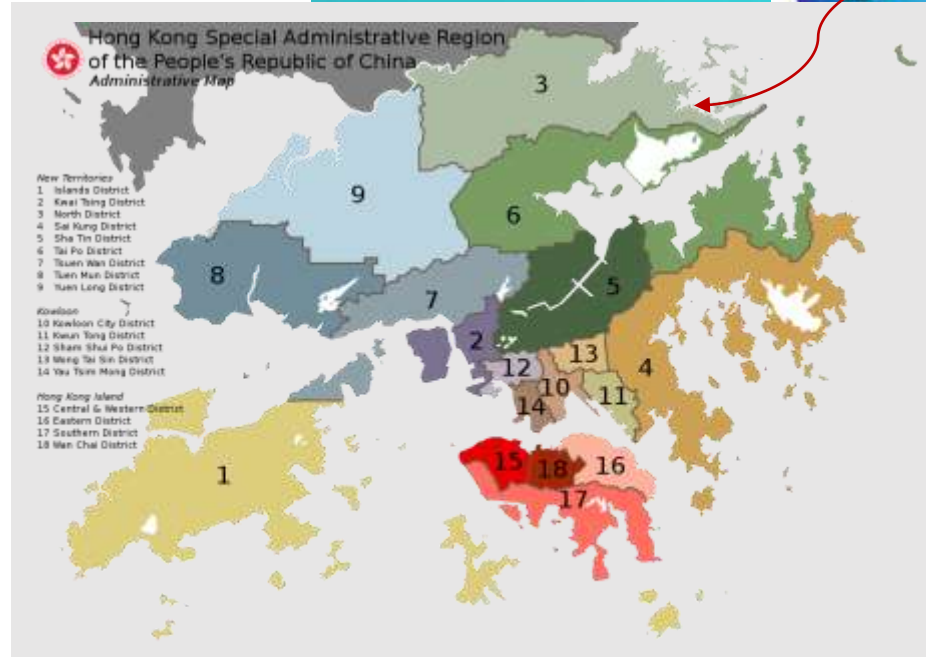
# Context: Sundarbans, India

- World's largest remaining mangrove forest and wetland, home to a large rural community
- Long-term trend of cyclone landfalls (1877- 2016) show Sundarbans as highest-impact zones (World Bank 2020)
- 5 cyclones including a super-cyclone between 2007-21 causing severe devastation



# Context: Hong Kong, China

- Urban heat island effect where dense environment exacerbates the impact of heat waves (Hua et al. 2023)
- Subtropical climate is becoming hotter and more humid with more frequent and severe heat waves (Galdies & Lau, 2020)
- Evidence of impact of climate change on mental health





## Preliminary findings: centering voices of young people

A rapid survey of **1,597 young individuals (aged 14-24)** from nine villages in the **Sundarbans and CUHK**, along with five secondary school students, revealed the following:

- Young people frequently encountered environmental challenges, including cyclones, extreme heat, and reduced access to drinking water
- **Environmental stressors**, such as high temperatures, and air, noise, and light pollution, significantly **impacted their mental health**
- Participants **expressed concern about climate change issues**
- Climate-related thoughts and concerns moderately interfered with their overall well-being

# Key takeaways and priorities for improving psychological responses to climate change



Climate change impacts mental health universally across regions, highlighting the **need for more mental research and targeted intervention**



**Socio-economic factors and life satisfaction influence mental health** and should be integrated into climate change impact and adaptation research



Environmental conditions (specific to urban and rural living) may exacerbate mental health challenges, and calls for **improved urban planning, rural development and environmental management**



**Emotional responses** to climate change and environmental degradation are critical areas for mental health research and intervention

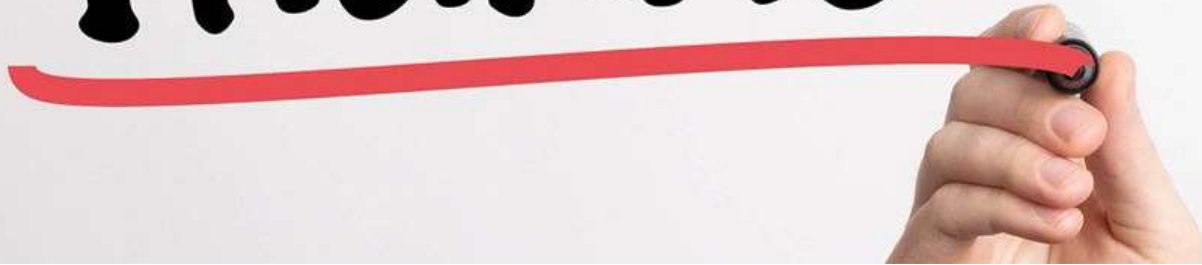
## Acknowledgements


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- The **CUHK-TGI** Joint Collaborative Research Fund
- Chinese University of Hong Kong (**Prof. Tse Lap Ah & Ms. Tang Hiu Yu Natalie**)
- The George Institute for Global Health (**Prof. Maree Hackett**, Australia; **Prof. Pallab Maulik**, India; **Dr. Sandhya Kanaka Yatirajula**, India)
- Child in Need Institute (CINI), West Bengal, India (**Mr. Sujoy Roy**, National Advocacy Officer)
- Secondary schools and Chief Public Relations Officer, Hong Kong (**A/Prof. Hon-ming Lam**)
- Changing Worlds (**Dr. Ans Vercammen & Dr. Emma L. Lawrance**)

**Thanks**





# Prioritizing the Health of Very Young Children in a World Impacted by Climate Change

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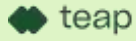
Amanda Clinton, M.Ed., Ph.D.  
Senior Director  
Office for International Affairs  
American Psychological Association



**COP29**  
Baku  
Azerbaijan

# Showcasing Youth-led Action on Mental Health and Climate Change

Case Study - The Eco-Anxiety Africa Project (TEAP)



The Eco-Anxiety  
Africa Project

sustyvibes

# About TEAP

The Eco-anxiety Africa Project (TEAP) by SustyVibes is a project founded to address the knowledge gap on climate change and mental health in Africa. Our project aims to understand and validate these realities for Africans by Africans.



# Research:

hub.connectingclimateminds.org



**Youth Research Agenda**

The cover features a blue and white design with the title 'Climate and Mental Health Research & Action Agenda for Young People'. It includes illustrations of people holding signs that say 'Climate Change is a Mental Health Issue' and 'We deserve a better future'.

**Youth Declaration**

The cover features a white background with the title 'Connecting Climate Minds Youth Declaration'. It includes logos for 'Climate Change', 'FORCE NATURE', and 'young voices'. Below the title is a small graphic of people holding signs.



# Space-making



## ZenCafe

ZenCafe, is a conversation-styled gathering that creates an open, inclusive and exploratory space for people to come together as a community to discuss their environmental-related emotions and transform fear and worry into action and hope.

## Eco-Resilience Stories



A social media campaign that spotlights stories of eco-anxiety and coping strategies from young people in the global south

# Community Action and Psychosocial Support



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Community action through susTEA Parties and psychosocial support at dialogues to support overwhelm or other emotions that may come up during our sessions.

# Other Youth Interventions

- The Resilience Project
- Climate Youth Resilience



# Integrating youth mental health in climate policies and programmes

UNFCCC side event - COP29

DR. ALESSANDRO MASSAZZA, POLICY AND ADVOCACY ADVISOR

# Murad's story



*“It's impossible to sleep, every year, when it floods, when it rains. My children are afraid. When it rains, we stay in the neighbour's house. We even stayed with my cousin's family for a year. I moved there for a year. I couldn't stay here for a year. I didn't get treatment, but I haven't been myself for a year”*

Murad, Azerbaijan

# Children's mental health in climate adaptation policies

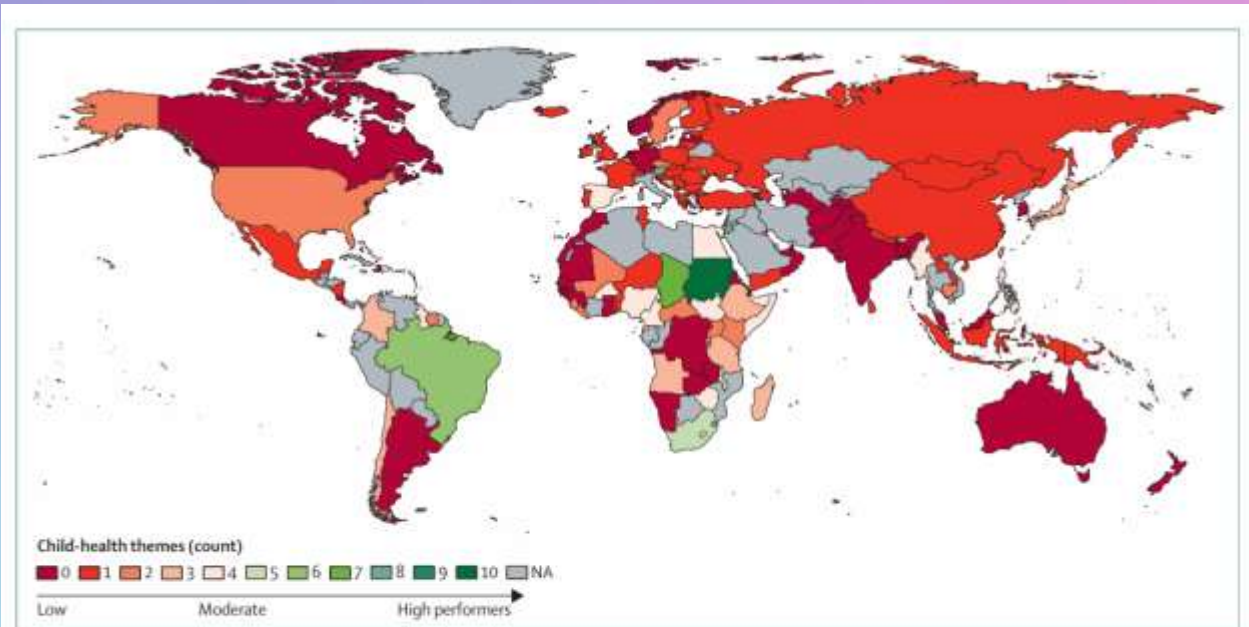
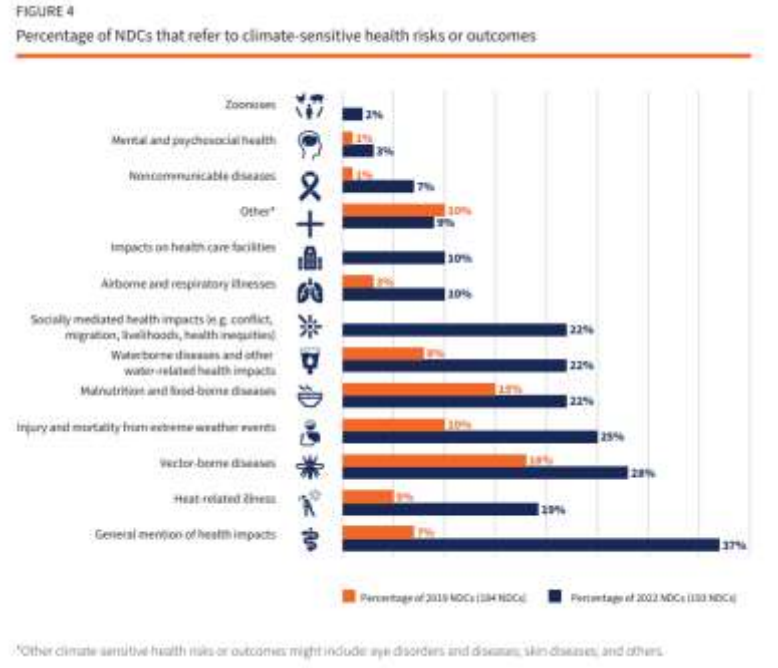


Figure 2: Inclusion of child-specific adaptation themes within 160 national adaptation policies  
Countries that were classified as high performers are coloured from dark green to green, moderate performers from light green to dark orange, and low performers are coloured dark red. Countries excluded from the analysis are coloured grey. A colour vision deficiency-friendly version of the map is also available (appendix p 14).  
NA=not applicable.

None of 160 national adaptation policies included a reference to children's mental health

# Mental health in climate policies

- Only 3% of **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** include a reference to mental health (WHO, 2023)
- Only 5% of **National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)** include actions to address mental health and psychosocial needs (WHO, 2021)
- Only 28% of WHO Member States have mental health and psychosocial support programs integrated into **disaster preparedness and/or disaster risk reduction** (WHO, 2020)



# Things are changing...



**CLIMATE CARES**

**Submission by The Climate Cares Centre and United for Global Mental Health to the Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate Change**

In response to Decision UCMAS, para 188 to hold an "expert dialogue on children and climate change", the Climate Cares Centre, Imperial College London and United for Global Mental Health welcome the opportunity to share our experience and examples of the biopsychosocial impacts of climate change on children, alongside relevant policy solutions.

**Context**  
 Climate is changing. <https://www.ipcc.ch/>  
 @UKClimateCaresCentre, @UnitedforMentalHealth

**Introduction**

"Healthy psychological development" enhances the future capital of society and thus, its capacity to achieve equity and sustainability. "Climate change is undermining this capital!"

(Report 8 Dec. 2023. Climate Change and Children's Mental Health. A Developmental Perspective)

Young people aged 0-24 years make up 47% of all people alive in the world today. 1 Of them, 88% live in low- and middle-income countries that are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. 2 According to UNICEF, 13% of children and young people aged 10-19 years old live with diagnosed mental health disorders. This represents 80 million young people aged 10-14. 3 This amount loss in human capital among their mental health conditions in children aged 0-14 is estimated to be US\$267.2 billion. 4

However, according to the World Health Organization, no country is sufficiently providing children's health, their environment and their futures. 5 The upcoming first expert dialogue on children and climate change should thus address the most relevant and pressing climate research on children's health including their mental health and well-being. This is in line with the best available scientific evidence, according to the IPCC AR6 2022 report, there is very high confidence that climate change has already negatively impacted mental health globally, with children and young people identified as populations at higher risk. 6 Further, when COP28 hosted the first-ever research

1 World Development Prospects, Population Division, United Nations  
 2 World Development Prospects, Population Division, United Nations  
 3 UNICEF, "Psychiatric morbidity among children and young people aged 10-14"  
 4 UNICEF, "Psychiatric morbidity among children and young people aged 10-14"  
 5 World Health Organization, "Mental Health and Well-being in the Context of Crisis"  
 6 IPCC AR6 Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report, Chapter 12: Human Health

**African Union**

**OFFICE OF THE YOUTH ENVY**

**Youth Mental Health Toolkit On 5 Emerging Issues in Africa**

**#icansurvive**

Mental Health and Well-being of Support, Recovery, and

**SUMMARY AGENDA**

**Climate and Mental Health Research & Action Agenda for Young People**

Systemic Policy and Resilience in the Generation Inhabiting the Climate Crisis

**United for Global Mental Health**

[www.unitedformentalhealth.org](https://www.unitedformentalhealth.org)

Partners:

**MEERA & the Disaster & Rewind Machine**

**HOW TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS**



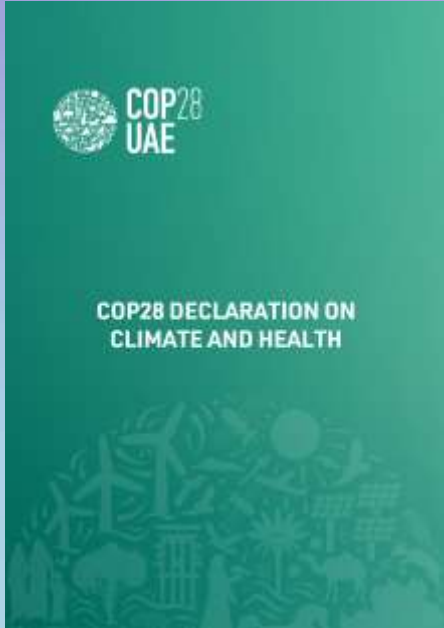
# A case study from Peru (UNICEF): Integrating youth mental health into disaster response



Photo credit: UNICEF

- Peru experiencing multiple **climate-related hazards** plus high **levels of migrating populations** (in Northern region)
- UNICEF, together with national partners, has **integrated mental health and psychosocial support** in migrant attention and orientation points
- **“Fixed Friendly Spaces”** focus on strengthening protective factors and resilience in children as well as psychoeducation with caregivers
- **Itinerant brigades** implemented to reach families far from these points and included nutritionist/midwives/psychologists
- Implementation of **socio-emotional toolkit in schools** in Northern Peru hit by cyclone Yakun, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education

# Global policy precedents



# Youth as powerful advocates for the link between climate and mental health



Out of 11 side-events covering mental health at COP29, 7 (64%) focused on young people's mental health

# Final recommendation

*“Integrate young people's mental health and psychosocial wellbeing considerations into the new submissions for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPS), including at least three specific multi-sectoral actions to:*

- a) ensure access to climate-resilient mental healthcare systems for young people*
- b) address the prevention and management of mental health conditions exacerbated by climate change*
- c) promote psychosocial well-being and resilience in the face of climate and ecological stressors.”*



COP29 side event on youth mental health in the climate crisis

# What do decision-makers need to drive change in climate and youth mental health?

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**John Balbus, MD, MPH**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary for**  
**Climate Change and Health Equity**  
November 21, 2024



## Some ideas for what is needed to drive change

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- Within the government
  - **Integrate climate into mental/behavioral health programs, and vice versa**
  - **Build multiple agency collaboration**
- Outside the government
  - **Build the evidence base for effective interventions**
  - **Advocacy for stronger prevention programs in youth mental health**
  - **Make the connection between climate action and youth mental health**

# Integrate behavioral health into youth climate programs and vice versa

## Behavioral Health Programming



*What Works In Schools*



Delivering Services in School-Based Settings

**SAMHSA**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

**Certified  
Community  
Behavioral  
Health Clinics**



## Youth Climate Programming



**Youth &  
Young Adult  
Programs**







## Some ideas for what is needed to drive change

---

- Within the government
  - **Integrate climate into mental/behavioral health programs, and vice versa**
  - **Build multiple agency collaboration**
- Outside the government
  - **Build the evidence base for effective interventions**
  - **Advocacy for stronger prevention programs in youth mental health**
  - **Make the connection between climate action and youth mental health**

# Provide evidence of successful mental health interventions

Review Article | [Open access](#) | Published: 12 March 2024

## Mental health and psychosocial interventions in the context of climate change: a scoping review

[Siqi Xue](#) , [Alessandro Massazza](#), [Samia C. Akhter-Khan](#), [Britt Wray](#), [M. Ishrat Husain](#) & [Emma L. Lawrance](#)

[npj Mental Health Research](#) **3**, Article number: 10 (2024)

In contrast to the academic literature findings, the gray literature search identified mostly interventions delivered by organizations founded or based in HICs. Few interventions commented on a theoretical framework for the mechanism of intervention. None were formally evaluated or have evaluative data publicly available, and therefore it is not possible to determine whether they are effective in addressing their targeted mental health and wellbeing outcomes or have any unintended impacts.

# Connect climate action to youth mental health

ARTICLES · Volume 5, Issue 12, E863-E873, December 2021 · *Open Access*

[Download Full Issue](#)

Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey

[Caroline Hickman, MSc](#)<sup>a,†</sup> [✉](#) · [Elizabeth Marks, ClinPsyD](#)<sup>b,†</sup> · [Panu Pihkala, PhD](#)<sup>c</sup> · [Prof Susan Clayton, PhD](#)<sup>d</sup> · [R Eric Lewandowski, PhD](#)<sup>e</sup> · [Elouise E Mayall, BSc](#)<sup>f</sup> et al. [Show more](#)

“A perceived failure by governments to respond to the climate crisis is associated with increased distress.”

ARTICLES · Online first, October 17, 2024 · *Open Access*

Climate emotions, thoughts, and plans among US adolescents and young adults: a cross-sectional descriptive survey and analysis by political party identification and self-reported exposure to severe weather events

[R Eric Lewandowski, PhD](#)<sup>a</sup> [✉](#) · [Susan D Clayton, PhD](#)<sup>b</sup> · [Lukas Olbrich, MSc](#)<sup>c,d</sup> · [Joseph W Sakshaug, PhD](#)<sup>c,d</sup> · [Britt Wray, PhD](#)<sup>e</sup> · [Sarah E O Schwartz, PhD](#)<sup>f</sup> et al. [Show more](#)

“These findings reflect previous correlational evidence linking climate anxiety to beliefs about government inaction on climate change.”



**OASH**

Office of  
Climate Change  
and Health Equity



**Thank you!**

**Contact us: [OCACHE@hhs.gov](mailto:OCACHE@hhs.gov)**

Visit us online and sign up for our  
listserv at [www.hhs.gov/ocche](http://www.hhs.gov/ocche)

# Q&A

