



COP20: Children in a Changing Climate Policy Briefing

Children in the world's poorest countries are some of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, despite being least responsible for its causes. Children across the world are already facing climate risks, which are affecting their access to education, to clean drinking water, to nutritious and reliable food, and extreme climatic events threaten lives and livelihoods. Nevertheless, despite their common portrayal as victims, children can also be powerful advocates and agents of change and have a right to participate and have their voices heard in decision making about climate change.ⁱ

Children in a Changing Climate is calling on negotiators in Lima to place the rights and needs of children front and centre of their discussions and decisions. It is crucial that as the foundations for the 2015 agreement are laid at COP20, this is done with a clear focus on the generation that will inherit this framework, and the consequences of a warmer world. It is also essential that during the critical period leading up to the agreement's implementation in 2020, action on mitigation, adaptation and financing is significantly strengthened.

Negotiations on the 2015 agreement

The new global climate agreement, to be finalised at COP21 in Paris next year, will be critical in shaping the world that today's children, and future generations, will inherit. Negotiators in Lima have important work to do to ensure that a strong draft text is put in place at COP20. This should lay the foundations of a fair, ambitious and legally binding agreement.

It is essential that equity is at the heart of the new agreement, in the context of the principle of countries' common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and according to the principle of intergenerational equity.ⁱⁱ Intergenerational equity should be enshrined as a guiding principle of the new climate change agreement. There must be an explicit recognition of the need to take action to protect the climate system for the benefit of future generations.

In order to limit warming to 2 degrees, global emissions need to be reduced by 40% to 70% by 2050 compared to 2010, and fall to nearly zero by the end of the century.ⁱⁱⁱ Countries' Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) must collectively be sufficient to meet the scale of this challenge. This means that the 2015 agreement must include mechanisms to ensure that INDCs are both adequate and equitable.

The scale of the adaptation challenge will only continue to escalate after 2020. The 2015 agreement must include guaranteed financial support for climate change adaptation in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. This should include new instruments and channels to mobilise international climate finance from new sources. It is also important that the 2015 agreement encourages and promotes national level adaptation planning, which focuses on the most vulnerable, and prioritises child-centred approaches to adaptation.

The 2015 agreement must also enshrine a greater role for civil society, and incorporate mechanisms for all members of society, including children, to participate in decision making, including compliance, monitoring and reporting and preparing of INDCs.

Finance

Protecting children in the most vulnerable communities from the impacts of climate change demands that sufficient financial resources are urgently made available. The pledges made so far to the Green Climate Fund are an encouraging start, but will need to be rapidly scaled up in order to meet the target of mobilising mobilise \$100 billion a year by 2020. It is important that COP20 discusses a future target level of annual contributions to the GCF, and that developed countries agree to continuously increase their annual contributions towards the 2020 target.

At the GCF begins its work, It is important that the allocation of finance is balanced between adaptation and mitigation and moves rapidly towards its target of allocating 50% of finance to adaptation, and 50% of these funds to the most high-risk countries.

Investments made by the GCF must focus on the people and communities it is serving: those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It is essential that allocation of funds is equitable, and investment criteria ensure that the most marginalised, including children, women and people with disabilities are significant beneficiaries. It is also important that robust social and environmental safeguards are established, particularly with regard to private sector investments.

It is essential that the GCF operates in a transparent manner, and that channels are established for public consultation on investment decisions. These should include channels for children and youth participation at all levels. Funds should be earmarked for children's participation and child centered climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, drawing on existing good programming practice.^{iv}

Pre 2020 ambition

The period leading up to the implementation of the new climate change agreement (2015 – 2020) will be critical for determining the amount of warming we are likely to see; it is important that global emissions peak before 2020. Further delays to emissions cuts will make the 2 degree target even more unattainable and mean that today's children, and future generations, will be unable to prevent dangerous human interference with the climate.

It is therefore essential that pre-2020 mitigation commitments are revised to ensure they are adequate, as demanded by the science. Developed countries must take a leadership role, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

ⁱ Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that: "Children have the right to participate in decisions affecting them"

ⁱⁱ The principle of intergenerational justice argues that there should be distributive justice between generations, and that the rights of generations should be considered equal over time. Stone L and Lofts K (2009) Climate Change, Child Rights and Intergenerational Justice. IDS

ⁱⁱⁱ IPCC summary for policy makers http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_SPM.pdf

^{iv} Children in a Changing Climate agencies (Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision have all developed child-centred approaches to climate change adaptation programming.