

# Media Update

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## UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

### Funds for world's climate hotspots woefully neglect the needs of children, new report finds

**New York - June 23, 2023,** Children are being failed by climate funding commitments, despite bearing the brunt of the climate crisis, according to a new report from members of the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) coalition; Plan International, Save the Children, and UNICEF.

Just 2.4 percent of key global climate funds can be classified as supporting child-responsive activities, the report finds. According to UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index, more than a billion children are at extremely high risk of the impacts of the climate crisis.

Maria Marshall, a 13-year-old UNICEF child advocate and climate activist from Barbados said, "Children are the future, but our future is shaped by the actions of those making decisions in the present, and our voices are not being heard. As this report shows, funding climate solutions is an obligation, but how that money is spent also matters. Children's needs and perspectives must be included."

The study, *Falling short: addressing the climate finance gap for children* used a set of three criteria to assess if climate finance from key multilateral climate funds (MCFs) serving the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement were: addressing the distinct and heightened risks they experience from the climate crisis, strengthening the resilience of child-critical social services and empowering children as agents of change.

"The findings are stark," said Kabita Bose, Country Director at Plan International Bangladesh. "Urgent and effective investment is key to adapting to climate change, and is particularly critical for children, especially girls who

are highly susceptible to the short and long-term impacts. Yet current spending almost ignores children entirely – this needs to change.”

The report found that out of all the money given by MCFs for climate-related projects over a period of 17 years until March 2023, only a small portion (2.4%) met all three of the requirements which amounted to only \$1.2 billion. The report also says that this number likely reflects an overestimate, meaning that even less money may have met all the requirements.

“Children, especially those already affected by inequality and discrimination, have done the least to cause climate change but are most affected by it. Climate finance offers an opportunity to tackle these injustices by considering the needs and perspectives of children,” said Kelley Toole, Global Head of Climate Change at Save the Children. “This has been woefully inadequate to date but can and must change. To really tackle the climate crisis, we must put child rights at the heart of our response and ensure children’s voices are heard”.

While MCFs provide a relatively small share of overall climate finance, the degree to which these funds consider children matters greatly. MCFs have a vital role to play in agenda-setting, and in catalysing and coordinating investments by other public and private finance institutions, including at national levels, which are necessary to drive a broader change.

Children are disproportionately vulnerable to water and food scarcity, water-borne diseases, and physical and psychological trauma, all of which have been linked to both extreme weather events and slow-onset climate effects. There is also evidence that changing weather patterns are disrupting children’s access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and clean drinking water.

“Every child is exposed to at least one - and often multiple - climate hazards. The finance and investment that is desperately needed to adapt critical social services like health and water to climate hazards is insufficient and largely blind to the urgent and unique needs of children. This must change. The climate crisis is a child rights crisis, and climate finance must reflect this,” said Paloma Escudero, Special Adviser for Climate Advocacy at UNICEF.

The report highlights that when it comes to children, they are often viewed as a vulnerable group rather than being recognised as active stakeholders or agents of change. Less than 4% of projects, amounting to just 7% of MCF investment (\$2.58 billion), give explicit and meaningful consideration to the needs and involvement of girls.

The report is informed by the voices of children from around the world, who said that they face increased risks because of climate change. A teenage girl in Zimbabwe said, “In Chiredzi, we learned that some girls cannot swim across flooded rivers to go to school or go home whilst boys can. Girls must walk for up to 10-15km to get to school. They get tired along the way before they even start classes.” A 13-year-old boy from Bangladesh added, “Lots of large-scale disasters hit our district which causes people to become impoverished, and children like us are engaged in child labour.”

The CERI coalition is urging multilateral climate funds, as well as other climate finance providers providing climate finance at both the international and national levels, to act quickly and address the adaptation gap. They are specifically calling for funding to cover losses and damages caused by climate change. This funding should prioritise the well-being of children and critical social services that support them. The focus should be on reaching and assisting the children who are most vulnerable and at high risk due to climate impacts.

## ENDS

### Notes to Editor:

The Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) is a coalition of children and young people, activists, child rights organisations, experts, governmental actors and policy makers from around the world, working together to ensure that children's fundamental right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is recognised and fulfilled. *Falling short: addressing the climate finance gap for children* is in part funded by the think tank Capita.

CERI enables coalition members to collaborate in elevating the voices of children and young people most impacted by environmental harm and climate change while also building the capacity of national decision makers to implement child-focused environmental policy and inform new standards and practices in multilateral processes. The work of the coalition is facilitated by a dedicated secretariat.

**For further information, interviews or to request an embargoed copy of the full report, please contact:** Tess Ingram, [tingram@unicef.org](mailto:tingram@unicef.org), +1 934 867 7867

## About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

For more information about UNICEF and its work, visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

## About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child. Working together with children, young people, our supporters, and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We have been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years and are now active in more than 80 countries.

## About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. Since our founding more than 100 years ago, we've changed the lives of more than 1 billion children. Around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children—every day and in times of crisis—transforming their lives and the future we share.