

Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies

Submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change regarding its call for input to the Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate Change

Introduction

- a. The Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies (“EiE Hub”) – with leading contributions from Education Cannot Wait (“ECW”), the Global Partnership for Education (“GPE”) and UNESCO – makes this submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (“UNFCCC”) under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (“SBI”) decision 1/CMA.5, para 182, regarding its call to share experience in, and examples of, the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children and relevant policy solutions ahead of the Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate Change, to be held in Bonn, Germany on 4th June 2024.
- b. The EiE Hub is an alliance of 52 entities, including States, funds, international organisations and procedures, civil society organisations, private foundations, an international financial institution, the ICRC and the International Federation of the Red Cross, and academic entities, committed to presenting a unified voice in shaping and influencing education in emergencies (“EiE”), stepping up visibility, political and operational commitments, and funding for EiE.^a
- c. The EiE Hub welcomes the UNFCCC’s call for input for the Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate Change.
- d. The EiE Hub’s input draws primarily on its flagship report *Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action*.¹ Additionally, it draws on the expertise of the EiE Hub’s members. The input focusses particularly on the disproportionate impact of climate change on the education of crisis-affected and displaced children and youth.

1. The disproportionate impact of climate change on children

- i. Children and youth are disproportionately affected by the climate and environmental breakdown. According to the UNICEF Children’s Climate Risk Index, approximately one billion children globally – nearly half the world’s children – live in countries considered at ‘extremely high risk’ from the impacts of the climate crisis.² Children in these countries are exposed to multiple climate-related and environmental shocks.
- ii. Climate change has particularly severe impacts on children that have been displaced or are already affected by other humanitarian crises. Currently, 224 million school-aged children

^a The EiE Hub is composed of the following 52 members (original co-signatories are marked in italics): Action for Development, Arigatou International, Aga Khan Foundation, Canada, Colombia, Catholic Relief Service Concern Worldwide, Danish Alliance for EiE, *Education Cannot Wait*, Enfants du monde, Education.org, Educators Without Borders International, Finn Church Aid, Fraternity –International Humanitarian Missions, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Global Education Cluster*, *Geneva Graduate Institute*, Global Partnership for Education, Humanitarian Development Partnerships, Helpcode, Humanity and Inclusion, Human Rights Watch, HundrED Foundation, *International Committee of the Red Cross*, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies*, International Parliamentary Network for Education, International Rescue Committee, IsraAID, Jacobs Foundation, Jesuit Refugee Service, Niger, Norwegian Capacity, Norwegian Refugee Council, People in Need, Plan International, Safe to Learn, Save the Children, Special Rapporteur on the right to education, South Sudan, *Switzerland*, United Kingdom, *UNESCO*, *UNHCR*, *UNICEF*, *University of Geneva*, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, World Bank, World Vision International.

worldwide are affected by crises and in desperate need of educational support. Of these, 62 million children are impacted by climate hazards (25 million children are affected by drought, 20 million by floods, and 17 million by cyclone, storms and similar weather events).³

- iii. The impacts of climate change also exacerbate existing risks and inequalities, including gender, ethnicity, disability, age and displacement or migration status.

2. Effects of climate change on children's education

A quality education is every child's right. Yet the impact of climate change on education, and the ways education can address climate change, have largely been overlooked in climate change discussions and policies. The following section provides some examples of how education is impacted by climate change.

a. Climate change negatively impacts children's access to education

- i. Climate change-induced extreme weather and other weather-related hazards can damage or destroy schools and other learning infrastructure, thus severely disrupting children's education. For example, the 2022 floods in Pakistan fully or partially damaged at least 25,993 education institutions, affecting the education of more than 3.5 million school-aged children.⁴ The floods compounded already existing humanitarian challenges such as high poverty and food insecurity, which can equally impact children's education negatively.
- ii. Schools can be forced to close due to climate change-induced extreme temperatures: for example, in April 2024, extreme heat forced the closure of all schools in Bangladesh as temperatures soared to 42 degrees Celsius, affecting 33 million children.⁵
- iii. Prolonged school closures in the wake of disasters can lead to a higher risk of school drop-out, in particular among girls. For example, in Mozambique, in 2022, Tropical Cyclone Gombe caused prolonged school closures.⁶ Combined with existing multiple vulnerabilities in the affected communities, such as high poverty, student absenteeism, and low female student retention, these closures led to higher student dropout, especially among girls.
- iv. Following climate change-induced disasters, schools are often used as temporary emergency shelters or evacuation centres, further disrupting the education of children. This has recently been the case in Haiti, Japan, Libya, Pakistan, and the Philippines.⁷
- v. Even when schools do not close, extreme weather events and other climate impacts (e.g., prolonged flooding) reduce attendance by making the way to school more hazardous for children. For example, in Brazil, there are more absences during the rainy season even when classes are not suspended. This is due to challenges in transportation, particularly for poorer and more vulnerable students.⁸
- vi. Climate change and climate change-induced extreme weather events can have negative impacts on children's health and wellbeing (cf. points *1.b.i* and *1.b.vi* below), which can in turn affect their ability to travel to and attend school, or cause them to drop out of school.
- vii. Destruction of and damage to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure caused by climate change-induced hazards can lead to school closures and absenteeism, especially among girls, and can in many cases lead to dropout. In Somalia, which has been severely affected by drought, water scarcity is one of the main causes of school closures.⁹ Lack of adequate WASH infrastructure can also increase the risk of violence for learners and teachers, particularly gender-based violence.

b. Climate change negatively impacts children's learning environment and learning attainment

- i. Climate change-induced high temperatures can disproportionately affect children's health and cognitive development. It also hinders children's ability to learn, as it makes it harder to

concentrate, process, and retain information. Recent research conducted in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan confirmed that extremely high ambient air temperatures and poor hydration affect children's ability to concentrate, which results in lower learning achievement.¹⁰

- ii. Extreme temperatures are making indoor classrooms unfit for learning and teaching,¹¹ while those who attend school in the open air or in a tent are often exposed to harsh conditions that make sustained and serious study impossible. As the global heating trend continues, outdoor learning spaces are on the brink of becoming unusable in very hot regions around the world. High temperatures and other extreme weather conditions are also disproportionately affecting girls.
- iii. Climate change-induced hazards and shocks can severely erode teachers' ability to provide quality education to crisis-affected children, especially if disasters destroy teaching and learning resources.
- iv. The growing number of children and youth being forcibly displaced and migrating due to climate or environmental crisis makes it harder for education authorities and providers, who are already beyond their limits, to meet students' diverse educational needs.
- v. Migration and displacement are driving up teacher-student ratios, creating additional learning challenges in already crowded classrooms.
- vi. Climate change has negative impacts on student's mental health, which is likely to adversely affect both student learning and retention. Children who have experienced climate change-induced disasters can develop post-traumatic stress disorder.¹² Climate anxiety has been shown to be an increasingly prevalent stressor for children; Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' surveys of children and youth aged between 10 and 30 revealed that 86% of respondents from Eastern and Southern Africa, and 93% from Southeast Asia, were 'extremely worried' or 'a little worried' about climate change.¹³

c. Climate change compounds factors that harm children's education

- i. Climate shocks can exacerbate conflict, displacement, and migration. Conflict, violence, and war in turn have severe consequences on children's educational attainment and achievement.¹⁴ Out of the 224 million school-aged children affected by crises and in need of education support, about 62 million were affected by climate hazards.¹⁵ Of these 62 million, around 31 million children found themselves in countries ill-prepared to handle the impacts of severe climate-related crises.
- ii. Over the last five years, more than 91 million school-aged children impacted by crises have faced climate shocks amplified by climate change. The effects have been particularly pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa, affecting 42 million children, and South Asia, impacting 31 million children. Among the various climate hazards assessed, droughts emerge as the most severe and persistent, disproportionately affecting children in Sub-Saharan Africa. Disruptions in access to education are larger in Sub-Saharan Africa, where many countries lack robust disaster preparedness systems within their education infrastructure, and have weak social protection mechanisms, leaving children - particularly displaced girls - susceptible to harm.
- iii. Climate-change related loss of income and livelihoods can force families to withdraw children from school, especially girls. For example, in rural Zimbabwe, when farming income has been lost due to drought, families have insufficient income to meet the education costs of their offspring, which often forces them to withdraw children from school.¹⁶
- iv. Recurrent and intensifying climate change-induced hazards are putting a great strain on already tight government financial resources, making it more difficult to invest in resilient education systems.¹⁷

d. Climate change impacts on children's education affect future earnings and productivity and prevent children from taking climate action

- i. Lower education attainment of children caused by climate change can translate to lower earnings and productivity.¹⁸ School attainment is linked with higher earnings, with estimates suggesting a return of 9-10% for each additional year of schooling. These returns are higher in poorer countries and among girls. As climate shocks reduce education attainment, future earnings and productivity will suffer.
- ii. Interruption in education caused by climate change and other factors hinders children in taking climate action and adapting to climate change. There is an increasing recognition that education is one of the most powerful tools to combat and adapt to climate change and its effects.¹⁹ However, if children have their education disrupted by climate change and other factors, this will prevent them from obtaining the knowledge and learning the skills necessary to take climate action.

3. Relevant policy solutions to address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children

The following section provides some examples of policy solutions.

a. Concrete actions to address climate change impacts on children's education

- i. Strengthen the resilience of existing buildings, protect classrooms and temporary learning shelters from heat, and adopt innovative best practices (for both resilience and cooling) for any new construction. In emergency contexts, there exist innovations, for instance, which use solar energy to make temporary learning spaces cooler in summer and warmer in winter.
- ii. Well-funded and coordinated emergency responses in the education sector help minimise the disruption of learning.
- iii. Identify and pre-position alternative temporary shelters in emergency response plans to avoid the use of schools as temporary shelters and minimise the disruption of learning.
- iv. Coordinate between Ministries of Education and Environment to support adaptation and disaster risk planning at the sector and school levels. Education policies, at the national and subnational levels, need to include climate change impacts and how to address these.
- v. Coordinate across Ministries of Education and Environment and Meteorological departments and invest in early warning systems and anticipatory action. Investing in mechanisms to alert schools in real time and take early action can minimise the damage of adverse climate events on students, teachers, and schools.
- vi. Provide targeted in-service training to school management on crisis response and overall management practices to help with risk mitigation and improve the speed and recovery following climate shocks.

b. Actions to address climate impacts on education in crisis-affected countries

- i. Ensure crisis-affected countries are not left behind in action to address the impact of climate change on education. A different set of interventions is required, including working through the humanitarian cluster system and with country-based coordination groups.
- ii. Ensure global climate change and education work does not disproportionately focus on visible areas, such as climate education/curriculum, but equally protects the basic right to education and attainment of SDG4 for children living on the frontline of climate and other crises, and whose education is disrupted and impeded by climate change.
- iii. In these contexts, activities such as anticipatory action, learning continuity (through use of temporary learning spaces), mental health and psychosocial support, coordinating with country-based coordination groups for quick response, and crisis modifiers, are vital.

c. Wider policy solutions

- i. Inclusion in, prioritisation of, and adequate funding given to, children's education through Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans and Action for Climate Empowerment strategies.
- ii. Relevant climate policy processes, such as those related to adaptation and loss and damage, should include the education sector as one impacted by and crucial to addressing climate change.
- iii. Develop enabling frameworks or strategies for EiE that articulate climate change and environmental imperatives, and are predicated on existing key global frameworks and strategies. These may include the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) of the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES); the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies' Minimum Standards; the Global Education Cluster Strategy; and GPE's Climate Smart Education Framework (see *paragraph 3.d.* for more information on some of these frameworks).
- iv. Encourage humanitarian and development actors to embed climate change and environmental dimensions in their educational policymaking, strategising, and planning.
- v. Integrate building resilience to climate change into education sector planning.
- vi. Strengthen data collection on climate-related disruption of education, risk assessments, analysis and dissemination, including disaggregated data by age, gender and disability, at a minimum.
- vii. Make contingency-informed policy that considers different projections of global surface heating and cooling, including local variations and particularities.
- viii. Develop institutional arrangements that help to forge close collaboration among ministries that will support climate, environmental, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) education in formal and non-formal learning spaces.
- ix. Allocate funding to enable displaced and crisis-affected children and youth to participate in climate change mitigation and adaptation activities, and to gain skills and livelihood opportunities.
- x. Fund examples of anticipatory action in the EiE sphere that extend over several years, with a view toward providing models of best practice.
- xi. Advocate for EiE to receive a fair share of international climate finance, including the Loss and Damage Fund.
- xii. Conduct a cost-effective analysis of climate action and inaction in the education sector to highlight the fact that early investments in education can bring significant savings, while non-investment can have significant human, economic, and psychosocial costs.

d. Successful existing solutions and good practices

- i. ECW signed onto the *Getting Ahead of Disasters: A Charter on Finance for Managing Risks* at COP28, which sets out principles for collaborative action to ensure better use of finance to manage risks and protect people in the most vulnerable countries from climate-related disasters. To support this, ECW is launching two new anticipatory action pilots in the EiE sector in 2024 to respond to forecasted climate shocks and stresses that can significantly affect schools and access to education.²⁰ This approach pre-positions finance and resources together with pre-defined actions to be taken when a trigger is activated. This is a key approach for EiE and climate sectors to implement and finance, to ensure early action is taken ahead of a shock to reduce the number of lost school days. ECW also funds multi-year resilience programmes across the intersection of humanitarian and development actions with strong climate considerations. In Chad, ECW supports training teachers on disaster risk

- reduction and how to introduce it to students and the wider community, school feeding programmes and distance learning opportunities, mental health and psychosocial support services, and climate-resilient school infrastructure.
- ii. The Greening Education Partnership aims to catalyse action to equip every learner with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to tackle climate change and promote sustainable development.²¹ Countries signing up for the partnership commit to reach the targets of at least two of four action areas by 2030: greening schools, greening learning, greening capacity and readiness, and greening communities.
 - iii. GPE's *Towards Climate-Smart Education Systems* is a 7-dimension Framework for Action.²² GPE's framework articulates the mutually reinforcing goals of protecting and advancing equitable quality education; protecting the planet's life systems; and promoting climate justice in lower income countries. Encompassing the seven interrelated key education system dimensions – data and evidence; policy and planning; coordination; finance; infrastructure; teaching and learning; schools and communities – the 'climate smart' education systems framework highlights potential approaches for strengthening education system resilience, and for leveraging an impactful education-sector contribution to wider climate change, DRR, and environmental efforts.
 - iv. The CSSF developed by GADRRRES supports the building of education sector resilience by taking an all-hazards, all-risks approach to protecting children and education.²³ The CSSF includes a foundation on systems and policies, as well as three intersecting pillars: 1) safer learning facilities; 2) school safety and continuity management; 3) risk reduction and resilient education. To proactively address threats to education systems, the CSSF supports risk identification, risk reduction, response preparedness, and rapid recovery. The CSSF also supports work to strengthen intersectoral collaboration and the nexus.

Endnotes

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- ¹ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#).
 - ² UNICEF (2021). [The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Index](#).
 - ³ ECW (2023). [Right here, right now: An Emergency Appeal to Support Education for Children and Adolescents Affected by Climate Hazards](#), p. 7.
 - ⁴ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 65.
 - ⁵ Save the Children (2024). [Heat-stricken Bangladesh extends school closures](#).
 - ⁶ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 29.
 - ⁷ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 29; S. Venegas Marin, L. Schwarz, and S. Sabarwal (2024). [The Impact of Climate Change on Education, and what to do about it](#), p. 10.
 - ⁸ S. Venegas Marin, L. Schwarz, and S. Sabarwal (2024). [The Impact of Climate Change on Education, and what to do about it](#), p. 10.
 - ⁹ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 29.
 - ¹⁰ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 29.
 - ¹¹ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 29.
 - ¹² S. Venegas Marin, L. Schwarz, and S. Sabarwal (2024). [The Impact of Climate Change on Education, and what to do about it](#), p. 15.
 - ¹³ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 36.
 - ¹⁴ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 24.
 - ¹⁵ ECW (2023). [Futures at Risk: Climate-Induced Shocks and Their Toll on Education for Crisis-Affected Children](#).
 - ¹⁶ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 33.
 - ¹⁷ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 32.
 - ¹⁸ S. Venegas Marin, L. Schwarz, and S. Sabarwal (2024). [The Impact of Climate Change on Education, and what to do about it](#), p. 15.
 - ¹⁹ EiE Hub (2023). [Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action](#), p. 50.
 - ²⁰ ECW (2023). [Climate Appeal](#).
 - ²¹ UNESCO (2024). [Greening Education Partnership](#).
 - ²² Global Partnership for Education (2024). [Climate smart education systems initiative](#).
 - ²³ GADRRRES (2022). [Comprehensive School Safety Framework](#).