



# The right climate to learn

Education in a changing climate



# Foreword

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As members of Send My Friend to School, we are committed to campaigning for quality education for all children around the world.

Education is the cornerstone of sustainable development and with Sustainable Development Goal 4, the global community committed to realising the right to quality education for all by 2030.

However, the climate crisis jeopardises this promise. Despite global commitments, education continues to be interrupted for children and young people around the world and data has already shown that the world is off-track in realising education for all.

The COVID-19 pandemic is just the latest example of serious interruptions to children and young people's learning. In April 2020, school gates closed to over 90% of the world's learners and this has compounded educational inequalities.

Building strong and resilient education systems is crucial in the face of interruptions to education – not least climate change. Flooded schools, heat-exhausted pupils, monsoon ravaged classrooms – children's rights, safety and education are under catastrophic threat around the world.

The poorest and most marginalised children, including girls, children with disabilities and migrant and refugee children, are hardest hit by the climate crisis and are at risk of being left behind.

The UK Government has made clear that supporting 12 years of quality education is a top priority, especially for girls, who are denied this right every day. We share this ambition, but the COVID-19 emergency within the climate crisis has made clear that we must urgently strengthen education systems and step up funding if these priorities are to be realised. The Government's proposal to reduce the ODA budget to 0.5% of GNI in the midst of both a global pandemic and climate emergency could be a devastating blow to UK impact on the global stage.

Our report comes at a crucial moment. The UK is presiding over the COP26 climate negotiations with the summit now taking place in 2021. Alongside its Presidency of the G7 and in hosting the fourth GPE replenishment, with strong and ambitious UK leadership, this could be a landmark year for placing education on the axis of efforts to face and fight the climate emergency.

By preparing this report, we have responded to the clarion call of children and young people around the world who have demanded climate action. We have identified the threats that climate change poses to education and underlined education's important role in the climate response. Now, we urge the UK Government to seriously consider the report's recommendations.

Ensuring that every child has access to a quality education means preventing and mitigating interruptions to learning. As part of a holistic approach, decisive action is therefore required to stop climate change undermining the right to education and strengthen education's role in the global climate response.

Hollie Warren  
Chair, Send My Friend to School



A woman pulls water out of a hole in the bed of a dried river in the Somali Region.

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# Recommendations

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In 2021, the UK Government will host the international climate summit, the Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26), where world leaders will convene to discuss action on tackling the climate emergency. The Prime Minister has made clear that providing 12 years of quality education is a top priority, especially for girls, who are denied this right every day.

The Send My Friend to School coalition is calling on the UK Government to seize the opportunity it has as host of COP26, in its G7 presidency and as a respected world leader in global education, to take decisive action to stop climate change undermining the right to education and strengthen education's role in the global climate response.

The Send My Friend to School coalition is calling on the UK Government to take the following measures:

**Provide leadership to stop climate change undermining the right to education and champion quality and inclusive participation of children and youth in climate change policy and practice by:**

## URGENTLY RAISING AMBITION

- The UK must take action by Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26) to put itself on track to achieve net-zero emissions as quickly as possible, and press other leaders and countries to close the gap between existing Paris Agreement pledges for 2030, and those needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 °C.
- Work together across ministries to deliver an integrated approach to climate change and education.

## PROMOTING YOUTH GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT ALL CLIMATE PROCESSES

- Recognise that children and young people are effective and important agents of change and meaningfully involve them in decisions that affect them. The UK must create opportunities in the lead up to COP26 and at the summit itself to harness, in a diverse and inclusive manner, children and young people's learning, consultation and influence on climate change policy and practice. Young people should be included on the high level delegation for COP and the UK should lead regional consultations, coordinated by youth engagement specialists, to seek young people's views on climate processes and policies, especially girls and children with disabilities, who are often the most marginalised.

## PROVIDING WORLD LEADING INVESTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

- The UK should continue to provide high-levels of investment in and political support for education in emergencies, for example through its strong support for education, including education in emergencies, to enable the continuous functioning of education systems in times of disasters.
- Invest in inclusive and quality education programming that is gender transformative, recognising the specific rights and needs of girls.
- The UK should maintain its commitment to set its ODA budget at 0.7 % of GNI, as enshrined in law.

**Work with communities, developing country partners and other key stakeholders to strengthen education's role in the global climate response by:**

### **SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE FACING THE IMPACTS**

The UK must lead the urgent scale up of financial support for poor and marginalised countries on the frontline of the climate crisis by:

- Maintaining its commitment to spend 50% of climate finance on adaptation and encourage other countries to commit to the same.
- As host of GPE replenishment in 2021, making an early and ambitious commitment to GPE's financing campaign. The UK should use its leadership position within the fund to drive policies that both insulate education against the impacts of climate change and utilise education in the global climate response.
- Championing a global adaptation finance goal and leading international efforts to raise new funding for loss and damage.
- Ensuring support is inclusive and accessible, responding to the needs and rights of the poorest and most marginalised children to prevent disruption to education.
- Taking account the rights and needs of girls in its climate financing and promoting the equality perspective at an international level.

### **ENSURING QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION (CCE)**

- The UK should champion the full integration of CCE into curricula and teacher training, as set out in the Paris Agreement and SDGs, to better prepare children to live in a rapidly changing climate, and ensure that all children, including the poorest and most marginalised, know about and feel empowered to act on their right to a healthy environment.
- In the lead up to and at COP26 the UK Government should prioritise an ambitious programme which recognises and responds to the right to education (which is undermined by climate change) and the right to environmental education, as per Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The UK Government, and those in the devolved administrations, should support all schools to build climate change education into their curriculums. This should include supporting initial teacher training and professional development to address climate change education, and supporting and disseminating resources that promote effective integration of climate change within the curriculum.

### **MAKING SCHOOLS SAFE**

- The UK should prioritise the 'climate proofing' of educational infrastructure, conducting school infrastructure vulnerability assessments and supporting the adaptation and construction of safe schools, with particular consideration for the most vulnerable children, to protect them from the impacts of climate related disasters, as well as slow onset changes.

## Introduction

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The right to education is the cornerstone of sustainable development. It empowers children and their communities to improve their quality of life and provides them with the tools to devise solutions to complex challenges.

A quality education is also central to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The 2030 agenda is the world's call to action to promote prosperity while protecting the planet, and world leaders promised to *leave no one behind* in pursuing this goal.<sup>1</sup>

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that make up the 2030 agenda for sustainable development are interlinked and indivisible. Education therefore has a critical role to play in sustainable development that prepares communities to face and fight climate change. This is particularly true for the most marginalised people in the poorest communities, such as girls, children with disabilities and refugee and internally displaced children.

**However, education is threatened by climate change.** Millions of children around the world, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, are already bearing the brunt of a changing climate and this is denying them of their right to learn. When floods decimate schools, children have no place to learn, when monsoons riddle their communities with diseases, they are too ill to attend classes, and when drought plunges families into

poverty leaving no money for school fees, children cannot go to school.

The impact of climate change is particularly acute for the most marginalised children. For example, when disaster strikes and resources are scarce, girls are often the first to be pulled out of school to help alleviate domestic burdens, they also sometimes become the victims of childhood marriage in attempts to reduce financial strain. Further, when natural disasters cause schools and transport routes to become inaccessible, children with disabilities are disproportionately affected.

### **Education is also woefully neglected as part of the global climate**

**response.** Climate strategies do not feature education in a meaningful way<sup>2</sup> and too many education systems around the world are inadequately preparing children and young people for a changing climate.

No Nationally Determined Contribution formally recognises the contributions that investment in education could make toward their climate strategy.<sup>3</sup> 68% of Nationally Determined Contributions reference education but often in vague terms, such as 'awareness raising', and not necessarily with young people as a specific focus or as part of a national curriculum.<sup>4</sup> Climate strategies overall concentrate on technological fixes, ignoring social concerns and the contributions that

people, particularly girls and young women empowered by education and information, might make.<sup>5</sup>

It is now almost five years since the international community signed The Paris Agreement, a historic moment when 197 governments committed to strengthening their efforts to limit global warming to at least 2°C below pre-industrial temperatures, with the aim of below 1.5°C.<sup>6</sup> However, the world is currently woefully off-track to achieving the goals of the agreement – current national pledges would still result in a terrifying increase of 3°C – which would have catastrophic consequences for all, particularly the most marginalised.

Within all of this, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare that education systems around the world are not resilient enough and are often unprepared to deal with large scale disruption: in 2020 COVID-19 interrupted education for 1.6 billion learners.<sup>7</sup> It is critical that education systems are built to withstand the impacts we know are coming. The Coronavirus pandemic was a test paper for the future – climate change will be a final exam.

We therefore need urgent action now. As host of COP26 and a leader in global education, the UK government must take decisive action to stop climate change undermining the right to education and strengthen education's role in the global climate response.

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1 UN Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>, (accessed 21 January 2020).

2 Kwauk, C., Cooke, J., Hara, E., Pegram, J., (2019). "Girls' education in climate strategies: Opportunities for improved policy and enhanced action in Nationally Determined Contributions." <https://www.brookings.edu/research/girls-education-in-climate-strategies/>

3 Plan International UK (2019). Girls' Rights in Climate Strategies.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 UNFCCC. The Paris Agreement. <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>, (accessed January 21 2020).

7 Send My Friend to School (2020). "Keep All My Friends Learning." <https://sendmyfriend.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Keep-All-My-Friends-Learning-Policy-Briefing-1.pdf>



P/s. advocate to  
prevent  
CLIMATE CHANGE



Plan International is working across south-east Asia and the Pacific, to help communities adapt to climate change, ensuring children are involved and participate in the design of their projects. Gellie Rose, 14, from the Philippines participated in consultations with Plan International on the action he wants governments to take to stop climate change.

# 1. Education is critical for an effective global climate response

Education systems are central to an effective climate response. This is because successful adaptation and mitigation requires key skills, knowledge and behaviour that can only be provided through teaching and learning. Education is lifesaving, increases adaptive capacity, and empowers children and young people to build a more sustainable future. Education's role in an effective climate response is emphasised by the UNFCCC,<sup>8</sup> the Paris Climate Change Agreement,<sup>9</sup> and the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>10</sup>

There are three key contributions that education systems can make in facing and fighting climate change.

## 1. Education is protective, lifesaving and life-sustaining during disasters and displacement

Climate change is increasing the severity and frequency of natural hazards and disasters – and in times of crisis, education is an essential protective measure. With the right teaching and learning, children have the potential to reduce their own vulnerability, and the vulnerability of their community, to the negative effects of climate change.

As set out in the Sendai Framework, education is a priority strategy and activity for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).<sup>11</sup> Equipping people with contextualised knowledge and skills can save lives, prevent injuries and build community resilience.<sup>12</sup>

**As UNESCO notes, during times of crisis, 'what people know is usually more important than what they have'.<sup>13</sup>**

For example, in the Philippines, communities have worked with the Ministry of Education and NGOs on climate change education programmes to reduce their vulnerability to disasters. Following training, when continuous rain posed a hazard to the community, children and their families evacuated their villages before landslides destroyed their homes.<sup>14</sup> Mainstreaming DRR into the curriculum, for instance through lessons on hazards or disaster response simulation and drills, as used in this example, empowers young people with life-saving knowledge which they often go on to share with their peers, families and communities.<sup>15</sup>

In times of crisis, education is lifesaving for the most marginalised children. In the majority of disasters, more than half of those who are affected or die are children,<sup>16</sup> and those with disabilities, girls, refugees and migrants, and the poorest are disproportionately affected. For children, education is a critical platform for boosting their adaptive capacity, keeping them healthy, and protecting them from the increased risks of violence and exploitation they face.

In Bangladesh, Save the Children has been working with vulnerable communities to implement their Child-Centred Climate Change Adaptation programme.<sup>17</sup> This programme recognises children as active agents in climate adaptation. It incorporates DRR into formal and non-formal curricula, embeds disaster preparedness into teacher training, involves parents and children in school vulnerability assessments, and during times of crisis ensures that alternative school sites are available to protect children and provide stability.<sup>18</sup>

8 UNFCCC (n.d.). "Education and Training Under Article 6". <https://unfccc.int/topics/education-and-outreach/workstreams/education-and-training>

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 UNDRR (n.d.). "Sendai Framework". <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030> (accessed January 21 2020).

12 UNESCO (2011). Disaster Risk Reduction in Education: an imperative for education policy makers; UNESCO (2007). Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School; Aghaei, N., Seyedin, H., & Sanaeinasab, H (2018). "Strategies for disaster risk reduction education: A systematic review." *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6089020/>

13 Ibid.

14 Anderson, A (2010). Combating Climate Change Through Quality Education. Brookings Institution. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/09\\_climate\\_education.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/09_climate_education.pdf)

15 Ibid.

16 Save the Children (2011). Reducing Risks Saving Lives.

17 Save the Children (2017). Overview of Our Humanitarian Work in Bangladesh.

18 Ibid.

# CASE STUDY

## Community centred response in Nepal



**In Nepal, climate change is threatening young people's access to education. Nepal is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, such as monsoons, which lead to flooding and landslides. These events pose significant risks to Nepali children and their communities and will likely increase in frequency and intensity in a rapidly changing climate.**

For example, in 2017, approximately 1.7 million people were affected by monsoon floods – at least 383 schools were used as shelters and many were damaged, causing significant disruption to education. Damage to educational facilities is estimated to have reached \$11.5 million US dollars.

VSO, an international NGO working through volunteers to deliver development outcomes, is working with civil society, schools, local officials and communities in Nepal to better understand climate vulnerability and to build long-term resilience

into the education system. A two-year, school-centred “response to recovery” project has so far reconstructed six schools that are now more resilient to the effects of climate change, and more work is underway in a further 50 schools.

VSO has also developed a Climate Change Learning Centre (CCLC) in the municipality of Changanarayan, near Kathmandu. The project puts young people and communities at the centre of building resilience in their communities.

Using local knowledge, the project takes place in schools, in the CCLC, and in the community to empower children and their communities to build long-term strategies to weather the impacts of climate change. While the climate crisis will continue to affect children's lives in Nepal, VSO is working to build resilience into education systems to minimise disruption and prepare communities for the challenges to come.

Such education programmes, which strengthen community preparedness, are not only lifesaving but also cost effective. A World Bank study estimates that for every \$1 invested \$7 is saved in recovery efforts.<sup>19</sup> Education is therefore a key component in mitigating the financial cost of post-disaster reconstruction efforts which can often indirectly divert funding from wider development efforts. Increased investment in and political support for resilience strengthening, risk reduction, preparedness and education in emergencies, is vital in supporting the continuous functioning of the education system to support the right to education.

Schools can be both lifesaving and life-sustaining if their infrastructure is protected. If schools are factored into DRR, they can be reopened comparatively quicker post-disaster, providing vital continuity and a semblance of stability in the lives of often traumatised children. For instance, after an 8.9 magnitude earthquake in Japan (a non-climate related disaster) classes were able to resume in disaster-proof buildings just a week after the event.<sup>20</sup>

Safeguarding education in a changing climate ensures safety and important continuity for children and their communities, while also ensuring that children do not miss out on learning.

In times of crisis, education is critical to ensuring the safety of children and communities pre, mid, and post disaster.

## 2. Education builds children's, and the community's, resilience and adaptive capacity in a changing climate

The poorest and most marginalised children and young people are most at risk in the climate crisis. Poverty makes them more vulnerable to, and less likely to be able to adapt to, the impact of climate change.<sup>21</sup> Children are more exposed to hazards, injury and death and are also more susceptible to the impacts of slow-onset climate change and post-disaster conditions such as malnutrition, water and sanitation illnesses, heat stress and infectious diseases.<sup>22</sup> Malnutrition disproportionately affects girls because of preferential feeding practices in households.

In 2017, disasters caused by environmental hazards affected over 95 million people and in 2018 over 17 million were displaced by natural disasters. Food insecurity is rising and climate change is expected to drive the internal displacement of 140 million people by 2050.<sup>23</sup>

In the long-term, investing in education to reduce poverty would significantly decrease the vulnerability of communities to climate change as it boosts their self-efficacy, autonomy, and ability to migrate and diversify their income. Investment in quality, safe and inclusive education contributes to poverty reduction by paving the way to better work, health and livelihoods. Each additional year of education can enable a 10% increase in income and, if all children and young people left school being able to read, we would see a 12% reduction in world poverty.<sup>24</sup> As a route out of poverty, education empowers communities to better navigate the complexities of a changing climate.

Climate action that is gender sensitive and gender responsive can bring about the systems level change needed. Research by Brookings Institution finds investments in girls' education to be extremely cost-effective in reducing vulnerability to climate change, estimating every additional year of girls' schooling to bring about significant improvements in a country's level of climate resilience.<sup>25</sup>

19 World Bank (2004). "Natural Disasters: Counting the Cost." Press release, March 2, 2004. [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

20 Greubel, L., Ackerman, A. & Winthrop, R. (2012). "Prioritizing Education in the Face of Natural Disasters". Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2012/10/31/prioritizing-education-in-the-face-of-natural-disasters/>, (accessed 22 January 2020).

21 IPCC (2014). Climate Change: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. WG II. Summary for Policymakers, [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar5\\_wgII\\_spm\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar5_wgII_spm_en.pdf)

22 Hales, S et al. "Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s". WHO. <https://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/quantitative-risk-assessment/en/>(accessed 22 January 2020).

23 Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (2017). Natural Disasters 2017. Brussels: CRED, p.2.

24 UNESCO (2013). Global Education Monitoring Report: Teaching and Learning – achieving quality education for all.

25 Kwauk, C. & Braga, A. (2017). Three Platforms for Girls' Education in Climate Strategies. Brookings Institution.

# CASE STUDY:

## Young people key to response in Guatemala

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**Guatemala, a small Central American country, is one of the places most affected by climate change.** The impacts of climate change pose significant ‘challenges to long-term development goals.’<sup>26</sup> The country is located in the middle of a “dry corridor”, worsened by climate change, with children currently bearing the brunt as extreme drought has left rising numbers experiencing one of the world’s highest rates of child malnutrition.<sup>27</sup> In the face of vulnerability to climate change, reports have suggested that some families are desperate to leave.<sup>28</sup>

In this context, UNICEF Guatemala, supported by UNICEF UK, undertook a Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC). The CLAC helped to ‘identify knowledge and data gaps, strategic partnerships and opportunities for leveraging climate finance for improved results for children.’<sup>29</sup> The CLAC will be used to further develop key recommendations for improving children’s opportunities and livelihoods in the face of climate change.

Additionally, UNICEF Guatemala worked with Paz Joven on a project to strengthen adolescent and youth participation in resilience efforts. Paz Joven is run by young people with extensive experience working with adolescents, youth and the community. Young people were trained on advocacy and climate change, allowing them to engage in interviews and awareness-raising in their community. Using a cascading model, the project reached thousands of young people directly or indirectly in 2019. Youth advocates will also be part of advocating on municipal plans for adaptation and mitigation, using data provided by a Guatemalan company hired by Paz Joven.<sup>30</sup>

This programme has the dual purpose of youth empowerment and climate change advocacy, while at the same time providing valuable information to be included in the CLAC.<sup>31</sup> Engaging young people in education-centred resilience and awareness-raising efforts is critical to improving the futures for those most affected by climate change.

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26 USAID. ‘Climate Change Risk Profile Guatemala’, April 2017. [https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017\\_USAID%20ATLAS\\_Climate%20Change%20Risk%20Profile\\_Guatemala.pdf](https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID%20ATLAS_Climate%20Change%20Risk%20Profile_Guatemala.pdf)

27 Moloney, A (2020). Guatemala’s children bear brunt of prolonged drought and rising heat. Thomas Reuters Foundation. Accessed 21 January, 2020. <https://reliefweb.int/report/guatemala/guatemalas-children-bear-brunt-prolonged-drought-and-rising-heat>

28 Steffens, G (2018), Changing climate forces desperate Guatemalans to migrate. National Geographic. Accessed 22 January 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2018/10/drought-climate-change-force-guatemalans-migrate-to-us>

29 UNICEF Guatemala, ‘Progress Report to Unicef UK,’ May 2020. Available upon request.

30 Read more about Paz Joven at <https://pazjoven.org/>.

31 UNICEF Guatemala, ‘Progress Report to Unicef UK,’ May 2020. Available upon request.

Research by The World Bank further suggests that millions of climate-related deaths could have been previously avoided with significant improvements to girl's education in developing countries.<sup>32</sup> Countries with a focus on girls' education also experienced fewer losses of life in extreme weather events compared to comparators with less progressive approaches to girl's education.<sup>33</sup> Investing in inclusive, quality and safe education provides children and young people with the basic and higher order skills needed as our climate changes. A changing climate contributes to unpredictability and complexity in the world around us and a quality education provides young people with the critical life skills and knowledge to navigate this.<sup>34</sup> This includes problem-solving, critical thinking, adaptation and leadership skills which are all vital to the ability of children and young people, in the long term, to adapt to the effects of slow onset climate change.<sup>35</sup>

Climate change, poverty and education are inextricably linked. We must invest in quality, safe and inclusive education in order to alleviate poverty and improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of young people to climate change.

### 3. Education empowers children and young people to create a more sustainable future

In 2019, we experienced the largest environmental protests the world has ever seen. Millions of young people from over 100 countries called for rapid and improved action on climate change. It is they who will bear the brunt of climate change, but far from being passive victims, children and young people are proving their potential as effective and important agents of change.

Head of the UNCC: Learn Secretariat, Angus Mackay, has described education as "the fundamental entry point for nurturing future leaders in the area of climate change".<sup>36</sup> This is because education is central to empowering young people with both a knowledge of climate issues and the skills required to advance advocacy and action.<sup>37</sup> This is demonstrated by education and training programmes around the world, in countries such as Taiwan, Colombia, and Nigeria, which have all generated active youth leadership on sustainability in local communities.<sup>38</sup>

Through quality climate change education and education for sustainable development, children and young people become effective at raising awareness among their peers, creating a powerful multiplier effect for climate awareness, sustainable development, and disaster risk reduction.<sup>39</sup> For example, Plan International's child centred climate change adaptation programme, Act to Adapt, demonstrated how children and young people can become peer educators when adapting to the risks of a changing climate.<sup>40</sup>

When engaged with quality education for sustainable development, children are better prepared for and more likely to become advocates for sustainable development in their communities.<sup>41</sup> Research demonstrates that when young people have knowledge of climate change issues and perceive their agency to be high, they are more likely to champion sustainability in their communities and provide constructive policy recommendations to local leaders.<sup>42</sup> When we empower young people with the relevant knowledge, skills and agency, they are better positioned to hold their local communities and governments to account on climate issues.<sup>43</sup>

32 Blankespoor, B et al (2010). The Economics of Adaptation to Extreme Weather Events in Developing Countries. The World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/753291468331254875/pdf/566590NWP0D1CC10Box353730B01PUBLIC1.pdf>. (accessed January 20 2020).

33 Ibid.

34 UNESCO (2012). Climate change education for sustainable development in Small Island Developing States: report and recommendations.

35 The Commonwealth Hub (2015). Education & Climate Change – Discussion Summary. <https://www.thecommonwealth-educationhub.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Climate-Change-Discussion-Summary.pdf>. Accessed 27 January 2020. ; Ibid.

36 UN Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change (2013). Youth in Action on Climate Change: Inspirations from Around the World.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Plan International (n.d.) Act to Adapt: the next generation leads the way!

41 UNESCO (2015). Not Just Hot Air: Putting Climate Change Education Into Practice.; Ibid

42 Thew, H. "Youth participation and agency in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change". *Int Environ Agreements* 18, 369-389 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-018-9392-2>

43 Thew, H (2019). "Climate Strikes: Researcher Explains How Young People Can Keep Up the Momentum". *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/climate-strikes-researcher-explains-how-young-people-can-keep-up-the-momentum-113594>

# CASE STUDY

## Mozambique and Cyclone Idai



“Many of my classmates never came back to school..  
School is very important, we all know that” Miranda age 11, Mozambique.

Miranda lost her classroom and her home when Cyclone Idai hit.

In 2019, more than 305,000 children in Mozambique had their education interrupted because of damage caused by Cyclone Idai, with over 3400 classrooms damaged or destroyed. Undamaged schools were also turned into emergency shelters and therefore required rehabilitation before they could become learning spaces again.

The damage suffered by Mozambique’s education system as a result of Cyclone Idai exacerbated the

pre-existing poor enrolment and poor learning in the country; less than 20 per cent of secondary-aged children are enrolled. As a result of the cyclone, many families lost their livelihoods and were plunged into poverty – this could further decrease enrolment and increase dropout rates as children are instead sent to work to help support their families.

In the wake of Cyclone Idai, DFID contributed \$5.2 million to support educational responses, as part of a wider \$14 million fund alongside ECW and Dubai Cares.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Education Cannot Wait (2019). “ECW and partners announce allocation of US \$14 million for the victims of Cyclone Idai.” <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/cyclone-idai/>

## 2. The impacts of climate change on education

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### Increased frequency of natural disasters disrupts education.

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme climate events with natural disasters globally occurring almost five times as frequently as 40 years ago.<sup>45</sup> Nearly 40 million children a year have their education interrupted by natural disasters and subsequent disease outbreaks following extreme weather events.<sup>46</sup> This number will continue to grow unless urgent action is taken.

In times of natural disasters, disruption to education in poor communities occurs as schools and routes to them are too often built on unsafe sites and the materials used to build them are of insufficient quality. Access to school during and after a natural disaster is therefore restricted due to damaged infrastructure. Education may also be stopped as undamaged school buildings are used to house disaster-affected communities.

Furthermore, education is often one of the first things families abandon when disasters strike.<sup>47</sup> This is because times of crisis present increased risks of violence, abuse and exploitation for children so parents may choose to keep children at home. Additionally,

a crisis often means families that are already struggling are plunged further into poverty and so often depend on their children entering informal labour.<sup>48</sup> Perceptions around the lack of value of education for children with disabilities can also mean that when families face financial hardship they deprioritise education for children with disabilities.<sup>49</sup>

Girls, especially adolescent girls, are particularly vulnerable. Adolescent girls are at an additional risk of being pulled out of school to help alleviate extra domestic burdens such as fetching water. Girls are also at risk of being married off early in an attempt by households to manage the financial burdens or safety concerns borne by environmental hardships and aftermath of weather related disasters. These circumstances can trigger early life transitions, including early pregnancy, that send girls into a cycle of intergenerational poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation.<sup>50</sup>

Psychological trauma as a result of an extreme climate event can lead to mental health conditions for children, which makes it difficult to learn and is linked to the early termination of education.<sup>51</sup> Without

the support needed to deal with physical impairments and the stress and trauma of experiencing a crisis situation children's development is hindered.<sup>52</sup> However, teachers, who themselves can often be dealing with trauma, rarely receive training on how to either provide this type of support or refer children to external support services should they exist.<sup>53</sup>

### Climate change increases migration and displacement.

Climate-related disasters are the single biggest cause of internal displacement over the last decade – forcing over 20 million people a year from their homes. That's roughly one person every 2 seconds.<sup>54</sup>

UNESCO recognises that climate could be a main reason for migration and displacement within a few years<sup>55</sup>, with estimates falling between 25 million and 1 billion people being on the move due to climate change by 2030.<sup>56</sup> Climate induced migration and displacement occurs when sudden or progressive changes in the environment adversely affect people's lives or living conditions and they therefore choose to or are forced to leave their homes.

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45 UNICEF (2015). Unless We Act Now.

46 TheirWorld (2018). Safe Schools: The Hidden Crisis. <https://theirworld.org/resources/detail/safe-schools-the-hidden-crisis>.

47 UNICEF and Plan International (2011). The Benefits of a Child-centered Approach to Climate Change Adaptation.

48 Plan International (2013). Because I am a Girl – the State of the World's Girls 2013: In Double Jeopardy - Adolescent Girls and Disasters.

49 Sightsavers (n.d.), Policy Context Analysis: Malawi and Uganda.

50 Ibid.

51 Ryan, G., Iemmi, V., Hanna, F., Loryman, H. and Eaton, J. (2019). Mental Health for Sustainable Development: A Topic Guide for Development Professionals. K4D Emerging Issues Report. London and Brighton, UK: Mental Health Innovation Network and IDS.

52 Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2016). From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families.

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54 Oxfam (2019). Forced From Home: climate fuelled displacement. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/forced-home-climate-fuelled-displacement>, (accessed 26th February, 2020).

55 Global Education Monitoring Report (2019). Migration, displacement and education: building bridges, not walls

56 International Organisation for Migration (IOM), (2014). IOM outlook on migration, environment and climate change.

# CASE STUDY

## Jessy and Issac in Malawi



Malawi's agriculturally based economy is highly vulnerable to climate change. Creeping disruptions in growing seasons, coupled with more frequent and intense drought and flooding is harming agricultural growth. With weather patterns expected to become more extreme in the coming decades, already extended dry periods will be lengthened, temperatures will reach the threshold of the country's staple crop (maize) and erratic, more extreme rainfall will increase the risk of flooding and further harm agriculture.

In Jessy and Isaac's community, in the Kasungu District of Malawi, high climate variability and increased incidence of extreme weather are already posing barriers to their education. Their families depend on agriculture as their source of income and livelihood. However, the changing climate has resulted in less food for their families to both consume and sell. This means there is less money for school fees and attendance has therefore been affected. Isaac explained that his education had also suffered

because drought and famine had disrupted the attendance of teachers, "We don't learn, we just spend a lot of time at school waiting for teachers. But they don't come". Isaac also explained that many schools have been destroyed by floods in recent years; a close relative of his died in one recently.

Jessy's parents are farmers and, during times of low-yield because of climate-related factors, have not always been able to afford her schools fees. She has sometimes missed school and done small jobs to raise money. She is now a beneficiary of a project by Oxfam Malawi which aims to increase the number of girls completing secondary school. She is now the Head Girl at her secondary school. Jessy and Isaac also discussed how the nearest river has dried up, meaning that some children often arrive late to school and miss out on learning as they must walk further for their water source. Jessy also explained that rising temperatures have increased the rates of malaria and, due to the gendered role of caring for their family, girls can sometimes miss school.

# CASE STUDY

## Drought in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia an entire way of life is under threat from climate change; huge numbers of children and young people are being forced to give up their pastoralist way of life owing to drought.

14-year-old Habiba\* is one of more than a million children in Ethiopia who have been displaced due to conflict and drought. She arrived at a makeshift camp on the edge of a settlement two years ago. Her family lived as pastoralists in the Somali region of Ethiopia but lost all their camels owing to persistent

drought. Now she lives with her parents and six siblings in one small hut. As the oldest child, she takes care of the household and her younger siblings.

The effects of droughts and other factors have been stark and far reaching. Save the Children's teams across Ethiopia are seeing communities struggling to regenerate pastures, replenish water supplies and restore livestock herds. Nearly seven million people face hunger and food shortages.

# CASE STUDY

## Floods in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is widely understood to be one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. This is due to its high levels of poverty, population density, and unique geography, dominated by floodplains and with low elevation, which makes it vulnerable to extreme flooding.

Flooding has a huge impact on education across the country. For example, in August and early September of 2017, floods left 3 million children in need of education in emergencies assistance and 4,000 schools needed urgent repair.<sup>57</sup> This led to the suspension of education for several weeks, significant disruptions to attendance, and the closure of 1,693 schools which were used as shelters.<sup>58</sup>

Humanity and Inclusion are currently implementing a regional project known as Growing Together, which is also working to support children in refugee camps in Bangladesh. A key objective of the project is using education to support children's and the community's understanding of inclusive disaster risk reduction (iDRR), aiming to improve their ability to respond to flooding.

For example, children have engaged in interactive sessions where they identified post-flooding risks, vulnerable groups who would need protection, and how they should respond. Children with disabilities were also able to identify their own challenges in the event of a flood and the groups came up with plans for mitigating these risks.

<sup>57</sup> Save the Children (2017). Education Disrupted, Education Denied.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Whether displaced by natural disasters or migration due to slow-onset impacts of climate change, many of the children forced to flee will require support to continue their education. Children on the move already face significant barriers in accessing education. Nearly three-quarters of all secondary aged refugees are out of school<sup>59</sup> and there are 44 million girls out of secondary school in crisis-affected countries. For every 10 refugee boys in secondary school, there are fewer than seven girls.<sup>60</sup> Linguistic, economic, legal, and social barriers all prevent children on the move from realising their right to education. With climate change likely to increase the number of migrating children, and increasing the complexity of movement, it is imperative that education systems are built to include and support both emigrating and immigrating children. Education systems must be built with these children in mind, having systems in place that address climate displacement before, during and after a move.

### The poorest and most marginalised children are faring the worst

Children and young people in already marginalised positions, such as girls, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, and displaced and refugee children are at a heightened

risk to climate change because social, economic and/or gender inequality increases vulnerability.

This is recognised in the Fifth Assessment Report, which notes that climate change interacts with other stressors and structural inequities to shape vulnerabilities, and that socially disadvantaged people at the 'intersection of various dimensions of discrimination' including gender, age, race, class, caste, indigeneity and disability are 'particularly negatively affected by climate change and climate-related hazards'.<sup>61</sup>

Children and young people belonging to these marginalised groups are therefore particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change and are being least prepared by education systems to cope with and adapt to a changing climate.<sup>62</sup>

### Climate change and poverty

The poorest children and young people are four times more likely not to go to school than the richest and five times less likely to complete primary education.<sup>63</sup> Poor children are therefore less likely to secure the basic skills needed to build resilience and adapt to a changing climate.

Poverty has been a proven cause of educational disadvantage and is an overarching and cross-cutting factor in exclusion from school and learning,<sup>64</sup> often intersecting with

and exacerbating other forms of disadvantage.

Poverty means families often have to make difficult decisions about who to send to school, as school fees are still a major barrier to education for the worlds' poorest.<sup>65</sup> Boys' education is often prioritised, meaning girls are more likely to miss out on schooling. Schools serving the poorest children are also often inadequately resourced and financed, meaning a poor quality of teaching and learning. And children living in poverty may find it difficult to learn when they are in school due to stress, hunger and poor development early on in life.

### Climate change and girls' education

Girls are already more likely to be out of school than boys, and twice as many girls as boys will never start school.<sup>66</sup> Girls face challenges unique to their age and gender that are different to those faced by adult women and adolescent boys. Harmful social norms that devalue their education, school-related gender-based violence (GBV) and other forms of GBV in the home or the community, early marriage and pregnancy are all major obstacles to learning that are amplified in times of humanitarian crisis. Heightened insecurity, the breakdown of social support networks and cultural structures can exacerbate gender inequality, compounding the challenges faced by girls.

59 UNHCR (2019). Stepping up: Refugee education in crisis.

60 Plan International UK, 2019. 'Left Out Left Behind'. <https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-uk-left-out-left-behind-reportpdf/download?token=kSIq8iq1>

61 Olsson et al (2014) Livelihoods and Poverty. In Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. p796. UNFCCC (2015) Paris Agreement. p2

62 Ibid.

63 Save the Children, 2018. Still Left Behind?

64 UNESCO (2015). Education For All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges.

65 World Bank, 2017. World Development Report: Governance and the Law.

66 UNESCO (2016). Leaving no one behind: How far on the way to universal primary and secondary education?

# CASE STUDY

## Flooding in Bangladesh makes the journey to school dangerous



“We had no toilets and we, girls, felt insecurity when going outside the school for toileting. We didn’t go to school regularly during floods, or we came at our own risk, and our books and dresses were dirtied by water and mud”

Shapla goes to a school on the banks of the Teesta River in Bangladesh, and she can only get to school by crossing the river on a boat. When there’s heavy rain and flooding, the high water levels make her and her friends journey to school extremely dangerous. Also, the rain can cause the classrooms to flood, which can close her school for a long period of time.

Sometimes, students will arrive at school with wet clothes and books from crossing the river. As there aren’t separate changing rooms or toilets for boys and girls, this has caused safety issues for girls which, as Shapla explains, causes many girls choose to miss school – “we had no toilets and we, girls, felt insecurity when going outside the school for toileting.

We didn’t go to school regularly during floods, or we came at our own risk, and our books and dresses were dirtied by water and mud”.

However, Plan International’s programme has ensured that Shapla’s education no longer suffers because of the weather. A new, larger boat has been provided to ensure that Shapla and her friends have a safe journey to school, even in times of heavy rain. The school building has also been improved so that the classrooms are less likely to flood. As well as this, there are now separate changing rooms and toilets for girls and boys, so they don’t miss school in times of heavy rain and flooding.

These risks are magnified in a changing climate, especially as climate change will increase scarcity of resources, increase conflict, and exacerbate inequality, compounding the already considerable barriers to education for girls.

Household-level decisions about sending children to school are affected by deteriorations in livelihoods caused by shifting weather patterns and changes in seasonality. Increased burdens, for example, of water and fuel collection, which disproportionately fall on girls, prevent girls from attending school.<sup>67</sup>

Further, extreme weather events cause more children and young people to miss school because of damaged schools and access routes, the use of school buildings as evacuation centers, psychosocial impacts, and injuries. Girls are more likely not to return to school after a disaster - in Pakistan, after the 2010 floods, 24% of girls in Grade 6 dropped out of school, compared with 6% of boys.<sup>68</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic is also set to disproportionately impact girls and young women. The Malala Fund estimates that once the pandemic passes, up to 20 million girls in

developing countries may never go back to the classroom.<sup>69</sup> Without urgent action now, these girls will see their opportunities dashed, their safety compromised and their vulnerability to climate related disasters and slow-onset climate change heightened.

### **Climate change and children with disabilities' education**

Children and young people with disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Children with disabilities are more likely to be living in poverty.<sup>70</sup> Children and young people with disabilities often experience high levels of stigma and discrimination and face a multitude of barriers to accessing quality health care, education and employment. This context means that children and young people tend to have low levels of resilience to the impacts of climate crises when they occur. Furthermore, climate change is likely to cause an increase in the prevalence of disability.<sup>71</sup>

Half of children and young people with disabilities in lower and middle-income countries do not go to school and are being increasingly left behind by global efforts to increase education opportunities for all.<sup>72</sup> Children and young people with disabilities are

being left behind for a variety of reasons, including discrimination and the perception that children and young people with disabilities are unable to learn, inadequate resources and infrastructure to cater to their needs in schools, and a lack of data and accountability on their access to education and learning. Girls with disabilities are often impacted by discrimination based on both their gender and their disability, which can further limit their access to quality education.

During climate related emergencies, children and young people with disabilities tend to be invisible and overlooked in emergency relief operations,<sup>73</sup> and increasingly pressurised budgets mean less resources are available for accessible and affordable services.<sup>74</sup> Already inaccessible environments can become even more inaccessible which makes accessing education even more challenging. During climate emergencies the impact of existing discrimination can be magnified, for example the practice of hiding children with disabilities away from the community could have serious consequences.

67 Bangay, C. and Blum, N., 2010. Education Responses to Climate Change and Quality: Two Parts of the Same Agenda? *International Journal of Educational Development* 30(4): 335-450

68 Bradshaw, S. and Fordham., M., (2013). *Women, Girls, and Disasters: A review for DFID.*

69 Malala Fund (2020). *Malala Fund Releases Report on Girls' Education and COVID-19.* <https://www.malala.org/newsroom/archive/malala-fund-releases-report-girls-education-covid-19> (accessed 12 November 2020)

70 Ibid.

71 Kett, M. and Cole, E. (2018) *Disability and Climate Resilience Research Report.* Leonard Cheshire.

72 The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, (2016). *The Learning Generation: investing in education for a changing world.*

73 Choy, 2009 cited by Lewis & Ballard 2011

74 Ibid.



Sheshig, 13, lives in a town outside Lalibela, Ethiopia. Over the past few years, the El Nino-induced drought has had a major impact on her education, as she's often had to fetch water rather than go to school. With the support of Plan International, Sheshig no longer has to skip class as she now has access to clean water, just five minutes from her home.

© Plan International / Petterik Wiggers

### 3. Education systems inadequate to respond to climate change

#### **A changing climate requires foundational and higher-order skills to survive, but education systems around the world are failing to deliver.**

The world is vastly off track in delivering the universal right to education, one that it promised to deliver for all children and young people via Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) – the goal to provide quality and inclusive education for all by 2030.

Recent projections reveal that none of the ten targets that form part of Sustainable Development Goal 4 will be met by 2030.<sup>75</sup> This means that education systems are not preparing children and young people with the basic or higher order skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes needed in a changing climate.

The COVID-19 pandemic has now exacerbated this challenge: the pandemic impacted the learning of 1.6 billion learners. An estimated 40% of low and lower-middle-income countries did not support the most marginalised children, such as the poorest, linguistic minorities and learners with disabilities.<sup>76</sup> Further, only 12% of household in the least developed countries have internet access at home.<sup>77</sup> It is also estimated that up to 20 million girls might never return to school after

the pandemic.<sup>78</sup> The inability of education systems to respond to the interruptions caused by COVID-19 has laid bare the cost of weak resilience. This is a harbinger of the toll that a changing climate will wreak unless urgent action is taken now.

Further, lack of progress on access and learning in basic education leaves millions of children and young people without foundational skills and therefore vulnerable to a changing climate. 258 million children remain out of school<sup>79</sup> and millions more children who do access school are not acquiring even the most basic and foundational skills needed to survive in our increasingly complex and changing world. A staggering 387 million children of primary school age will not achieve minimum proficiency levels in reading; two-thirds of them – 262 million – are in school.<sup>80</sup>

Recent projections reveal almost no progress on reducing the number of children who are out of school by 2030.<sup>81</sup> 24 million children are out of school because of humanitarian crises: 54% - or 13 million – are girls.<sup>82</sup>

Unless the learning crisis is addressed, more than 750 million young people in low and middle-income countries will not have the skills to participate in tomorrow's economy, and 1.5 billion adults in 2030 will have no education beyond primary school.<sup>83</sup> Unless we

urgently address the learning crisis now, millions of children will be left vulnerable to climate change.

#### **Besides the lack of progress on securing the fundamentals in access and learning, we are failing to prepare children and young people to create a more sustainable future.**

The sustainable development goal on education includes a target promising that by 2030 all learners will acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. Education can contribute to a more sustainable world because it can develop the skills and mindsets needed for building and contributing to a green economy and the promotion of sustainable communities.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has received increasing attention since UNESCO launched its 'Decade for Education for Sustainable Development' in 2004.<sup>84</sup> However, ESD is still not adequately integrated into many curricula around the world, and teachers' capacity on delivering ESD is not being supported or strengthened. Globally, little over 20% of reporting countries dedicate enough teaching hours to ESD, while few countries incorporate ESD into in-service teacher training: large gaps persist in the mainstreaming of education for sustainable development.<sup>85</sup>

75 UNESCO, 2019. Meeting Commitments? Are countries on track to achieve SDG4?

76 UNESCO. 2020. Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all. Paris, UNESCO.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 UNESCO, 2019. New Methodology Shows that 258 Million Children, Adolescents and Youth Are Out of School.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 2016. The Learning Generation: investing in education for a changing world

84 UNESCO, 2014. Shaping the future we want: A Decade of Education for Sustainable Development; final report.

85 Ibid.



Food and water shortages have become increasingly common in Cambodia as the dry season becomes hotter and longer forcing many people to migrate to look for work. It's vulnerable children like Prey who suffer most – left behind as their relatives move away.

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Khurshida (14), Nur Kayeda (13), Rahina (17) and Tasmina (12) play together as monsoon clouds loom in the background

© Plan International / KM Asad

### Education neglected in global and national climate responses

Despite the criticality of education in effective climate responses, recent analysis by Plan, UNICEF and Brookings reveals that climate strategies position education in a largely passive rather than empowering role.<sup>86</sup>

The report provides analysis of countries Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. It reveals

that the majority (66 of 108, or 61 %) position education passively without explicitly describing children’s role in mitigation or adaptation efforts.<sup>87</sup> The report identifies four ways that countries’ NDCs represent education passively. Firstly, education is often included as a tokenistic, general activity to support the success of efforts made by other sectors. Secondly, education is often referenced as an outcome impacted by climate change and/or by another sector’s contribution to mitigation or adaptation, rather than a critical input. Thirdly, countries’ strategies fail to recognise the importance of education

for the most marginalised children, and particularly girls’ education. Fourthly, the calls for financial and material support for education are not framed as necessary to enhance climate action.

The report highlights that this passive framing of education in climate strategies creates unhelpful silos that positions climate change as a problem for environmental sectors to handle, rather than all sectors. Furthermore, it disempowers key education actors and stakeholders in harnessing education in an effective climate response.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.



Young people who have been striking for the climate called on adults to join them on Friday 20 September 2019 as part of a massive global day of action. Millions of people around the world took part in a climate strike day, including hundreds of children, students and young people who took part in a march in Jakarta, Indonesia.

## 4. A Mandate for Action

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**As host of COP26, which coincides with the year of the UK's G7 presidency, the next year offers a real opportunity for the UK government to take decisive action to stop climate change undermining the right to education.**

Further, the UK must now take action by Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26) to put itself on track to achieve net-zero as quickly as possible, and bring other leaders and countries on board.

At the Paris climate summit in 2015, world leaders agreed collectively to limit average global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures, and to 'pursue efforts' to limit warming to 1.5°C via the Paris Agreement.<sup>88</sup> In order to do this, the Paris Agreement required each signatory to develop a plan to reduce their emissions by 2030, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

However, current commitments under the Paris Agreement would still result in global warming of 3°C or more.<sup>89</sup> 2020 is the deadline for these commitments to be strengthened, and ahead of COP26, governments are expected to set themselves more ambitious targets to stop climate change. The IPCC concluded that limiting warming to 1.5°C is possible but will require "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society"<sup>90</sup> in order to cut global

carbon emissions by 45% by 2030, and achieve 'net zero' emissions worldwide by 2050 at the latest.<sup>91</sup>

The UK has already become the first major economy to commit to bringing all its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. To show the world it's serious, the UK must now take action by COP26 to enact new policies, laws and investment to put itself on track to achieving this target as quickly as possible, including by announcing our own ambitious NDC. And throughout 2020 and 2021, Britain must use its diplomatic weight to press other leaders and countries to close the gap between existing Paris Agreement pledges for 2030 (NDCs), and those needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C.

**The UK government must take a child and youth centred approach to COP26.** The demand for world leaders to act on climate change has been driven by children and young people. Greta Thunberg, among other youth leaders, such as Leah Namugerwa, a teenage climate activist from Uganda, have led and inspired protests in countries around the world, from Afghanistan to Australia and from Uganda to the UK.

Children and young people, especially the most marginalised, must be included in understanding the problem of climate change and devising solutions. This is because the climate crisis will affect younger generations worse and they will feel the impacts

of climate change the longest. Furthermore, children and young people provide a different insight and perspective on the impacts of climate change than those provided by adults and, when empowered, can be effective agents of change in their communities. Yet, children and young people's perspectives are rarely considered in climate policy and practice, and their participation in decision making spaces in relation to climate change is limited.<sup>92</sup> Children and young people who are most likely to be affected by climate change are least likely to have their voices heard.

As host of COP26, the Government has the opportunity to ensure that children and young people's voices, experiences and perspectives are meaningfully included. To do this, opportunities must be created in the lead up to COP26 and at the summit itself to harness, in a diverse and inclusive manner, children and young people's learning, action, consultation and influence on climate change policy and practice. Young people should be included on the high level delegation for COP and the UK should lead regional consultations, coordinated by youth engagement specialists, to seek young people's views on climate processes and policies.

In partnership with communities, developing countries and other key stakeholders, the UK must strengthen education's role in the global climate response.

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88 UNFCCC, 2015. The Paris Agreement

89 IPCC, 2018. Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C approved by governments, <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 OHCHR (2016). Children, Young People and Climate Change. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRC/Discussions/2016/Plan%20International%20-%20201.pdf>; Mitchell, Paul & Bouchard, Caroline. (2014). Mainstreaming children's vulnerabilities and capacities into community-based adaptation to enhance impact. *Climate and Development*. 6. 372-381. 10.1080/17565529.2014.934775.;

D. Guatam and K. Oswald (2008). *Child Voices: Children of Nepal Speak Out on Climate Change Adaptation*.



Children taking part in an evacuation simulation at the Cot Lheure Rheng Elementary School, Pidie Jaya, Aceh.

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**Education has a key role to play in building adaptive capacity and resilience to a changing climate.**

Sustainable Development Goal 13 commits countries to specific targets to strengthen adaptive capacity and improve education and training on climate change. Simultaneously, Sustainable Development Goal 4 commits world leaders to achieving education for all and guaranteeing the provision of free, equitable and quality education. SDG 4.7 particularly commits governments to ensuring that all learners acquire the key skills, knowledge and behaviours for promoting sustainable development. Global commitments to use education in efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change were first made in Article 6 of the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

(UNFCCC).<sup>93</sup> This was later reaffirmed in Article 12 of The Paris Agreement.<sup>94</sup> Most recently, at the Conference of the Parties 25 (COP25) side events were held which focused on increasing the focus of world leaders on climate change education and improving the status of education in Nationally Determined Contributions.<sup>95</sup>

Despite international commitments and the gains made in prior decades, as this report documents, governments around the world are failing to adequately integrate CCE into national curricula and are off track in their pursuit of education for all - a key indicator of adaptive capacity.

As a respected leader in global education, especially girls' education, and as host of COP26, the Send my Friend to School coalition is calling

on the UK to deliver the following to strengthen education's role in the global climate response.

**Support young people facing the impacts**

Estimates by Oxfam suggest that people in the poorest countries receive less than a penny a day in dedicated climate change adaptation support from the international community.<sup>96</sup> The Government should therefore champion a global scaling up of financial support for poor and vulnerable countries and communities, with special account given to the rights and needs of the poorest and most marginalised children, including girls, children with disabilities, and refugee and internally displaced children, to prevent disruptions to education in a changing climate.

93 United Nations (1992). UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

94 UNESCO, "New UNESCO study highlights achievements and gaps in the area of climate change education", 06 December 2019, <https://en.unesco.org/news/new-unesco-study-highlights-achievements-and-gaps-area-climate-change-education> (Accessed 13 January 2020)

95 Ibid.

96 Oxfam, 2019. Poorest people get less than a penny per day to protect themselves from impacts of climate crisis. <http://oxfamapps.org/media/ryz7c>

Climate change is costly, deadly and hits hardest those who are least responsible for causing it. Young people in the poorest countries face a double-whammy – they will be the first generation to experience the full force of climate impacts, and they live in countries that are most exposed, have the least capacity to adapt, and find it hardest to recover from climate-related disasters. Yet finance to support vulnerable communities to adapt and cope with the impacts is neglected – stagnating at only 20% of overall climate finance for many years, falling short of the Paris Agreement commitment to provide a balance between adaptation and mitigation finance.

The UK Government recently announced that it would double its International Climate Finance from £5.8 billion in 2016/17 to 2020/21 to £11.6 billion over the next five years between 2021/22 to 2025/26.<sup>97</sup> The doubling of investment represents a commendable elevation of ambition from the UK government, though new and additional sources are needed so as to not rely on the aid budget alone. The UK should now show global leadership to ensure there is urgent and significant scale up of financial support to poor and vulnerable countries and communities on the frontline of the climate crisis. This includes committing to maintain 50% of UK climate finance for adaptation (and building support for others to do the same), championing a new global

adaptation finance goal, and leading international efforts to establish new and additional sources of finance for loss and damage.

### Climate change, education policy and practice

The Get Children Learning (GCL) policy, released in 2018, highlights three priority areas for the FCDO (formerly DFID): a) invest in good teaching b) back system reform and c) improve targeted support for the most marginalised children.<sup>98</sup>

Despite highlighting the threat conflict, crises and natural disasters pose to education, the policy does not yet acknowledge how climate change will exacerbate the frequency and severity of these disruptions. It subsequently, therefore, does not set out what measures it will take to both protect children's access to learning, or utilise education, in the face of a changing climate.

Further, while the Government has committed to directing 50% of its climate finance toward adaptation, it is difficult to assess what proportion, if any, will be spent on both protecting access to education and investing in education's potential role in mitigation and adaptation. For example, the UK International Climate Finance Strategy booklet does not address education at all.<sup>99</sup> Further, in the former DFID's 2019 UK Climate Finance Results document,

its statement of results on UK ICF makes no reference to education for sustainable development, climate change education or education more broadly.<sup>100</sup>

While climate change is absent from its overall education strategy, the Government should be commended for its global leadership on girls' education and education in emergencies. This includes commitment to and leadership of the Girls' Education Challenge and Leave No Girl Behind campaign which have reached millions and placed girls' education at the top of the global agenda.<sup>101</sup> Girls' education, as identified in this report, can provide high returns on investment for strengthening community resilience to climate change. The UK should therefore continue with its global leadership in this area.

Further, the UK's £90 million investment in Education Cannot Wait (ECW) in 2019, representing the largest multi-year contribution to ECW to date, is extremely valued. As this report states, children and young people in emergencies represent some of the furthest behind in education and some of the most vulnerable to climate change. Investing in this fund will help bring important educational continuity and opportunity to marginalised children impacted by climate disasters.

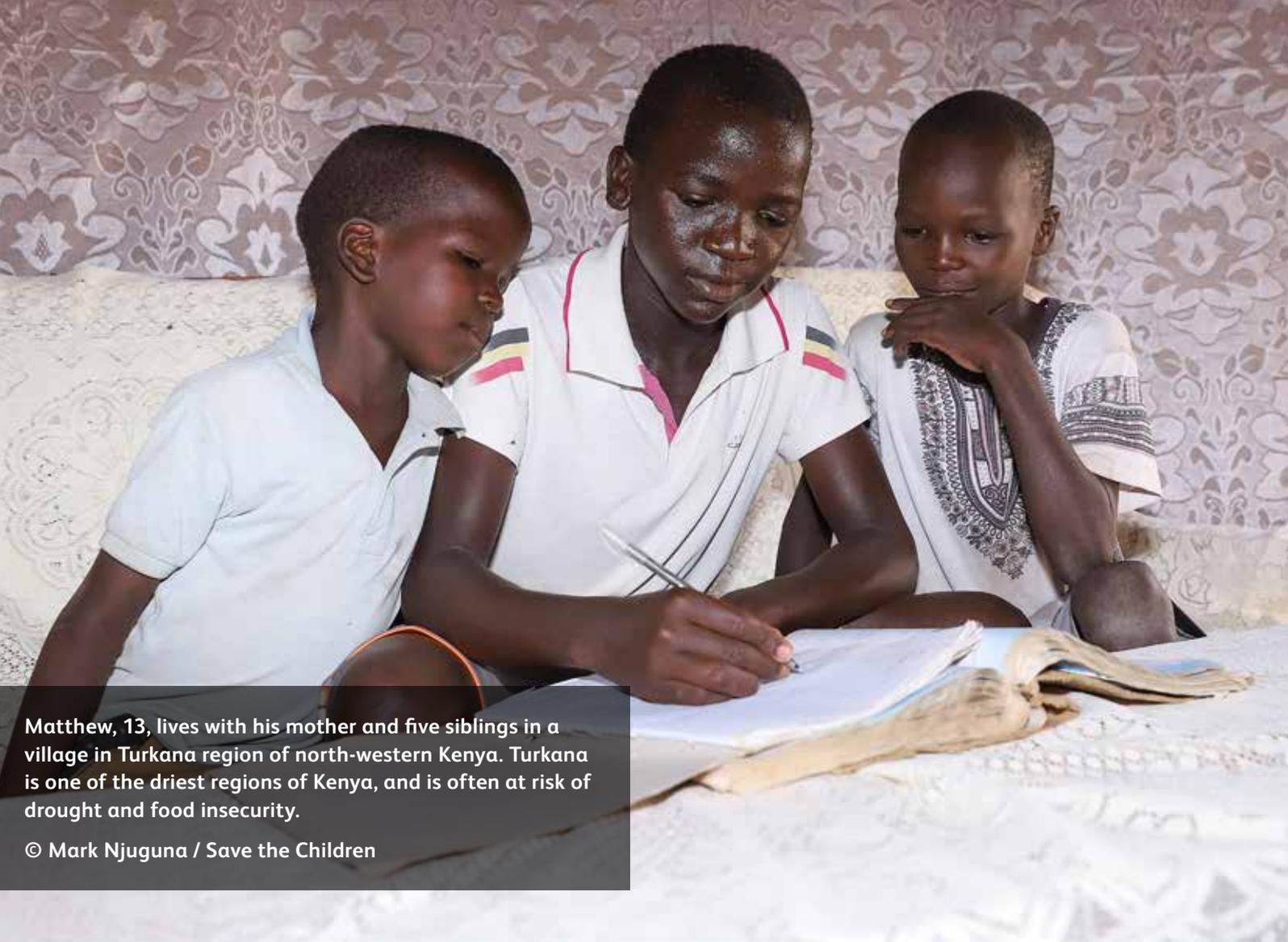
97 DFID, 2019. "UK Aid to Double Efforts to Tackle Climate Change", 23 September 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-to-double-efforts-to-tackle-climate-change> (accessed 13 January 2020)

98 DFID, 2018. Get Children Learning.

99 UK Government, 2019. UK International Climate Finance.

100 DFID, 2019. "UK Climate Finance Results 2019". [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/830656/ICF-Results-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/830656/ICF-Results-2019.pdf) (accessed 9 January 2020)

101 Send My Friend to School, 2019. Unlock Education for Everyone.



Matthew, 13, lives with his mother and five siblings in a village in Turkana region of north-western Kenya. Turkana is one of the driest regions of Kenya, and is often at risk of drought and food insecurity.

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The UK's commitment to education in emergencies is welcome, but not all impacts of climate change will be sudden disasters. As the long-term effects of climate change impact human movement, the FCDO should work with countries to better understand how education systems can become sensitive to climate change induced displacement and migration. This includes ensuring that measures are in place to protect education and learning before, during and after any move, internal or international, slow or immediate. The FCDO can do so by improving data collection on this issue, creating opportunities to share learning and best practice, facilitating active technical support for affected countries, and exploring innovative solutions.

Broadly, the FCDO's education spending should be fit for the future, with current and future spending tested for its climate sensitivity and future strategies should take serious consideration of education's role in facing and fighting climate change.

**The UK should lead by example on the integration of climate change education into curricula and teacher training.**

Globally, progress on actioning commitments to education and climate change has been inadequate. This is compounded by a failure to systematically monitor both the implementation of climate change education and the rate at which education has been utilised in adaptation.<sup>102</sup> In a UNESCO analysis of National Communications and

Nationally Determined Contributions, as a percentage of references to climate change education, just 11 % are references to formal education programmes.<sup>103</sup>

At COP26, the Action for Climate (ACE) programme will be adopted. The ACE programme is the vehicle through which climate change education, and broader public engagement, is covered under the Paris Agreement. In the lead up to and at COP26 the UK Government should prioritise an ambitious UNFCCC work plan which recognises and responds to the right to education (which is undermined by climate change) and the right to environmental education, as per Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

102 Christina Kwuak, "Is Education Standing Up to the Task of Climate Action?", Brookings Institution, 18 September 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2019/09/18/is-education-standing-up-to-the-task-of-climate-action/> (Accessed 13 January 2020)

103 UNESCO (2019). Country Progress on Climate Change Education, Training and Public Awareness

The UK Government, and those in the devolved administrations, should support all schools to build climate change education into their curriculums. This should include supporting initial teacher training and professional development to address climate change education, and supporting and disseminating resources that promote effective integration of climate change within the curriculum.

**The UK should prioritise school infrastructure vulnerability assessments, supporting the adaptation and construction of safe schools**

with particular consideration for the respective needs of the poorest and most marginalised children, including girls, children with disabilities and refugee and internally displaced children.

Disaster resilience is the ability of countries and communities to ‘manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses – such as earthquakes, drought or violent conflict – without compromising their long-term prospects’.<sup>104</sup> In the face of such disasters, education can be key to enhancing community resilience, both directly and indirectly, as already covered in this paper.

However, when school infrastructure is not built with resilience in mind, for example when schools are not built on safe sites or with quality materials, the safety of pupils and teachers is jeopardised and their respective abilities to learn and teach compromised.<sup>105</sup> It is clear that education infrastructure which is most exposed to climate related events, which are increasing in severity and frequency, will be more vulnerable to damage, destruction, and disruption if they are not adequately ‘climate-proofed’.<sup>106</sup>

A number of global initiatives exist to keep schools safe in times of disaster including the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES), the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools, and the Comprehensive School Safety Framework. Such attempts to better align education policy with disaster management practices are helping to improve school safety and school disaster management. However, a clear need still exists to make schools climate resilient, including in future developments as well as when rebuilding education infrastructure after a disaster.<sup>107</sup>

The FCDO, and formerly DFID, holds significant expertise on resilience and disaster preparedness. DRR is a priority across a number of policy papers, including placing resilience at the centre of its approach to addressing disasters, and commitments to embedding resilience-building in all of its country programmes by 2015.<sup>108</sup> However, it is unclear how effective these measures have been and to what extent education has been prioritised. It is also unclear how structured and coordinated its respective policies on education, DRR and climate change are with respect to reducing risk and building resilience in its education programmes. For example, its education policy, *Get Children Learning*, does not adequately reference the need for risk-reduction and resilience-building, especially in the face of a changing climate, nor does it acknowledge this as being central to tackling the global learning crisis.

Educational infrastructure should be protected from the impacts of climate related disasters, as well as slow onset changes, through better design and planning, with particular consideration for the most vulnerable children. The FCDO should prioritise the ‘climate proofing’ of educational infrastructure to ensure that children are safe during disasters and that disruptions to learning are minimised.

104 DFID (2011). Defining Disaster Resilience: A DFID approach paper. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/186874/defining-disaster-resilience-approach-paper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/186874/defining-disaster-resilience-approach-paper.pdf)

105 Send My Friend to School (2018). Safe from harm: protecting every child and teacher at school <https://sendmyfriend.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Make-Schools-Safe-Policy-Report.pdf>

106 Blum, N (2015). Topic Guide: Education, Climate and Environment. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08978ed915d622c000225/EoD\\_Topic\\_Guide\\_Education\\_Climate\\_Environment.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08978ed915d622c000225/EoD_Topic_Guide_Education_Climate_Environment.pdf)

107 Ibid.

108 DFID (2011). Saving Lives, Prevent Suffering, Building Resilience: The UK Government’s Humanitarian Policy. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67468/The\\_20UK\\_20Government\\_s\\_20Humanitarian\\_20Policy\\_20-20September\\_202011\\_20-20Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67468/The_20UK_20Government_s_20Humanitarian_20Policy_20-20September_202011_20-20Final.pdf)

# Recommendations

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In 2021, the UK Government will host the international climate summit, the Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26), where world leaders will convene to discuss action on tackling the climate emergency. The Prime Minister has made clear that providing 12 years of quality education is a top priority, especially for girls, who are denied this right every day.

The Send My Friend to School coalition is calling on the UK Government to seize the opportunity it has as host of COP26, in its G7 presidency and as a respected world leader in global education, to take decisive action to stop climate change undermining the right to education and strengthen education's role in the global climate response.

The Send My Friend to School coalition is calling on the UK Government to take the following measures:

**Provide leadership to stop climate change undermining the right to education and champion quality and inclusive participation of children and youth in climate change policy and practice by:**

## URGENTLY RAISING AMBITION

- The UK must take action by Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26) to put itself on track to achieve net-zero emissions as quickly as possible, and press other leaders and countries to close the gap between existing Paris Agreement pledges for 2030, and those needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 °C.
- Work together across ministries to deliver an integrated approach to climate change and education.

## PROMOTING YOUTH GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT ALL CLIMATE PROCESSES

- Recognise that children and young people are effective and important agents of change and meaningfully involve them in decisions that affect them. The UK must create opportunities in the lead up to COP26 and at the summit itself to harness, in a diverse and inclusive manner, children and young people's learning, consultation and influence on climate change policy and practice. Young people should be included on the high level delegation for COP and the UK should lead regional consultations, coordinated by youth engagement specialists, to seek young people's views on climate processes and policies, especially girls and children with disabilities, who are often the most marginalised.

## PROVIDING WORLD LEADING INVESTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

- The UK should continue to provide high-levels of investment in and political support for education in emergencies, for example through its strong support for education, including education in emergencies, to enable the continuous functioning of education systems in times of disasters.
- Invest in inclusive and quality education programming that is gender transformative, recognising the specific rights and needs of girls.
- The UK should maintain its commitment to set its ODA budget at 0.7 % of GNI, as enshrined in law.

**Work with communities, developing country partners and other key stakeholders to strengthen education's role in the global climate response by:**

### **SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE FACING THE IMPACTS**

The UK must lead the urgent scale up of financial support for poor and marginalised countries on the frontline of the climate crisis by:

- Maintaining its commitment to spend 50% of climate finance on adaptation and encourage other countries to commit to the same.
- As host of GPE replenishment in 2021, making an early and ambitious commitment to GPE's financing campaign. The UK should use its leadership position within the fund to drive policies that both insulate education against the impacts of climate change and utilise education in the global climate response.
- Championing a global adaptation finance goal and leading international efforts to raise new funding for loss and damage.
- Ensuring support is inclusive and accessible, responding to the needs and rights of the poorest and most marginalised children to prevent disruption to education.
- Taking account the rights and needs of girls in its climate financing and promoting the equality perspective at an international level.

### **ENSURING QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION (CCE)**

- The UK should champion the full integration of CCE into curricula and teacher training, as set out in the Paris Agreement and SDGs, to better prepare children to live in a rapidly changing climate, and ensure that all children, including the poorest and most marginalised, know about and feel empowered to act on their right to a healthy environment.
- In the lead up to and at COP26 the UK Government should prioritise an ambitious programme which recognises and responds to the right to education (which is undermined by climate change) and the right to environmental education, as per Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The UK Government, and those in the devolved administrations, should support all schools to build climate change education into their curriculums. This should include supporting initial teacher training and professional development to address climate change education, and supporting and disseminating resources that promote effective integration of climate change within the curriculum.

### **MAKING SCHOOLS SAFE**

- The UK should prioritise the 'climate proofing' of educational infrastructure, conducting school infrastructure vulnerability assessments and supporting the adaptation and construction of safe schools, with particular consideration for the most vulnerable children, to protect them from the impacts of climate related disasters, as well as slow onset changes.



Southeast Asia is currently experiencing one of the strongest El Niño on record, and La Niña is predicted to bring strong winds and rains to the region after months of food and water shortages. More than 1000 students in 70 villages of Rakhine State are now better prepared to respond to disasters and mitigate the risks of climate change after joining School Disaster Management Committees. The students have started a nursery, and learnt how to perform search and rescue operations, first aid and alert others if there is a disaster.

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**Send My Friend to School is a UK civil society coalition of international development NGOs, teachers unions and charities. The campaign undertakes a range of activities designed to increase community awareness of the state of education internationally and generate the political will necessary to ensure the UK plays an active and effective part in efforts to secure education for all. Send My Friend to School is the UK coalition of the Global Campaign for Education movement which is present in over 80 countries around the world, and aligns its work with the organisation’s mission and aims.**

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### **The Campaign’s UK members are:**

Able Child Africa	NEU	Sightsavers
CAFOD	Oxfam GB	The Educational Institute of Scotland
Christian Aid	Plan International UK	The Steve Sinnott Foundation
Deaf Child Worldwide	RESULTS UK	UNICEF UK
Humanity & Inclusion UK	Save the Children UK	UCU
Leonard Cheshire	Sense International	VSO
NASUWT		

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#### **Front cover photo:**

Southern Africa is in the grip of a food crisis. 15.3 million people are facing food shortages, after years of drought, widespread flooding and economic insecurity. The region has been designated a climate ‘hotspot’ by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and has experienced just one normal growing season in the last five years.

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\* All children’s names have been changed to protect their identity