

The Hidden Key to Climate Resilience: Investing in Young Children

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Global Climate Change Agenda

- Climate change poses profound risks to early childhood development (ECD)
- **UN COP28 acknowledged** the climate crisis' disproportionate impacts on children and recommended to include relevant policy solutions across UNFCCC
- Yet, attention to **early childhood is a key gap in existing climate policies, plans, and investments**



“Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis”

UN Climate Change Conference 2025

- Put young children at the heart of **COP30 outcomes**, recognizing their unique vulnerabilities, needs, and rights
- Adopt concrete, **child-focused climate measures** and commitments within national climate mitigation, adaptation, and Loss and Damage financing plans



Purpose of the Brief

The Hidden Key to Climate Resilience: Investing in Young Children



Climate change is a defining challenge of this moment and planning actions that will mitigate its impact presents an opportunity to make investments that will build the health and potential of young children as a climate resilience solution. There is already clear evidence that investing in high-quality nurturing care and essential early childhood services is a powerful tool for achieving sustainable development, and this approach should also be leveraged to address the multifaceted challenges of climate change. This brief provides countries with the rationale, examples, and recommended actions they can take to use climate change planning processes and financing mechanisms to adopt and implement policies and plans that guarantee universal access to all components of [nurturing care](#)—health, nutrition, safety, responsive caregiving, and early learning—for young children.

What is at Stake

In 2023, the [28th UN Climate Change Conference \(COP28\)](#) acknowledged the disproportionate and intersecting impacts of the climate crisis on children and recommended including children distinctly in all levels of climate action across the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)) agenda items.

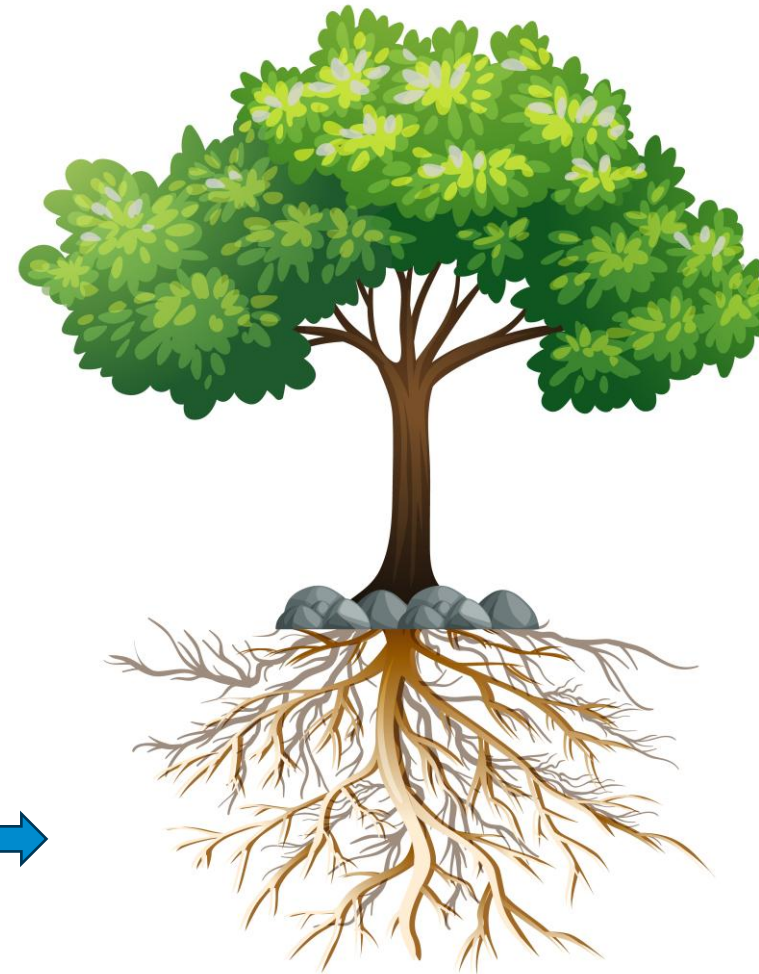
development. Risks include malnutrition due to reduced food supply, disrupted access to early education, unstable living environments, interrupted caregiver attention, and an increased likelihood of physical, cognitive, and mental health challenges resulting from stress, pollution, and displacement ([UNICEF, 2021](#)).

1. **Target Audience:** Country-level climate policymakers
2. **Goals:**
 - Understand investing in young children as a climate resilience strategy
 - Learn recommended actions to include in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and climate financing
 - Highlight successful examples from other countries
 - Advocate for stronger commitments on global platforms
3. **Dissemination:** Leverage COP30 and national planning process

Connecting ECD to Climate Goals

Climate Change Agenda

1. Improved community climate resilience
2. Adaptation
3. Mitigation
4. Disaster response



Benefits of Investing in Young Children

- Builds human capital and supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Delivers a high return on investment
- Fosters cross-sector collaboration through an integrated approach and coordinated service delivery
- Boosts climate-friendly habits
- Reduces the risk of lifelong non-communicable diseases and lowers associated healthcare costs
- Offers an efficient way to reach families with messages and services through community centers



Learning from other Countries



The Republic of the Marshall Islands

- Recognizes the fundamental role ECD plays in the context of **socio-economic development and climate change policies** in its latest NDC 3.0
- NDC goes on to specify that the government ***“plans to...integrate ECD and climate change both at the agency and program levels.”***
- Prioritizes climate-smart infrastructures



Dominican Republic

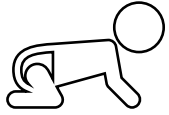
- Integrated **early childhood considerations** into its **NDC**
- Held a landmark First **Forum on Climate Change and its Impact on Early Childhood (2023)**
- Are advancing **child-sensitive solutions** within national climate policies
- Are advocating for stronger **integration of early childhood considerations** in climate response plans ahead of COP30 and updating NDCs



Action Countries Can Take



At National Level



Name young children (0-8 years) specifically as a distinct group



Integrate comprehensive nurturing care services into climate change policies, plans, and financing



Include nurturing care services in budgets



Construct and upgrade early childhood facilities to be climate resilient



Expand access to economic and social resources for families impacted by climate change

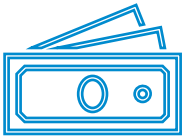


Involve key ECD stakeholders in climate action planning

At Global Level



Showcase successful countries as models



Endorse climate finance reforms



Advocate for the allocation of grants to vulnerable countries



Promote the inclusion of age-responsive indicators in the global adaptation goals



Support continuation of the expert dialogue on early childhood and climate change

“They (children) have their whole life ahead of them - any deprivation as a result of climate and environmental degradation at a young age can result in a lifetime of lost opportunity”

Unicef, 2021





ECDAN

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