

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a cracked, grey stone floor. In the upper left corner, a pair of red, multi-strap sandals is visible. In the center-right, there is a colorful drawing of a flower with orange petals and a blue center, outlined in red. The text is overlaid on this image.

**barnfonden**

Member of ChildFund  
Alliance

4 actions we can  
take now to keep  
children safe in  
climate-affected  
communities

**Strategies to end  
violence against children  
in a changing climate**

This white paper has been published by Barnfonden, August 2022.  
It is aimed at authorities and development practitioners – those working with communities and national and global structures to address the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, as well as those working on issues related to ending violence against children.

#### **Acknowledgements**

Barnfonden wishes to thank ChildFund and local partner offices in Cambodia, India and Ethiopia whose important work is portrayed in the case studies. Barnfonden would also like to thank the following people for their input to this paper: Sabine Rakotomalala, Technical Officer, Violence Prevention Unit; Department for the Social Determinants of Health (SDH), World Health Organization; Nicolas Makharashvili, Senior Program Officer, CPC Learning Network, Columbia University; Coordinator, INSPIRE Implementation Working Group; Cristina Velázquez Calleja, Global Advisor on Ecological Transition, Educo Spain.

The ideas and opinions presented in this document are solely those of Barnfonden, Sweden. Case studies do not necessarily represent the perspectives of the ChildFund Country offices and local partners.

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Photos: Emil Swensson, Sofia Jung, and ChildFund Country Office files.  
Design: Vinter.

Barnfonden is an international child rights organisation based in Sweden. Barnfonden is a member of the ChildFund Alliance, eleven organisations working with over 23 million children and families in 70 countries to end violence and exploitation against children and to overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential.

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Approximately one billion children globally live in countries considered to be extremely vulnerable to climate and environmental shocks and stresses(1). These risks increase children’s exposure to violence.

## How does climate change affect violence against children?

Roughly one billion children aged 2-17 experience physical, sexual, or emotional violence each year (1,2). Climate change-exacerbated increases in droughts and water scarcity, floods, other natural disasters, and rising temperatures have effects on migration, conflict, poverty and food insecurity, psychosocial health, and stress (3–7). These in turn increase the incidence of violence against children, such as child labour, child marriage, sexual abuse, physical abuse, gender-based violence, neglect, trafficking and mental health issues (8–16). Violence against children is multidimensional, with causes at the individual, close relationship, community, and societal levels. Violence against children has a life-long impact on the health and well-being of a child.

The protection of children from all forms of violence is a fundamental right upheld in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, formal planning, policy and response systems and structures do not put ‘climate change’ and ‘protection of children from violence’ in the same space. As a result, duty bearers – including community

leaders, governments, non-governmental organisations, and agencies influencing international structures – are not responding as quickly as they should to develop policies, prevention and recovery interventions.

Lack of, or limited, documented evidence further inhibits action to protect children from violence caused by the effects of climate change. In the rapidly changing climate we are experiencing, we cannot afford to sit on the bench. We need to strengthen the discourse on linking climate change and environmental degradation risks and protecting children from violence, especially at local levels where children are impacted the most. We need to go further than humanitarian response (where established guidelines exist) to strengthen multi-sectoral approaches in development interventions to protect children in a changing climate.

In brief, we need to be more explicit and deliberate in making the link between climate change and violence against children in development programming.

Figure 1

**The INSPIRE strategies are seven internationally recognised strategies for ending violence against children and adolescents. For climate affected communities, Barnfonden sees the need to enhance INSPIRE strategy approaches to include or strengthen the following four actions:**

1. Acknowledge that climate change is increasing levels of violence against children, and continue to strengthen and test the evidence.

*Include as an INSPIRE Strategy Cross-cutting activity*

2. Strengthen prevention of violence against children through livelihood resilience; address social norms, and develop school-based programmes.

*Strengthen across INSPIRE Strategies 2,4,5,7*

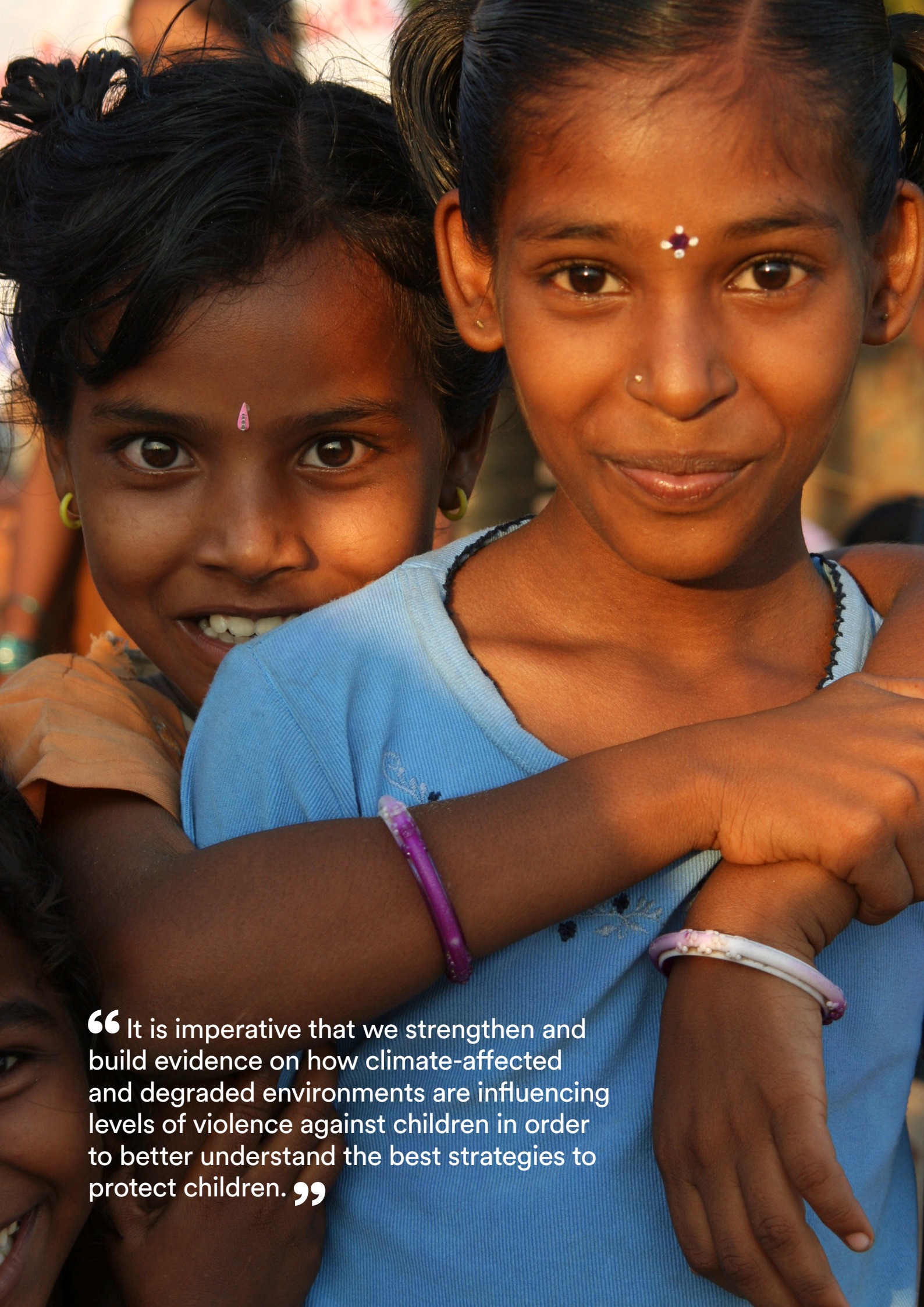
3. Strengthen disaster prevention and response services to incorporate the increasing risk of violence against children, and promote anticipatory action.

*Reinforce in INSPIRE Strategies 4, 6*

4. Listen to, engage and support children and youth in planning and solution-finding to deal with the effects of a changing climate.

*Incorporate across all seven INSPIRE Strategies*





“ It is imperative that we strengthen and build evidence on how climate-affected and degraded environments are influencing levels of violence against children in order to better understand the best strategies to protect children. ”



# What is child-focused climate resilient development?

This document talks about child-focused climate resilient development, emphasising child protection as a core component of Barnfonden’s approach to mainstreaming climate, environment and child rights across its community development work.

Climate change is affecting families by placing stresses on them that can lead to increased violence. Figure 2 demonstrates the link based on previous published work of Barnfonden: [Exploring the link between climate change and violence against children](#).<sup>(19)</sup>

Conventional development and resilience-building projects seldom account for such impacts. For instance, the Inspire Strategies – the select group of strategies to help countries and communities intensify their focus on effective violence prevention programmes and services – do not adequately account for the impact of climate change, except in humanitarian action. The same can be said for child-focused climate change efforts. For example, UNICEF’s Children’s Climate Risk Index (CCRI) report, *The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis 2021*, presents measures indicating children’s vulnerability to climate risks. This index is missing measures related to violence.

Such exclusions increase opportunities for the issue to be overlooked. Immediate attention must be paid to raising the status of climate change impacts in violence prevention recommendations, and heeding risks of violence against children in climate change impact discussions.

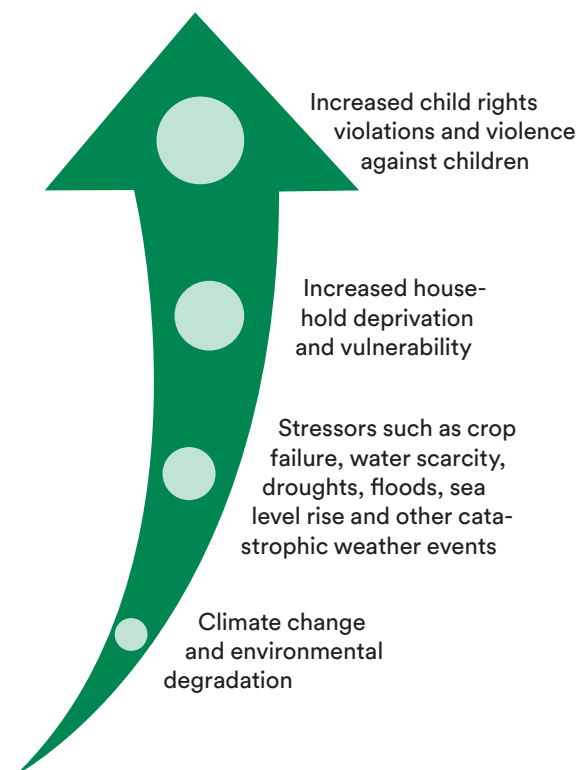
Barnfonden has a child-focused, climate-resilient development approach which:

- Applies a climate / risk to children lens over all their child-focused development work as they design programmes in health, education, child protection and sustainable livelihoods.
- Informs on how climate change has direct and downstream effects on children and youth to raise awareness and identify behavioural, systemic and structural weaknesses that need to be addressed.

- Prepares communities, including child protection structures, to anticipate and respond to keeping children safe from violence, while strengthening their resiliency to better withstand climate and environmental risks.
- Focuses on children claiming their rights, which includes the meaningful participation of children and youth.

This paper focuses on actions centred around SDG 16.2: *Ending violence against children* and SDG 13 (see page 6). It recommends four actions we can take now to incorporate child protection into development and resilience-building programmes for communities afflicted by climate change. A series of case studies from Page 10 provide examples of how these actions can be applied.

**Figure 2**  
*Exploring the link between climate change and violence against children*<sup>(19)</sup>.



# How can we strengthen current strategies to end violence against children?

## ACTION

### 1

**Acknowledge that climate change is increasing levels of violence against children, and strengthen and test the evidence to demonstrate this.**

Emerging research has found that climate change contributes to direct and structural violence, including violence against children<sup>(17)</sup>. Based on this evidence, it is perplexing that reports and guidelines addressing climate risks towards children currently exclude “violence” as an effect. There is an urgent need to add this to the lexicon related to climate change and environmental degradation, while also adding “climate” to discussions on child protection. This includes the need to promote an integrated development approach to ensure that work on climate and child protection is considered together in a more systematic way (18). Alongside this, it is imperative that we strengthen and build evidence on how climate-affected and degraded environments are influencing levels of violence against children in order to better understand the best strategies to protect children. Despite the limited documented evidence, we must act – with urgency! The development sector has a role to play, first of all, by naming the issue and incorporating it into their climate change programming. This includes assigning indicators to measure violence against children, and sharing successful strategies when violence is reduced. For Barnfonden, this ‘evidence collection’ is firmly situated within our child-focused, climate resilient development approach, with its emphasis on informing and preparing communities for climate and environmental change.

## ACTION

### 2

**Strengthen the prevention of violence against children through livelihood resilience; address social norms and develop school-based programmes.**

Community-level risk factors for violence include poverty, high unemployment levels, emotional stress and lack of access to services<sup>(19,20)</sup>. Climate change affects these risk factors, locking people into pov-

erty, and influences systems and services central to supporting children’s wellbeing. Child-focused climate resilient development tackles the two risk factors together, recognising that they are interlinked.

Climate change can impact wellbeing differently at each stage of a child’s life (e.g., from nutrient deprivation for under 5s, to being withdrawn from education to contribute to household income for 5-18 year olds<sup>(21,22)</sup>). There is evidence linking degraded or climate-affected environmental conditions to child labour, both as a root cause of child labour and as an aggravating factor of existing root causes (23). An example can be seen in the case of Dugda, Ethiopia, where the continued slow onset of drought impacts livelihood opportunities, agriculture, and food systems, driving households into poverty. In such cases, families in search of survival solutions may resort to child labour and forced marriage, child abandonment and unsafe migration<sup>(24)</sup>.

Climate change and environmental resilience strategies must be linked with child protection strategies in order to address violence against children. Alongside economic strengthening and the creation of more resilient incomes, negative social norms and harmful coping mechanisms such as early marriage and child labour need to be addressed.

Strengthening families’ livelihoods to be sustainable and resilient to climate change effects can prevent the severity of impacts that influence children’s education, health, and psychosocial situations – all of which drive up an increase in the risks of violence. Development interventions, including disaster risk reduction plans, should tailor adaptation strategies to each local context, while also tackling the community social norms and local resource limitations that perpetuate these risks<sup>(25)</sup>.

Projects that focus on the economic empowerment of mothers have shown to decrease the risk of child labour, trafficking, and early marriage. However, such interventions need to consider gender responsive approaches, such as climate smart agriculture that addresses the gender differences in adoption barriers and access to resources<sup>(26)</sup>.

Cash assistance or vouchers are, for example, an increasingly popular tool in African governments' social protection strategies. By directly addressing structural factors such as poverty and indirectly reducing gender inequality, cash assistance or voucher systems have the potential to reduce the risk of violence against children.

Climate change and sustainable development education that aims to increase the adaptive capacity and resilience of children and youth, can also be seen as an entry point towards building resiliency in families. Schools are valuable because they not only provide the vehicle for education about child protection, climate and environmental stewardship, but they are an entity that can motivate for linkages across the community, including with local and district government environmental, DRR and child protection structures. Schools can also introduce sustainable development, child rights and peace-building concepts, through the curriculum or via environmental clubs and other groups.

Children who are not in school should not be forgotten or left behind. Programmes specifically targeting this group can build cohorts of youth ambassadors or peer motivators, who can be powerful activists in promoting pro-social behaviours and environmental activism within their homes and in the community.



Evidence from Dugda, Ethiopia, shows that when mothers are engaged in income generating activities, children are more likely to stay in school. The simple addition of an energy-saving stove in a household can reduce risks to the women and children responsible for wood-fuel gathering as they trek ever-further from home in search of supplies. Such a device can also have the dual benefit of reducing the need to burn biomass – a key contributor to global warming<sup>(25)</sup>.

#### ACTION

### 3

**Strengthen prevention and response services to incorporate the increasing risk of violence against children, and promote anticipatory action.**

“Anticipatory Action” is an approach which systematically links early warnings to actions designed to protect families and their assets ahead of a hazard. Increasingly, many hazards are attributed to climate change.

Using schools and community spaces to not only deliver life and social skills trainings, but to discuss and plan for potential hazards, is a primary prevention intervention that can yield a significant return on investment<sup>1</sup>. This approach should link to local authority and government-based early warning and child protection response systems. Such systems may also need strengthening – including through increased government investment and focus – in order to identify and anticipate the downstream, multiplier effects of climate change on violence against children.

For instance, schools in disaster-prone areas can work with community organisations and authorities to plan for the immediate establishment of child-centred spaces in the event of a catastrophe. Such spaces offer psychosocial support and child protection services to children. Local government can initiate training to upscale and prepare community-based child protection plans and services, or initiate the early introduction of meals in schools<sup>2</sup>. Such initiatives can help keep children in school and curb child labour and migration.

Cash transfers, often used in humanitarian response, can also be effective in both development programmes and anticipatory action interventions. Small sums of cash released to the most vulnerable households ahead of a hazard can allow families to become disaster-ready, which can significantly ease household stress. Stress is a key contributor to violence against children.

<sup>1</sup> Evidence shows that for every dollar invested in anticipatory action, families can receive a return of more than \$7 because they avoid the loss of livelihoods (27,28).

<sup>2</sup> This highlights the importance of governments having anticipatory action plans, as school meal programmes are often linked to Emergency Response Plans and rely on a crisis being called, by which stage many children will have already left school.



## ACTION

## 4

## Listen to, engage and support children and youth in planning and solution-finding to end violence against children, in a changing climate.

Children view natural disasters as forms of violence that leave them vulnerable by threatening or destroying their homes, interrupting their daily lives, and placing strain on their families and communities<sup>(16)</sup>.

The emotional impact of climate change on children and young people can be coupled with a dissatisfaction with government responses to climate change. This has led to increased distress, known as climate anxiety<sup>(29–31)</sup>. Fear of causing anxiety is sometimes seen by adults as a justification not to discuss climate change with children, yet it is a global crisis and an important subject, and children have a right to engage on the issue. Guidance exists for parents and teachers on how to talk to children and youth about climate change, and adults should view a discussion as an opportunity to support children and enlist their ideas for positive actions to help deal with and end climate change, and to address other environmental concerns (such as adopting the call to ‘reduce, reuse and recycle’). Through this, children and adults can also learn the value of self-efficacy and the importance of climate action (action can be a powerful antidote to anxiety). There are increasingly more opportunities for children, youth and adults to engage, such as through climate action and conservation groups at school and in the community<sup>(32)</sup>. Where these opportunities do not exist, development projects can encourage the formation of such groups, linking household- and school/ community-based DRR planning and/or emergency response to promote engagement. Research describes such climate action as a *strong, community response to a shared external threat, acknowledging the challenge, encouraging adult insight into young peoples’ responses, providing time for empathetic communication with children and youth, validating their feelings of fear and disillusionment, and jointly mobilising hope through meaningful goal-directed activities*<sup>(33,34)</sup>. Even with adult support and guidance, some children and youth may feel distress. Opportunities should be created for children to access psychosocial support.

<sup>3</sup> A useful resources can be found on the web; Doing What Matters in Times of Stress (who.int), Eco distress - for young people | Royal College of Psychiatrists (rcpsych.ac.uk)

## What SDGs are we asking duty bearers to align with in this call to action?

The Actions proposed touch on many of the SDGs, some of which are noted, below. Barnfonden has chosen to discuss the issue by focusing on the particular relationship between SDG 13 and SDG 16.2.



- SDG 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations.
- SDG 8.7: End modern slavery, trafficking and child labour.
- SDG 10.2: Empower and promote social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
- SDG 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters.
- SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into policies and planning.
- SDG 13.3: Build knowledge and capacity to meet climate change.
- SDG 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.
- SDG 17: Supporting partnerships for the goals.

SDG 13 also specifies climate action as a necessary objective. This includes “taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. It is important for people – as individuals and societies – to reduce or stop climate change and prevent serious permanent damage to the environment.

Being effective in the context of these recommendations is about building children’s belief that they can and are making a difference to their world, and assisting them to find opportunities to meaningfully engage with duty bearers.



Children should be supported to engage with authorities in age-appropriate ways. Above: Children in India send messages to global leaders by designing placards which Barnfonden shares in its advocacy work with the Swedish public and in international forums.



# Conclusion

“No single country supports a healthy childhood and an environment fit for the future.” (Clark et al, 2020)

Children, families, communities, and local governments need to be prepared to handle the increase of climate change effects, through a range of climate change adaptation strategies, disaster risk reduction strategies and plans, and increased education and awareness on how to prepare and prevent the effects of climate change on violence against children (17). These discussions need to happen within and between the child protection sector, and the environment and DRR sector, with both sectors seeing and seizing opportunities to come together.

There are valuable lessons to learn from the Covid-19 pandemic – a time when we also saw an increase in violence against children (36). We acknowledge the difficulties in speaking about climate change, and the sensitivities around violence against children. While documented evidence describing the link between these two issues is growing, it is still small, challenging the ability to find a solid

evidence base on best practices. Comprehensive child protection strategies exist, such as the INSPIRE strategies, however these now need to be updated to explicitly include climate change.

## This paper suggests that:

- Not enough is being done to demonstrate how the impacts of climate change are intensifying child protection risks related to violence against children, particularly in ‘conventional’ development programming.
- Immediate action is required to co-ordinate climate change adaptation strategies and disaster preparedness and responses with violence prevention actions, to keep children safe.
- A child-focused, climate resilient development approach can be an entry point to creating effective ways to protect children from violence in a changing climate in the development sector.



See annex for case studies based on Barnfonden’s experience.

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According to *Counting Pennies: A review of official development assistance to end violence against children (ChildFund Alliance - Counting Pennies)* spending on efforts to end violence against children should be systematically tracked. The OECD-Development Assistance Committee database should be encouraged to explore the inclusion of a specific marker on spending related to violence against children. The report was commissioned by ChildFund Alliance, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International, World Vision International, and Development Initiatives (2017).



# Case studies

## Three project examples from Barnfonden and ChildFund partners

The following case studies are drawn from Barnfonden's child-focused climate resilient development work with ChildFund partners. They represent lessons from projects that address climate change and environmental degradation and respond to violence against children. The stories demonstrate how the recommended Actions are being practiced in affected communities.

## Cambodia, Svay Rieng

### *The case of unsafe migration*

**Background.** Millions of children around the world are on the move, with the impacts of both slow onset environmental degradation and sudden onset disasters contributing to migration. In 2020 alone, there were an estimated 9.8 million weather-related internal displacements of children (UNICEF, 2021). Migration is a coping strategy to overcome damage and losses occurring from and linked to climate change effects on livelihoods (Burrows & Kinney, 2016). Migration laws are often not conducive to receiving, providing protection, or realizing the rights of environmental migrants, most of whom are internal migrants (UNICEF, 2021). Many people uprooted by climate change are unlikely to meet legal definitions or other conditions for employment-based, family or humanitarian admissions to destination countries, leaving many children stranded with nowhere to go (UNICEF, 2021). Cambodia is considered one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change within Asia (WeWorld, 2021).

Due to limited income opportunities in Cambodia, including in climate change affected areas, caregivers migrate and leave their children behind, often in the care of relatives in similarly-stressed family situations impacted by slow-onset crises (UNICEF & ILO report 2021, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ROME 2021). These children are at high risk of being recruited into child labour and of migrating themselves. They may also drop out of

school or become homeless because it is the 'better alternative' to staying in a home where violence is prevalent. In Svay Rieng, Cambodia, limited income opportunities and low production and yields linked to the effects of climate change directly impact families' livelihoods. This results in high rates of migration. In a project study conducted by Barnfonden and ChildFund Cambodia, it was found that a common situation is for parents to migrate for job opportunities and leave their children in the care of grandparents, aunts, or other extended families. This is not always ideal, or safe, as these families may themselves be under stress. *Demonstrates Action 1: Acknowledge that climate change is increasing levels of violence against children and strengthen the evidence.*

**Developing safe alternatives** (leverage points). Since vulnerable parents, youth or whole families were likely to migrate in the hope of improving their stressed situation, Barnfonden's/ChildFund's Unsafe Migration project focused on capacity building around "safer options". This included providing education around child rights, establishing support 'hotlines', promoting the value of networks and check-ins with relatives, Child Friendly spaces offering psychosocial support for children, and guidance/referrals to community-based services, including child protection services. *Demonstrates Action 3: Strengthen prevention and response services and promote anticipatory action.*



### **Strengthening knowledge and skills.**

Vulnerable children living with relatives were known to be at risk of migrating, but neither these children nor their parents or temporary caregivers accessed the support services available to them. Reasons given for not using these services were lack of knowledge, low motivation, and/or a weak health status. A good practice from the Unsafe Migration project was to conduct house visits to share information on the issue and to demonstrate safe and legal migration alternatives. Youth were targeted and provided with legal knowledge and linked to networks to enable them to make more informed decisions. Capacity building on safe and legal migration practices and how to access legal documentation to promote safe migration was recognized as a good practice among community members.

A mobile information/“home visit” strategy led by trained community youth volunteers who were connected to child friendly spaces (funded by the Commune budget) proved successful to removing the access barriers noted above (Barnfonden Unsafe Migration evaluation report). These home visits were also an opportunity for promoters to discuss how relatives/temporary caregivers could support vulnerable children and discuss child trafficking, gender-based violence, and other protection issues. *Demonstrates Action 2- Strengthen prevention through livelihood resilience, address social norms, and develop school-based programmes.*

**Youth involvement.** Children and youth were highly involved in the project, identifying issues and needs, participating in trainings, raising awareness through events and home visits, and building networks. They were also involved in evaluating project progress and revising implementation along the way. Many activities were implemented through school clubs and youth clubs – sustainable structures where knowledge can be shared and where children are enabled to become agents of change (borne out by evidence from several Barnfonden projects, all using a similar approach). The engagement of youth in disseminating information on child rights, safe migration and child trafficking was an initial step in

engaging youth in key community issues (UM prevalence study report 2018).

Information centres were also an opportunity to promote youth leadership by engaging youth in the management and further development of the centre activities. The project evaluation confirmed that the youth volunteers became confident in raising awareness on unsafe migration and child trafficking and were committed to their tasks. *Demonstrates Action 4- Listen to, engage and support children and youth in planning and solution finding to end violence against children in a changing climate.*



Photo: Jesper Anhede

Child Clubs are a good way to integrate training in child protection with disaster risk reduction and climate resilient agriculture. In this picture, children in a flood-prone area of Cambodia learn how to grow vegetables in raised gardens. Children can teach parents new and improved ways of coping with problems experienced as a result of climate change, leading to increased parent/child engagement and positive relationship-building.

## India, Gogunda

*The case of community-driven climate resilience planning for climate-ready, child-friendly schools.*

**Background.** India is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the South Asia region, caused by a chronic repetition of droughts during the dry seasons (February – June) and floods during the wet season (July – August). These climatic stressors amplify already existing development challenges, particularly those related to health, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Education can provide a sense of normalcy in emergencies. Disrupted education exposes school-goers to increased risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. These risks are compounded by the relatively low adaptive capacity and knowledge of community members and government officials about the links between climate change and its downstream effects, and how they impact children. In line with the Convention of the Rights of the Child, there is an urgent need to ensure that there are safe and child-friendly structures that correspond to children's particular needs.

Gogunda is an area particularly prone to both flooding and drought. Schools are in vulnerable areas. Prior to the Barnfonden/ChildFund project, they were unprepared to respond to emergencies. Based on the problem analysis identified above, the overall goal of the project was to improve the quality of formal education by providing Child-Friendly and Climate-Ready public schools where children could thrive in safe, inclusive, and stimulating learning environments.

Before Barnfonden's Child Friendly and Climate Ready School Project began, the 20 schools faced multiple challenges including safety concerns related to fire, flooding, heat stress, drought (reduction of school water supply), storms or cyclones, and health impacts due to diseases and viruses.

### **Using a child-friendly participatory design.**

Twenty school communities created and cham-

pioned a tailor-made solution for their school and broader community. In each school the project developed strategies to respond to the perceived and evidence-based impacts of climate change. Solutions included managing hotter temperatures, drought and flooding, and how to address environmental degradation. Strategies also included how to improve child development physically, intellectually, cognitively and socially. Teachers were trained in social and emotional learning skills and child protection. *Demonstrates Action 4- Listen to, engage and support children and youth in planning and solution finding to end violence against children in a changing climate.*

**Child-led Emergency Plans.** Children were included in leading school risk assessments, and in the planning and preparation of school safety plans. They now oversee the plan's implementation with the support of the School Management Committees. Children and youth were included in the disaster response structure and received training on specific task force skills required during an emergency. This included risk mapping, child-friendly early warnings, first aid and physical readiness. School children and the wider school community were able to practice these roles and responsibilities in pre-, during- and post-disaster scenarios by executing mock drills and training with school members. *Demonstrates Action 2- Strengthen prevention through livelihood resilience, address social norms, and develop school-based programmes; and Action 3- strengthen prevention and response services, and promote anticipatory action.*

The project offered a wide variety of elements to stimulate children's development needs, including spaces for activity and movement, opportunities for recreation, spaces for different needs, interest, and learning difficulties, and opportunities for safe outdoor playing and learning. The project focused on applying a 'climate-ready' approach which included the identification of safe spaces, access to safe drinking water, safe and gender segregated latrines, and the construction of natural protection mechanisms such as tree planting,





erosion prevention, stop-banking and fire breaking. Shade structures provided a means of reducing heat stress in schools, while also providing a framework for climbing plants. While these changes may not seem ground-breaking, the combination of elements helps spark the notion of how to build resiliency, and the importance of creating shared plans link-

ing the individual to schools, to homes, and to the wider community. *Demonstrates Action 2- Strengthen prevention through livelihood resilience, address social norms, and develop school-based programmes; and Action 3- Strengthen prevention and response services, and promote anticipatory action.*



## Ethiopia, Dugda

*The case of harmful coping strategies to relieve livelihood stress due to slow-onset droughts.*

**Background.** Slow-onset crises such as drought impact livelihood opportunities and affect agriculture and food systems. When these shocks happen again and again, families find themselves slipping further and further into poverty. A study by Terre des Hommes (Child Labour Report 2017) and Barnfonden's research 'Exploring the Link between Climate Change and Violence Against Children' links child labour to environmental stress, especially in communities prone to recurrent shocks. In Ethiopia, as in the previous case study in India, loss of livelihood can result in families taking drastic measures, including engaging children in child labour.

In the agriculturally-dependent woreda (district) of Dugda, girls are routinely charged with fetching fuelwood, sometimes venturing far from home to find supplies, while boys work as animal herders. Juggling these tasks with school work is exhausting, especially as climate stressors mean further and further treks in search of water, fuelwood and animal fodder. Not only does this place children at increased risk of violence, but it also makes them more vulnerable to rejecting school in order to focus on the more pressing need for survival. They are even more vulnerable when their family becomes dependent on them contributing to household income to see them through environmental shocks, such as a drought or flood. Girls in rural Dugda already face challenges of inequality that exclude them from school, despite the government policy of 'education for all'. Lack of education forces girls into the informal labour market, trapping them in the poverty cycle. Boys also work informally, finding jobs on commercial farms or operating as street vendors. They have no legal rights, and find themselves in situations that are dangerous and frightening, and from which it is hard to escape.

**Economically secure families are unlikely to require their children to contribute to the household income, which would expose**

**them to child labour and other harmful coping strategies.** Identifying the most vulnerable families, and providing conditional cash transfers with the commitment of keeping children in school (as a short-term solution), is one way Barnfonden's/ChildFund's project in Dugda is averting child labour. This is supplemented with efforts to promote gender equality at home and in leadership roles, farmer training in climate-smart agriculture (with a particular focus on women farmers), opportunities for diversified income generation, links to markets and access to community-operated savings and loan facilities so families can build resilience over the medium- to long-term. The project also supports teaching improvements, as children are more likely to want to stay in school, and their parents are more likely to support them to do so, when they feel it is worth their while. *Demonstrates Action 2- Strengthen prevention through livelihood resilience, address social norms, and develop school-based programmes.*

Resilience can also be strengthened by protecting existing natural resources, such as introducing community woodlot planting. An effective way to do this is to work with government across various departments, including agriculture, economic and social affairs, women and youth, environment, and education units (DEVEX, 2021).

**Harmful coping strategies triggered by climate change must be mitigated.** Incidences of Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) intensify during times of community stress, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic (UNDP, 2020 GBV violence and Covid-19). Women and girls in Ethiopia are particularly vulnerable to risks in disasters, due to deeply-rooted unequal power relations. The project in Dugda works through community groups to raise awareness on the adverse effects of child labour and HTPs, while also working with children and youth to help them understand about child rights. They and their parents and teachers also learn where to receive support and advice, while community-based child protection structures are strengthened to improve



the quality of their services. Meanwhile, those who employ children are also made aware of the social and legal ramifications of their practice, and police are motivated to enact the law. *Demonstrates Action 3- Strengthen prevention and response services, and promote anticipatory action.*

**Youth inclusive environments support livelihood opportunities.** With less access to arable land and increased climate vulnerability, youth need new options for employment. A parallel project in Dugda has introduced life skills, entrepreneurial and vocational skill training for youth, allowing them to form groups to start their own small businesses. At the same time, youth are encouraged to engage in setting the future direction of their community. Forums are facilitated where they can identify issues of concern, and raise them to community leaders. Children and youth also play a proactive role in sharing lessons with their families, for instance, taking what they have learned from school bio-gardens to their parents and peers. Previous project work has demonstrated how this has led to more climate-resilient farming methods being adopted at home, resulting in year-round vegetable production. *Demonstrates Action 4- Listen to, engage and support children and youth in planning and solution finding to end violence against children in a changing climate.*

**Strengthen community-based protection structures across all levels and find champions to end violence against children.** In Dugda, engagement right across the multi-level system has been crucial to ensure the collaboration and same-page messaging of local authority disaster planning structures, traditional and religious leaders, private companies, health, law and education authorities and child protection services. Knowing that a climate event such as a drought or flood triggers a spike in child labour and child marriage, leaders and services have been prepped to be on guard when an event is expected. It is important to systematically strengthen the functionality and communication of community-based child protection mechanisms for improved prevention, response, referral, coordina-



tion, surveillance, evaluation, and documentation. Behaviour change is a slow process and requires change leaders – both women and men – who must be prepared to stand firm and stand tall in their support against violence. *Demonstrates Action 3- Strengthen prevention and response services, and promote anticipatory action.*

**Children and youth can, themselves, be leaders.** Barnfonden's/ChildFund's work in Dugda links child clubs to teachers, elders, lawmakers and services in the community via workshops and events. This helps to reinforce messaging while engaging children and allowing them a voice. *Demonstrates Action 4- Listen to, engage and support children and youth in planning and solution finding to end violence against children in a changing climate.*



Children in Gogunda, India, learn how to keep themselves and others safe at school, should a disaster strike. In addition, community-based child protection services are equipped to become better prepared to identify and address issues arising from both slow- and rapid-onset climate-induced events.



**For more information about Barnfonden's climate work, please visit our website:**

We focus on the climate – for the sake of the children | Barnfonden ([barnfonden.se](http://barnfonden.se))

This summary document has been produced by Barnfonden to promote a joining-up of the concepts of 'climate change' and 'violence against children'. If you have worked on the links between these issues, or if you have evidence linked to implementing development programmes that address climate and child protection in a joined-up way, we would like to hear from you.

**barnfonden**

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