

PRESS RELEASE

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Time to break the silos: climate stress and child violence go together

Recently, the United Nations General Assembly adopted [a resolution](#) recognizing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right for all. This follows an earlier resolution adopted in 2020: [Rights of the child: realising the rights of the child through a healthy environment](#).

These resolutions confirm that children's health and the health of their environment must be protected. Discussions around climate change and child rights mainly suggest health determinants such as air, water, and exposure to toxic substances, however, environmental determinants on child health must also factor in violence against children.

Martina Hibell, Secretary General of Swedish child rights organisation Barnfonden, says the development sector and governments must change the way we work to better recognise the interconnectedness of climate change with other issues, including violence against children. She is drawing attention to the kinds of climate-induced crises that don't make the headlines, but that slowly encroach on people's ability to earn an income or to reliably put food on the table. She claims that these 'invisible disasters' are putting more and more children on the streets or into risky situations. "We see climate adaptation plans being made and invested in to strengthen communities. What we want to see are plans that work hand-in-hand to strengthen and invest in a coordinated way with child protection."

She says that governments and development organisations are slowly waking up to the need to prepare communities for the impacts of climate change. But, currently, and with the exception of a humanitarian disaster, climate change sits in one camp; child protection sits in another. Adapting key violence prevention strategies, such as INSPIRE, can be key to shifting this thinking.

To encourage this understanding, Barnfonden has produced a recommendation report on [Strategies to end violence against children in a changing climate: 4 actions we can take now to keep children safe in climate-affected communities](#). Aligned with the Paris agreement and SDG 13 and 16.2, it prompts the understanding that children's rights to a safe environment will take multi-level efforts – from the communities themselves to governments and international policymakers. The report sends a strong message about the need to break siloed thinking.

Recommendations include:

- The need to acknowledge that climate change is increasing levels of violence against children and to gather the evidence surrounding this;
- The need to strengthening livelihood resilience and work that addresses social norms, while also developing school-based programmes that encourage environmental stewardship and child rights;
- The need to strengthen disaster prevention and response services to recognise the risk of increased violence against children and promote anticipatory action;
- The importance of listening to, engaging with and supporting children and youth in planning and solution-finding to deal with the effects of a changing climate.