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By Joining Forces, East and Southern Africa Region - ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, and World Vision International

## World leaders should integrate Children's Voices for Climate Action at COP 29

10<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

Over one billion children are at extreme risk from the impact of the climate crisis, which hampers development and worsens global humanitarian crises<sup>1</sup>, which continues to limit development opportunities and exacerbate global humanitarian crises. As COP29 approaches, the world faces another record-breaking year of climate change.<sup>2</sup> Children and youth, especially girls and young women, are vulnerable to climate change's effects and are leaders in climate resilience efforts.

COP29 dubbed the "Climate Finance COP," aims to set an ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, prioritizing the rights of those most affected by climate inequality, including children, youth, women, indigenous peoples, and marginalized communities. The NCQG must be fair, science-based, and ambitious enough to meet the needs for mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, addressing the trillions needed for systemic change and accounting for the differential vulnerabilities affected communities. We stand in solidarity with the Africa Group of Negotiators in calling for a minimum of **1.3 trillion** dollars per year in new climate financing for five years up to 2030 directed to developing countries. These funds are essential to address the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities, providing necessary resources for recovery and resilience-building. Africa faces severe impacts from the climate crisis, with many children experiencing heightened vulnerability. Despite this disproportionate impact, climate investment focusing on children remains low. According to a study by the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), over a 17-year period, less than 2.4% of finance from key multilateral funds could be categorised as supporting projects that incorporated child-responsive interventions. Some funders have recently acknowledged this gap. For example, the Green Climate Fund is actively working with partners to bridge child-focused climate finance, particularly in the areas of health and education.

Additionally, COP29 should serve as a platform for the realization of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) General Comment 26, emphasizing the rights of children in the context of environmental and climate justice. Ensuring inclusive participation of children in all climate actions is crucial for integrating human rights-based approaches in climate strategies.

Education is critical for girls' leadership in climate action, enhancing resilience to climate disasters. However, over 40 million children's education is disrupted annually by the climate crisis.<sup>3</sup> Integrating climate education into systems like the Comprehensive School Safety Framework helps build resilience. It is also essential to uphold children's rights and gender equality in climate policies as well as to recognize in climate finance discussions, the disproportionate impact of climate change on children, especially girls.

Climate change is a key driver of food insecurity leading to hunger and malnutrition in most African states. It is particularly high in the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan), and is often compounded by conflict and insecurity, which further limits people's access to livelihood opportunities. In Sub-Saharan Africa extreme dry weather patterns, like the recent elnino, affect food security, impacts negatively family livelihoods and compromise the nutritional rights of children.

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<sup>1</sup> Save the Children (2022). [Generation Hope: 2.4 billion reasons to end the global climate and inequality crisis](#).

<sup>2</sup> World Meteorological Organization (2024). [WMO Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update \(2024-2028\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF (2023). [The climate-changed child: A Children's Climate Risk Index supplement](#).

We have spoken to thousands of children and they have told us in no uncertain terms that the climate crisis is stealing their present and future. For example, Ruth from Malawi shared how cyclones have displaced her family, she said, ***“We are displaced most of the time because we are from poor homes, when our houses fall or are washed away by floods, we seek refuge in camps while those from well-to-do families who were also living here manage to go back home after rebuilding because they have money.”***

The gendered impact of climate change is significant, as women and girls frequently face a greater burden of domestic responsibilities, which hinders their ability to access education, training, and economic opportunities. Early marriages, imbalanced power dynamics, and limited sexual and reproductive health rights exacerbate their vulnerability, leaving them susceptible to violence, mistreatment, and premature pregnancies.

## **Our recommendations**

To anchor climate financing on children’s rights obligations, leaders at COP 29, must ensure that:

- The New Collective Quantified Goal for climate finance prioritizes the needs of climate-affected and marginalized communities. Without ambitious climate finance commitments, children will continue to bear the brunt of climate-related disasters, including increased risks of violence, exploitation, and loss of education.
- Child-centered approaches are in place. This involves mainstreaming children’s rights into climate policies and projects including in NDCs 3.0, conducting child-sensitive climate risk assessments, developing child-focused climate adaptation plans and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and allocating climate finance to child-centred initiatives. By integrating these elements, we ensure that children’s unique vulnerabilities and needs are addressed in climate action.
- Increase climate finance for gender and intergenerational justice as part of the New Collective Quantified Goal— including clear allocation for adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage, with targets for gender and age-responsive interventions, and which are accessible to communities most affected by the climate crisis. acknowledging the intersectionality of gender and climate change, promotes gender-responsive climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies
- Climate finance mechanisms prioritize children’s needs. This can be achieved through funds such as the Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Funds, and national climate budgets. These mechanisms should be designed to channel resources specifically towards initiatives that benefit children, especially vulnerable girls, ensuring that they are not left behind in the fight against climate change.
- They track progress using children’s rights indicators. Key indicators include reductions in child mortality and morbidity, improvements in education and school attendance, enhanced child protection and safety, better health and nutrition, and increased participation and empowerment of children and gender-segregated data. Monitoring these indicators helps ensure that climate actions effectively support children’s rights and well-being.