

Save the Children input to GCF's Strategy Update

Save the Children's key strategic recommendations

Save the Children is delighted to contribute to the Green Climate Fund's Strategy and would like to thank colleagues at the Green Climate Fund for this consultative approach in what will be a crucial strategic period. Save the Children recognises the breadth and diversity of programming across the portfolio and would like to encourage the Green Climate Fund to deepen its focus in four key pillars: Locally led adaptation, youth engagement, climate-resilient health and education systems, and anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection. Save the Children has outlined specific recommendations below and considers that all of these areas are critical in supporting the most vulnerable communities adapt to the unavoidable impacts of the climate crisis.

1. Locally led adaptation

Save the Children is a founding signatory to the [Principles for Locally Led Adaptation](#) (LLA), developed by a partnership of organisations led by the Global Commission on Adaptation. The LLA approach starts from the assumption that communities themselves are best placed to lead sustainable and effective adaptation to climate change at the local level, but that they require systematic support to do so. Several climate finance mechanisms (including the GEF, the Adaptation Fund and the CIF) have endorsed the Principles – as well as a growing number of GCF donors (including governments of Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the USA).

Recommendation: Save the Children encourages the GCF to endorse the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation as part of the 2024-2027 strategy, or, at minimum, the GCF should identify a mechanism for analysing how to incorporate the Principles into future adaptation programming.

2. Youth engagement

Despite strong leadership in defending their rights in the face of the climate crisis, children and youth are routinely excluded from and overlooked in decision-making. We encourage the GCF to expand the engagement and participation of children and youth in the 2024-2027 strategy. Save the Children encourages the GCF to not only ensure that their views and needs are heard during the development of country programmes and entity work plans, but also to mandate consultation with children and youth during proposal development under the GCF's ESS framework. The GCF could include youth in its decision-making processes, while also playing a key role in elevating the engagement of children and youth in key national and international climate finance discussions.

Recommendation: the GCF should strongly recommend that all countries and Accredited Entities include a formal role for youth in the development of country programmes, Entity Work Programmes and proposals. The GCF should also consider including a youth representative as an active observer at the GCF Board meetings.

3. Climate-resilient health and education systems

Climate change is among the greatest public health threats to child survival. It is also threatening children's access to quality education and their achievement of essential learning and wellbeing outcomes. These impacts are particularly evident among children already experiencing other forms of exclusion from essential services, including children with disabilities.

Education: Climate-related extreme events disrupt education through school closures for millions of children each year. Children’s learning, physical safety, mental health and psychosocial wellbeing is threatened by damage to – and destruction of – early childhood education centres, schools, learning facilities, and education systems. When children and their families are displaced by environmental threats and climate impacts, the risk of dropping out of school dramatically increases.¹ Increases in temperature have also been shown to decrease educational outcomes.

Health: Climate change will shape the future health of all communities. It will also deepen inequities – inequality increases the exposure of disadvantaged social groups to the adverse effects of climate change. Inequality increases disadvantaged groups’ susceptibility to these adverse effects. And, inequality decreases their relative ability to cope with and recover from the damages they suffer. Climate change will disproportionately impact poorer communities, including children that are underserved. Under current Paris Agreement country commitments, a child born in 2020 will experience on average twice as many wildfires, 2.8 times the exposure to crop failure, 2.6 times as many drought events, 2.8 times as many river floods, and 6.8 times more heatwaves across their lifetimes, compared to a person born in 1960.²

Recommendation: Save the Children urges the GCF to redouble its efforts to support health-related actions in its adaptation portfolio and to work with countries and entities to develop a pipeline of education-focused projects to ensure that children are safe from climate extremes while at school and are being equipped with the knowledge and resources they will need to thrive in a world with a changing climate.

4. Anticipatory action and adaptive social protection

Social protection systems should reach all children as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and SDG 1. Social protection schemes – if designed to be child-sensitive, inclusive, shock-responsive and adaptive – have the potential to effectively and efficiently reach many children and their families with basic cash support before, during and after climate shocks. Significant evidence exists on the effectiveness of cash to help children survive, learn and be protected.³ Recent actions taken by governments across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic show how expanding national systems is possible where the political will exists. Save the Children is an early adopter of the Anticipatory Action model, which draws on credible forecasts of extreme weather events to enable action in advance of, or in early response to, predicted impacts, rather than responding to emergencies after they happen. This can help to prevent or reduce harmful impacts amongst at-risk populations.

Recommendation: the GCF should include anticipatory action and adaptive social protection mechanisms in its guidance to partners to ensure there is increased awareness that these mechanisms can be effective tools in building climate resilience among vulnerable populations.

¹ 75 million children have their education disrupted – half as a result of environmental threats, such as floods and droughts. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/build-forward-better-how-the-global-community-can-protect-education-from-the-climate-crisis/>. Pg.1

² See Save the Children (2021) *Born into the climate crisis: why we must act now to secure children’s rights*. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/born-climate-crisis-why-we-must-act-now-secure-childrens-rights/>

³ Save the Children (2020) *The Effectiveness of Cash Transfer Programming for Children*. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/effectiveness-cash-transfer-programming-children/>