



Our actions today shape our children's future

Act now against climate change! Secure the future of young children.

[ARNEC's response to the IPCC Report: Climate Change 2022 - Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Working Group II \(WGII\) contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report \(AR6\) of the IPCC.](#)
'Climate change is a grave and mounting threat to our wellbeing and a healthy planet'

On 28 February 2022, the world's leading authority on climate science, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released **Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability**. The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report prepared by Working Group II assesses the impacts of climate change, particularly on ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels. The Report also highlights the vulnerabilities of the natural world and human societies as well as their capacities and limits to adapt to climate change. In this response, ARNEC highlights the linkages between the Report's key messages and Early Childhood Development, and shows how Report findings offer evidence that reinforces ARNEC's call to put young children at the centre of environmental and climate actions, and for the environment to be at the centre of early childhood development.

Key takeaways

1

Climate change worsens inequalities and adversely affects the most vulnerable populations, including children, of the Asia-Pacific region

Hoesung Lee, IPCC chair, stressed: "This report is a dire warning about the consequences of inaction. Our actions today will shape how people adapt and nature responds to increasing climate risks." (IPCC, 2022)

- a. The rise in weather and climate extremes has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt (IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers, p5).
- b. Sudden decreases in food production and in access to food, compounded by decreased diet diversity have increased malnutrition in many communities, especially for Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers, and low-income households with children and pregnant women (IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers, p11).
- c. Ill health and premature deaths are projected to increase alongside rising climate-sensitive, food-borne, water-borne, and vector-borne disease risks (IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers, p16). Dengue risk will increase with longer seasons and a wider geographic distribution in Asia, Europe, Central and South America and Sub-Saharan Africa, potentially putting additional billions of people at risk by the end of the century.
- d. Mental health challenges, including anxiety and stress, are expected to increase under further global warming in all regions, particularly for children, adolescents, the elderly, and those with underlying health conditions (IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers, p16). Science has shown that adversity and toxic stress harm brain development, which is critical in the first 1000 days of a child's life, and that caregivers' nurturing engagement with young children is adversely affected by stress, anxiety, and depression. When children grow up deprived of stimulation, with low interaction with adults, and ongoing, persistent stress, their young minds fail to build or maintain important brain connections (Yoshikawa et al., 2020).

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report

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Climate change is a grave and mounting threat against our wellbeing and a healthy planet.

Hoesung Lee, IPCC Chair



ARNEC

Asia-Pacific Regional Network
for Early Childhood

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We need to put young children at the center of environmental and climate actions and the environment at the center of Early Childhood Development.

2

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Hoesung Lee also said: “This report emphasizes the urgency of immediate and more ambitious action to address climate risks. Half measures are no longer an option.”

- a. Ambitious accelerated action is required to adapt to climate change and cut greenhouse gas emissions. Given the inevitable and irreversible impacts of climate change, investments in adaptation and resilience are urgently needed, especially for developing nations and vulnerable cohorts such as young children who are suffering disproportionate impacts and lack the resources to address them. The Report highlights how ‘integrated flexible, multi-sectoral, inclusive, and long-term planning and implementation of adaptation actions are the best case for action and can benefit many sectors and systems’ (IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers, p29).
- b. In the lead up to COP27, pledges and commitments from countries based on the Glasgow Agreement need to clearly show **how** and **when** they will include **young children** in their climate responses, specifically through the following actions: (i) their inclusion in financing mechanisms and investments for climate change; (ii) recognition of the impact of climate change on young children in their Nationally Determined

Contributions (NDCs); (iii) inclusion in global and national climate-sensitive policies and national adaptation plans and (iv) enhanced knowledge on impacts and solutions for the youngest children (ARNEC, ECDAN, Save the Children, UNICEF EAPRO, 2021). [You can read more](#) on our priority asks from the [global call to action](#). Governments, donors, multilaterals, the private sector, civil society, and other partners and stakeholders must place young children at the heart of climate change responses and adaptation plans.

2022 IPCC Report: Climate change has increased malnutrition in many communities especially for Indigenous Peoples, low-income households with children, and pregnant women



The rights and well-being of young children matter in climate response and action.

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3

Human development measures are key in promoting sustainable resilience and adaptation

The report shows the interdependence of climate, biodiversity and people and integrates natural, social and economic sciences more strongly than earlier IPCC assessments. IPCC Working Group II Co-chair Debra Roberts said: "Our assessment clearly shows that tackling all these different challenges involves everyone."

- a. The Report states that 'progress on adaptation is uneven and there are increasing gaps between action taken and what is needed to deal with the increasing risks. These gaps are

largest among lower-income populations (IPCC, 2022). Although financing that is focused on resilience and adaptation can be done in ways that promote some measures to help ensure longterm sustainable development, this path does little to address the causes of environmental damage and climate change. Therefore, as damage accumulates, ever increasing financing is needed to keep communities safe and maintain their capacity to adapt. This is not a long term, sustainable approach, just an urgently needed tool to address vulnerabilities and damage. Indeed, the Report notes that ‘climate change has hinder[ed] efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals’ (IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers, p11).

- b. However, there are ways to complement strategies of adaptation and resilience with strategies that promote sustainable development. The Report highlights that such climate-resilient development is enabled when “governments, civil society and the private sector make inclusive development choices that prioritise risk reduction, equity and justice, and when decision-making processes, finance and actions are integrated across governance levels, sectors and timeframes” (IPCC, 2022) which can synergise and reduce trade-offs between adaptation and mitigation in the process of advancing sustainable development.
- c. There is increasing evidence of adaptation that has caused unintended consequences; for example, destroying nature, putting peoples’ lives at risk, or increasing greenhouse gas emissions. This can be avoided by involving everyone in planning, paying greater attention to equity and justice, and drawing on Indigenous and local knowledge. Indeed, urbanization and climate change create complex risks, and between 2018 and 2050, Asia’s urban population is predicted to increase by 61%, so that by 2050 most of the world’s

2022 IPCC Report: Growing urbanization and climate change create complex risks, says Debra Roberts

Bernard van Leer Foundation:

Urban planning can support the development and wellbeing of children and caregivers. It’s also vital for mitigating and adapting to climate change.



urban population will be located in Asia (UN, 2018). However, the report shows that cities also create opportunities that can 'lead to a more inclusive, fairer society.' (IPCC, 2022). Evidence shows that urban families around the world, especially those living in poverty or in informal settlements, benefit in transformational ways from family-centred urban planning and design. These include more accessible services, transport, and safe, clean, green spaces for small children to play and families to gather (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2018). This shows that early childhood policies and programs are a fundamental part of building this path towards sustainable development.



- d. Although young children are the most vulnerable population suffering the effects of climate change, they also have the most potential to build healthy, well educated, well nourished, socially- and emotionally competent, peace-building communities in the future. Investing in young children is a smart investment and should be placed at the forefront of the fight against climate change. Research shows that for every \$1 invested in the early years of life, specifically the first thousand days, the returns can be as high as \$13 (UNICEF, World Bank, 2018). Preschool programs serve as an excellent example of the power of early childhood in achieving a more sustainable future as they can foster valuable skills, attitudes, and values which lead to more gainful employment and bridges the inequity gap, improves health outcomes, strengthens the workforce, grows the economy and reduces social spending (Heckman, 2017). At the community level, these impacts add up to better use of resources, less waste, increased motivation and enhanced capacity for civic actions to address climate change challenges (Cerezo, 2015). Over time, these benefits create truly sustainable communities with the infrastructure and capacity for innovation that make it possible for these benefits to be incremental and long-term. When high-quality, comprehensive, equitable, and accessible early childhood programs are provided, we make a sustainable future real (Cerezo, 2015). Interweaving the SDGs and ECD promotes resilience and capacity for adaptation and more importantly, will help change the trends in environmental degradation and climate change.

Summary

IPCC Working Group II Co-chair Hans-Otto Pörtner said: “The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human wellbeing and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future.”

- a. Climate change is a global challenge that requires collective action. The effort to pursue climate-resilient development is at risk, especially if global warming exceeds 1.5°C (2.7°F), and at even greater risk in some regions if global warming exceeds 2°C (3.6°F). This key finding underlines the urgency for climate action, focusing on equity and justice. ECD is inextricably linked to environmental issues and sustainable development policies in two ways: (1) young children urgently need support to be able to absorb the risk and damage caused by environmental degradation and (2) promoting the well-being and rights of young children is key to building a sustainable future .
- b. We support the interagency [call to action from the world's leading child focused agencies to governments and the IPCC](#) , such as World Vision, UNICEF, and Save the Children, that asks for future IPCC reports to give greater emphasis to children, reflecting the depth of available science as well as the needs of children (Tanner et al. 2022). We reinforce the ask for Governments and the IPCC to demonstrate the importance of children and future generations by commissioning an IPCC Special Report on Children and Climate Change, including the youngest children aged 0-8. The disproportionate burden that young children aged 0-8 will suffer due to a changing climate and the power of investing in young children’s development need to be recognized as part of climate change mitigation, adaptation, resilience, and the movement towards sustainable development.
- c. We stand with the youngest children and urge for their voices to be heard. The evidence in the IPCC Report shows that young children must be at the forefront of the collective action against climate change and be included in the preparations for COP27 and in all environmental and climate actions thereafter. Urgent action is needed now to realise the rights of the youngest children and protect their future against the climate crisis that they will so unfairly have to face.

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ARNEC, UNICEF, and Save the Children work together to put young children at the center of environmental and climate actions

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