



## Global Warning

Children's Right to be Heard  
in Global Climate Change  
Negotiations

Plan is one of the largest child-centred community development organisations in the world; with no religious or political affiliations. Through our programme work in 69 countries, Plan seeks to help children and their families in the poorest countries to break the cycle of poverty and ensure the realization of child rights.

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# Introduction

**“Climate change is very important for everyone, but because I’m young I’m more concerned as I will live to feel its effects.”**

Annie, 15yrs, from Stonehouse, UK, who will be in Copenhagen reporting on the negotiations.<sup>1</sup>

**“Today, the world is really polluted and this is the fault of humans. Without noticing, we are destroying nature, burning the forests, polluting the rivers, the lagoons and the air. We could change this. It is up to us to keep our environment clean and healthy.”**

Ana Caroline, 13yrs, from Sao Luis do Maranhao, Brazil

The changing climate and the ways that decisions are being made to tackle climate change are both having an impact on children's futures like never before. Since the Bali COP in 2007, adults have been taking part in the extensive political negotiations for the new global agreement on climate change. But while adults are negotiating away the viability of the world we will live in, the next generation, who will bear the brunt of the consequences of climate change, is not being granted a place at the negotiating table. Intergenerational justice<sup>2</sup> calls for climate change decisions to ensure not only that the rights of future generations are fulfilled, but also that its decision-making process includes the views of children.

From Australia to Zimbabwe and Alaska to the South Pacific, climate change is directly and indirectly affecting family, school and community life; the supply of food, water and energy; and families' livelihoods.<sup>3</sup> Unpredictable and extreme weather is causing upheaval in children's lives, with children on every continent vulnerable to either sudden- or slow-onset climate-related disasters, or both. Hurricane Ida's devastation in El Salvador in November 2009 has left thousands of children homeless, destroying their family's assets and livelihoods with repercussions on children's education and future prospects. Typhoons Ketsana and Ondoy affected tens of thousands of children in Vietnam and the Philippines. And with the recurring droughts in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Cambodia, several million children are now facing a food security crisis caused in part by unpredictable weather.<sup>4</sup>

As one of the groups so drastically affected by climate change, children have a right to be directly involved in the making of decisions that govern how we adapt and minimise its impact. This right is upheld by one of the few international agreements with the widest national commitment of 193 signatory countries – the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Twenty years ago the nations of the world agreed, under the UNCRC, that children have a right to a say in decisions that affect them. In Copenhagen the best interests of all the world's children are at stake.

Yet currently there is hardly any opportunity for children to have a say in one of the most important decisions that will affect their future.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://blog.plan-uk.org/2009/11/16/a-note-from-our-youth-journalists/>

<sup>2</sup> The principle of intergenerational justice was first proposed in the context of mainstream climate change policy by Sir Nicholas Stern, who argued for a cost benefit analysis in public policy that gave as much value to future as current generations. See: IDS In Focus Policy Briefing Issue 13 (November 2009)

<sup>3</sup> The impact of climate change on the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals is reported in the IPCC's report 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Emergency Assessment Reports from UNOCHA, UNICEF, Plan International (November 2009).

<sup>5</sup> UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has described the Copenhagen COP as the global “pre-eminent geopolitical and economic issue of the 21st century... [which can] rewrite the global equation for development, peace and prosperity. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Opening remarks to the United Nations Climate Change Summit Plenary (22 September 2009)

# Introduction

Plan International is one of the largest child-centred community development organisations, working in 69 countries on projects and initiatives that address the causes of poverty and its consequences for children’s lives. Plan works with children, their families and communities to build a world where children are safe, healthy and capable of realising their full potential. Plan is an International NGO with the environment in its sights as Plan UK’s CEO Marie Staunton explains, “Extreme weather caused by global warming has the ability to undermine all the gains achieved in the areas of food security, water and sanitation, and the survival of young children. We have seen how a catalogue of disasters this year has damaged homes and livelihoods in many countries where we work, with children being the greatest victims.”

But children are not only victims of climate change. In many countries, children at risk are already taking action to tackle the challenges amounting from the changing climate. Granted the opportunity to learn, to be informed, and to take part, children can be very effective agents for change. From local level community based disaster risk reduction interventions, to global level engagement in climate change decision-making, children all over the world are now showing their interest, capacity and valuable role in strengthening resilience to climate risks. Plan is determined to work towards a world where genuine children’s participation is the norm, not a novelty – including participation in climate change decisions. (See Box 1.)

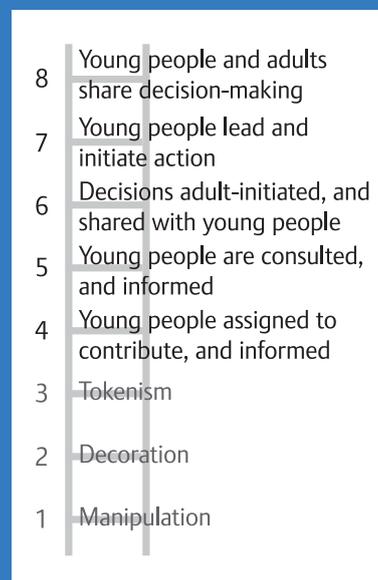
## BOX 1 – Avoiding Tokenism

### What do we mean by ‘Participation’?

Participation is the process of engaging in decision-making about issues which affect a person’s life and the life of the community in which a person lives. Child participation in decision-making is a challenging issue, facing barriers including cultural traditions, representation, social exclusion and child protection risks.

Sociologist and child rights expert Roger Hart<sup>6</sup> distinguishes eight different types of participation, three of which he condemns as

‘non-participation’ (see diagram). Genuine participation supports a process which is democratic to the extent that all parties affected by it are involved, and their involvement is maintained throughout all stages from inception through to implementation of decisions and feedback processes. Children’s confidence and competence to be involved, argues Hart, is gradually acquired through practice and access to relevant information – starting during childhood.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Hart, R. (1997) Children’s Participation London: Earthscan/UNICEF

<sup>7</sup> Hart, R. (1992) ‘Children’s Participation: From tokenism to citizenship’ Rome: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

# What can children bring to the negotiating table?

From our work over the past 70 years with children, we have repeatedly observed the value of listening to children. Children often see what adults do not see, and say what adults will not say. Children's unadulterated outlook offers valuable insight and perspective – helping to challenge the status quo and bring about change.

**The CRC defines children as everyone under the age of 18  
UNCRC – Article 1**

It was children in Quebrada de Alajuela, Ecuador, who identified that the bridge which connects one side of their village to the other was a major safety hazard particularly in the event of flood. They took action to mobilise their community to press their local government to reinforce the bridge and ensure access to the community was not impeded during floods or landslides. This was particularly significant as the likelihood of flooding has increased substantially since more frequent and intense rains are being experienced due to changes in weather patterns – causing a real risk to the community of being cut off.

And it was children in Santa Paz, the Philippines, who campaigned successfully to relocate their school which was vulnerable to landslides. A new school was built by the local government with the support of Plan, which offers a safe learning environment for its pupils and staff. The school now boasts a tree seedling nursery and children are involved in reforestation to minimise landslide threats in their vicinity. Pupils, staff and parents are now involved in annual contingency plans, undertaking regular evacuation drills to protect them against extreme weather and other risks.



# Everyone under 18 has a right to be heard

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The nations of the world have agreed under the UNCRC that children, according to their evolving capacities, have a right to a say in decisions made which affect them. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child says:

“I. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

II. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”

Typical administrative proceedings include, for example, decisions about children’s education, health, environment, living conditions, or protection.

In July 2009, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child<sup>8</sup> issued their General Comment No.12 – to promote the ‘effective implementation of article 12’.<sup>9</sup> The comment sets out the basic requirements for the practical implementation of children’s right to be heard and explains the value and impact of this in different situations and settings. It provides strong justification – and useful guidance – for bringing children into climate change decision-making at the global level. A selection of its contents illustrates this:

- State parties must assure that in all matters affecting the child, the child must be heard if the matter under discussion affects the child. “This basic condition has to be respected and understood broadly.” The impact of climate change on children is now more than ever one such key matter; and one that children themselves are saying matters a great deal to them.<sup>10</sup>
- When addressing the interaction of children’s right to participation (Article 12), the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in any official procedures affecting the child (article 3). The UN Committee’s comment states, ‘There is no doubt that the best interests of children as a defined group have to be established in the same way as when weighing individual interests. If the best interests of large numbers of children are at stake, heads of institutions, authorities, or governmental bodies should also provide opportunities to hear the concerned children from such undefined groups and to give their views due weight when they plan actions, including legislative decisions, which directly or indirectly affect children.’ Since climate change is compromising the best interests of all children everywhere, the CRC committee’s statement calls for heads of institutions, authorities and governments to create mechanisms to listen to children and address their views in adaptation and mitigation decision-making.

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<sup>8</sup> The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is a body of experts who monitor the implementation by State Parties of the Convention on the Right of the Child. The Committee holds regular sessions each year to review States Parties’ reports on progress made in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention and its Optional Protocols. The Committee can make suggestions and issue recommendations to governments and the General Assembly on ways to meet the Convention’s objectives.

<sup>9</sup> General Comment No. 12 (2009) “The right of the child to be heard” was presented by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its Fifty-first session held in Geneva, on 25 May-12 June 2009.

<sup>10</sup> BBC News 23 June (2005) Climate change ‘worries children’. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4123884.stm>

# Everyone under 18 has a right to be heard

- The Committee recognises the valuable role children can play at an official level: 'The views expressed by children may add relevant perspectives and experience and should be considered in decision-making, policymaking and preparation of laws and/or measures as well as their evaluation.' and 'States parties should carefully listen to children's views wherever their perspective can enhance the quality of solutions.' This should include policy formulation at national and global level on climate change, including the planning of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and other national climate change strategies.

Concerted effort is needed to put into practice the principle of children's participation, though few underestimate the challenges in ensuring that children can participate at a high level on such a complex and crucial issue as climate change. This includes the challenge of ensuring children are not exploited or manipulated. But we are not starting from scratch. Progress on supporting children's participation in decision-making at the global level has been made within the UN system. (See Box 5.) In addition, there is a body of academic research and growing international discourse on the ways to achieve meaningful participation by children.<sup>11</sup> The UNCRC's comment paper draws together theory and experience to identify key steps which need to be taken to effectively realise children's right to be heard and the necessary enabling features for any processes in which children are heard and participate. (See Box 2.)

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, T., Tanner, T. and Haynes, K. (2008), Children as agents of change for Disaster Risk Reduction: Lessons from El Salvador and the Philippines. CCC Research Working paper 1, Brighton: IDS [www.childreninachangingclimate.org/docs/CCC\\_Working%20Paper\\_Final1\\_Screen.pdf](http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/docs/CCC_Working%20Paper_Final1_Screen.pdf)



## BOX 2 – Practical and ethical considerations

The UNCRC's General Comment provides five practical steps required to ensure the realisation of the right of children to be heard. In summary:

1. Preparation – this entails providing information, both of the choices the child has and the form proceedings will take.
2. The hearing – there needs to be an enabling and encouraging context.
3. Assessment of the capacity of the child – case-by-case analysis is required.
4. Feedback – information about the outcome resulting from the child's views should be provided (both positive and negative).

5. Complaints, remedies and redress – formal procedures must exist and the child should be informed of them.

It recommends the following requirements for all processes in which a child or children are heard and participate:

- (a) Transparent and informative
- (b) Voluntary
- (c) Respectful
- (d) Relevant
- (e) Child-friendly
- (f) Inclusive
- (g) Supported by training
- (h) Safe and sensitive to risk
- (i) Accountable.

# Bringing local experience to bear in global decision-making

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There is increasing evidence that more is at stake regarding the need for children's input to the climate change debate than a fulfilment of their rights. Although at the global level, climate decisions remain the exclusive domain of adults and the debates are barely accessible to genuine child participation, in many climate risk countries, children are already showing their worth as agents of change at the local and national levels. The practical value of children's participation, evidenced at local and national level, illustrates how children's involvement can benefit everyone, not just children.

## • Children's participation at local level

In many countries where we work, Plan has witnessed how children can effectively challenge adults to better address climate change adaptation at the local level.

Our experience shows that children's capacity can exceed the expectations of all involved. In our disaster risk reduction work in Africa, Asia and Latin America, children's enthusiasm and energy, inquisitiveness and creativity, at home, at school and in the community have been crucial resources to mobilise action in support of building resilience to climate risks. But they need to be given the opportunity and space to express their ideas, build their knowledge, and voice their concerns. Children's unadulterated outlook can offer valuable insight and perspective on local conditions — challenging taboos, social exclusion, and power relations and bringing about positive changes in behaviour, perception and actions towards the common good.

It was school children in El Salvador who identified that the unregulated extraction of stones from the banks of the Supul River in the community of Petapa, Chalatenango, was leading to increased erosion of its river banks. Facing the annual occurrence of hurricanes, children understood the growing threat of floods to their village. They investigated the local laws and found that the quarrying practice was actually illegal, but the law was not being enforced. They took action by campaigning to their local leaders to stop the quarrying and contributed to monitoring the river banks and to raising awareness of the impact of quarrying – including helping put up signs prohibiting extraction and raising awareness in their community of how stone quarrying was increasing their vulnerability to floods.



# Bringing local experience to bear in global decision-making

And it was children in the community of Cagaut, Salcedo municipality in Eastern Samar in the Philippines, who persuaded their local government to put out an ordinance prohibiting chromite mining near the river. The children made a short film to show how the mines were making the groundwater toxic and aggravating flooding when heavy rains took place. They interviewed parents and teachers, they filmed and talked to the miners and meteorologists and questioned local leaders. Under the persuasive power of the children's video which they screened to local authorities and community members, the local government agreed to ban mining from taking place near river banks and stipulated that miners must fill old quarrying pits, so these do not set a danger during floods. On top of this successful outcome, the children then helped organise a tree planting campaign to reforest the unutilised extraction areas.

Like these children in El Salvador and the Philippines, many of today's children are often more concerned about the environment and the climate than their parents and grandparents. They become more aware of environmental issues at school and through informal learning through children's groups and the media. In addition, most children are more proactive and much more capable than adults of obtaining information on these topics from the internet. Their ready use of new media has other advantages. (See Box 3.)

## BOX 3 – New Media

Children and young people can lead or play an active role in activities which raise public awareness of climate change. Indirect influence can be generated at the global level through school and community projects, campaign marches, youth group activities, 'web 2.0' campaigning (using interactive web media such as Facebook and Twitter), and organised national network events (with support from networks such as tcktctkc.org and 350.org). There is also a growing trend of school linking projects utilising web platforms to generate inter-cultural dialogue and learning.<sup>12</sup> For direct action at global events themselves, children and young people can raise public awareness using media tools for

reporting on events and sharing stories with one another internationally.

At the local level, information and communication technologies (ICT) have successfully been used to raise issues and set agendas for change, and following success at the local level these have been scaled up towards district and national levels. Radio broadcasting, use of mobile phones and participatory video are all tools where children can employ ICT to help get their message across. These resources are



particularly valuable for evidence-based advocacy work led by children as their messages can be communicated directly, decreasing the risk of manipulating their voices or 'translation' into technical, specialised or 'adult-speak'.

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://www.plan-ed.org/inthenews/bethechange/>

# Bringing local experience to bear in global decision-making

## • Children's participation at the global level

To date children's formal participation in climate change deliberations at a global level has been largely limited to 'side events'. At COP13 in Bali in 2007, the Children in a Changing Climate coalition<sup>13</sup> supported four children from the UK, Philippines, Sweden and Indonesia to participate in the UNFCCC discussions and present their views, ideas and concerns. The young delegates observed negotiations and challenged ministers and official delegates, including the chief negotiator for the G77, Bernardita Muller from the Philippines, and Swedish Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Anders Wijkman. They also took part in side events facilitated by Plan and the Institute of Development Studies and their participation helped design the Children in a Changing Climate's Bali Roadmap outlining our strategy for promoting children's participation in the UNFCCC decision-making mechanism.

At COP14 in Poznan in 2008, Children in a Changing Climate held a side event but due to challenges in obtaining visas for young delegates, 16-year-old Nurul from Jakarta took part via video conference, sharing her award-winning video illustrating climate change impact on Indonesian children.

At COP15 in Copenhagen, Plan International is helping a group of children from Indonesia, Kenya, the UK, Netherlands and Sweden to take part in the conference as young reporters. These children will be interviewing delegates from all over the world and reporting their views on climate change via traditional and new media. The ten young reporters are charged with following the deliberations at COP15 and reporting back to their peers, communities and other interested stakeholders, from their own unique perspectives. They have learned to target news blogs, reports and stories to their own local and national newspapers. This 'rapporteur' activity will enable children and young people to share their learning, raise public awareness and promote accountability by encouraging all stakeholders to hold their governments to account for a fair, ambitious and binding deal.

<sup>13</sup> The Children in a Changing Climate is a global partnership bringing together leading research and development organisations, each with a commitment to share knowledge, co-ordinate their actions and to work with children as protagonists in climate change. Members include: Plan International, UNICEF, Save the Children, Institute of Development Studies, among others. See: [www.childreninachangingclimate.org](http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org)



# The wider benefits of children's participation in climate change decision-making

The resulting experiences children have had at UNFCCC's COPs and at the UNISDR's 2009 Global Platform (see Box 4) were both powerful and useful towards establishing more formal mechanisms for children's participation at the global level of decision-making. Engagement by children in civil society can have far-reaching influence, contributing to the realisation of the MDGs and poverty reduction strategies. Thus, in upholding the rights embodied in Article 12 of the UNCRC and based on its extensive experience of children's participation, Plan calls for systematic and effective approaches for children's direct participation at official climate change negotiations. We believe it is essential that those involved in such discussions on climate change are representative of all opinions – including those of children.

Children in a Changing Climate partner organisations are in discussion with the UNISDR to explore ways of institutionalising the participation of children and young people in global Disaster Risk Reduction accountability mechanisms, such as the mid-term review of the Hyogo Framework for Action.<sup>14</sup> Based on this successful commitment by a sister UN agency, Plan now calls on UNFCCC decision-makers to accept children as official stakeholders by providing a formal mechanism for children to dialogue and influence climate change decision-making at the global level.

Plan believes that institutionalising children's involvement in climate change decision-making at a global level will lead the way for firmly establishing children's right to be heard more generally – in all areas affecting them. Ideally the progressive increase of children's participation at the global level will take place systematically, through formal consultations and the establishment of official, formal mechanisms and processes for their participation. It is important to transfer children's unique perspectives and capacities to the global level where key agendas, targets and standards are set which have a direct impact on their lives and their futures.

We are mindful of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's call for civil society organisations (CSOs) "to further promote child participation in all matters affecting them, including at the grass-roots, community, and national or international levels, and to facilitate exchanges of best practices". The global decisions being made on climate change and their impact on the rights of children are clearly such a matter.

<sup>14</sup> The Hyogo Framework for Action is a ten-year international framework adopted by 168 Governments in 2005 which offers guiding principles, priorities for action, and practical means for achieving disaster resilience for vulnerable communities. See: <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa.htm>

## BOX 4 – Children's official engagement so far

In spite of a globally recognised argument for participation as a right, even in the work of the CRC, "few tangible efforts have been made" towards securing children's participation. Since 2000 there have been just a few examples.

At the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction's Global Platform meeting in 2009, two young boys were so well received in their peripheral engagement activities that they were granted space to speak in the final official meeting of delegates. Rhee, 16, from the Philippines and Constancio, 13, from Bolivia witnessed a change in adults' attitudes towards children in adult-dominated policy space. A promising acknowledgement was made by UNISDR that children are to be "seen as strong agents for change who should be involved in the decision-making process".

The regular Junior 8 Summit addresses a wide variety of topics. In 2009, the fourth meeting of young delegates from around the world took place in Rome. Facilitated by UNICEF, the J8 runs parallel to the regular G8 meetings of leaders from the "Group of 8" countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States and Russia. Young delegates from these eight countries and other selected countries discuss key issues on the G8 agenda and are given space to share their concerns and ideas.

# Investing today for a better tomorrow

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The UNCRC General Comment No.12 observes that there is a long way to go to achieve the full realization of children's right to be heard: 'in most societies around the world, implementation of the child's right to express her or his view on the wide range of issues that affect her or him, and to have those views duly taken into account, continues to be impeded by many long-standing practices and attitudes, as well as political and economic barriers'.

Formal consultation at the national level already takes place in several non-climate arenas. The guidelines for the production of a national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), for example, state that the PRSP process will be more effective if the knowledge and experience of a range of stakeholders are tapped. In Vietnam, Plan International and Save the Children facilitated consultations to secure the inclusion of children's views in the national PRSP process. As a result, children's concerns about migration and health services were subsequently included in the PRSP; and in its socio-economic development plan (SEDP) the province of Quang Tri addressed the issue of child protection as a result of these consultations.

We have seen first hand that participation at any stage or level of a process teaches children about what to expect from such processes, how the processes work and how children can pursue government fulfilment of responsibilities and accountability, as well as teaching them personal skills and new subject knowledge. It promotes dialogue, openness, learning and active citizenship – among children and adults. Greater ownership of new ideas and initiatives, resulting from enhanced participation, increases receptiveness to those ideas and initiatives. In turn, programmes, projects and initiatives are more likely to succeed.

This is especially significant in achieving success in adapting to climate change. Harnessing and supporting children's enthusiasm and engagement has the long-term effect of encouraging the interest, concern and motivation of children and young people, as well as building confidence and technical skills for adaptation. In the long-term, engaging tomorrow's voters, tomorrow's farmers, teachers, businesspeople, householders and leaders will lead to greater climate sensitivity across countries and sectors.



# Investing today for a better tomorrow

## BOX 5 – Children are a part of Civil Society

Strengthening the emergence and functioning of a vibrant young civil society is important in working towards the systematic inclusion and association of children into established decision making processes. Alternative approaches to engage children in policy influence are available, which can be further explored within the climate change sphere of influence.

### Child-centred and Child-led Fora

One-off children's forums such as the 2002 UNGASS (United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children) and the 2000 Winnipeg Conference on war-affected children, as well as the structured Junior 8 (J8) summit, demonstrate the value of child-led participation. Junior 8 contributions to G8 summits are supported by a good level of interest from G8 leaders in children's proposals for global decision-making. Within the UNFCCC structure, formal mechanisms for children's engagement remain lacking.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Young stakeholders can contribute to progress assessments and other mechanisms for holding policymakers to account, often using indicators which they themselves have established. In early 2009, Plan together with World Vision conducted a global assessment by children on their government's implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Over 800 girls and boys from 17 countries voiced their opinions on the state of play of community-level Disaster Risk Reduction and how children's rights are being addressed in these. The survey was not only a valuable learning process for the children and young people, but also its findings were shared with global leaders at the UNISDR (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction) 2009 Global Platform, resulting in a firm commitment by the UNISDR that "children were also seen as strong agents for change who should be involved in the decision-making process".<sup>15</sup> Inclusive accountability mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the commitments set under the new global deal on climate change and the workings of the climate adaptation fund need to ensure a role for children.

### National Delegations

Where possible, children and young people may have the opportunity to influence the position of their national delegation at international negotiations. It can be done through ad hoc and informal lobbying and advocacy, or through formal interaction with government officials. In a combination of formal and ad hoc engagement, the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Environment Minister Ed Miliband recently took questions and heard perspectives from young people from around the UK as part of the UK government's briefing in preparation for COP15 negotiations in conjunction with Plan International, the UK Youth Parliament and other children's organisations.

### Children/Youth Parliaments

Official children's governmental bodies exist across the world. These allow formal interaction between young people and their governments. From the UK Youth Parliament and the European Youth Parliament in the north, to Burkina Faso's Children's Parliament and the National Youth Parliament of the Philippines in the south, these official bodies afford children regular access to their government representatives. Engaging children's parliaments in climate change decision-making at the global level through UNFCCC mechanisms will support the realisation of article 12 of the UNCRC.

### Civil Society Children's Advisory Boards

Plan International, UNICEF, Amnesty International and many other organisations have youth advisors, acting in the form of youth advisory boards or individual youth advisors, who provide input to programme work and engage regularly with the organisations' staff and directors. Advisory boards of children's NGO are effective vehicles for channelling children's voice – and, importantly, they legitimise the work of organisations who speak on their behalf. To ensure children's voices are being heard in Civil Society Organisations' work on climate change, a greater number of organisations engaged in climate change should establish formal mechanisms such as youth advisory boards.

<sup>15</sup> UNISDR (2009) Outcome Document: Chair's Summary of the Second Session Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction – see: <http://www.preventionweb.net/globalplatform/2009/background/documents/GP09-Chair%27s-Summary.pdf>

# Global Warning: Plan International's Recommendations for UNFCCC negotiations

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We call on governments and all stakeholders working in the field of climate change to do more to listen to children, and to prioritise the education and involvement of young people in decisions and actions to protect their future and ours. In determining climate change agreements, it is imperative that governments also respect their commitments made under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Plan International calls on decision makers at COP15 to prioritise children's best interests and deliver a fair, ambitious, binding and effective climate change global agreement, by:

- Committing to short-term reduction goals on greenhouse gas emissions as well as long-term goals by 2020 and 2050, in line with latest scientific research.
- Increasing funds committed to adaptation to countries at risk, with adaptation funds to be controlled by countries most at risk.
- Ensuring that National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and other international, regional and national strategic plans on climate change protect and involve children.

Plan calls on UNFCCC decision makers to take the following measures to promote intergenerational justice:

- Acknowledge children as official stakeholders, providing formal mechanisms for children to join the dialogue and contribute to decision making on climate change.
- Guide national delegations on how to facilitate consultations with children on climate change decision-making.
- Ensure full accountability for commitments made on mitigation and adaptation, by developing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which provide for the contribution of children's views.
- Encourage civil society organisations engaged in climate change to establish formal mechanisms for children's participation.
- Emphasise the significance of children – in terms of differentiated impacts and children's 'agency' – within the 5th IPCC Assessment Report.
- Insist that governments must invest more in education so future generations have the knowledge and skills to better manage our environment and adapt to climate change.

**“If we take some steps back, learn from our mistakes, and take measures to educate children, we will find ourselves living in a better world”**

Parina from Indonesia

**“Global Warming is affecting us in Sierra Leone greatly, making it rain when it is not expected and over rain when little is expected ... in March 2009 it rains heavily... in Freetown a very big stone rolled and fell on the house where the people were sleeping”**

Mjalloh from Sierra Leone

**“The issue of Climate Change has moved on from telling people about it, to what people need to do right now. Our generation needs to set the example...”**

Harry from the UK

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## Useful Websites:

- <http://www.plan-uk.org/action/issues/reducingchildrensvulnerability/>
- <http://planatcop15.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.plan-ed.org/inthenews/bethechange/>
- <http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org>
- <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa>

# Notes

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## **GLOBAL WARNING: Plan International's Recommendations for UNFCCC negotiators**

We call on governments and all stakeholders working in the field of climate change to do more to listen to children, and to prioritise the education and involvement of young people in decisions and actions to protect their future and ours. In determining climate change agreements, it is imperative that governments also respect their commitments made under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Plan International calls on decision makers at COP15 to prioritise children's best interests and deliver a fair, ambitious, binding and effective climate change global agreement, by:

- Committing to short-term reduction goals on greenhouse gas emissions as well as long-term goals by 2020 and 2050, in line with latest scientific research.
- Increasing funds committed to adaptation to countries at risk, with adaptation funds to be controlled by countries most at risk.
- Ensuring that National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and other international, regional and national strategic plans on climate change protect and involve children.

Plan calls on UNFCCC decision makers to take the following measures to promote intergenerational justice:

- Acknowledge children as official stakeholders, providing formal mechanisms for children to join the dialogue and contribute to decision making on climate change.
- Guide national delegations on how to facilitate consultations with children on climate change decision-making.
- Ensure full accountability for commitments made on mitigation and adaptation, by developing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which provide for the contribution of children's views.
- Encourage civil society organisations engaged in climate change to establish formal mechanisms for children's participation.
- Emphasise the significance of children – in terms of differentiated impacts and children's 'agency' – within the 5th IPCC Assessment Report.
- Insist that governments must invest more in education so future generations have the knowledge and skills to better manage our environment and adapt to climate change.

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Plan is a child-centred community development organisation with no religious or political affiliations. Plan makes long-term commitments to children in poverty and assists as many children as possible, by working in partnerships and alliances with them, their families, communities, civil society and government, building productive relationships and enabling their voices to be heard and recognised in issues that affect them.