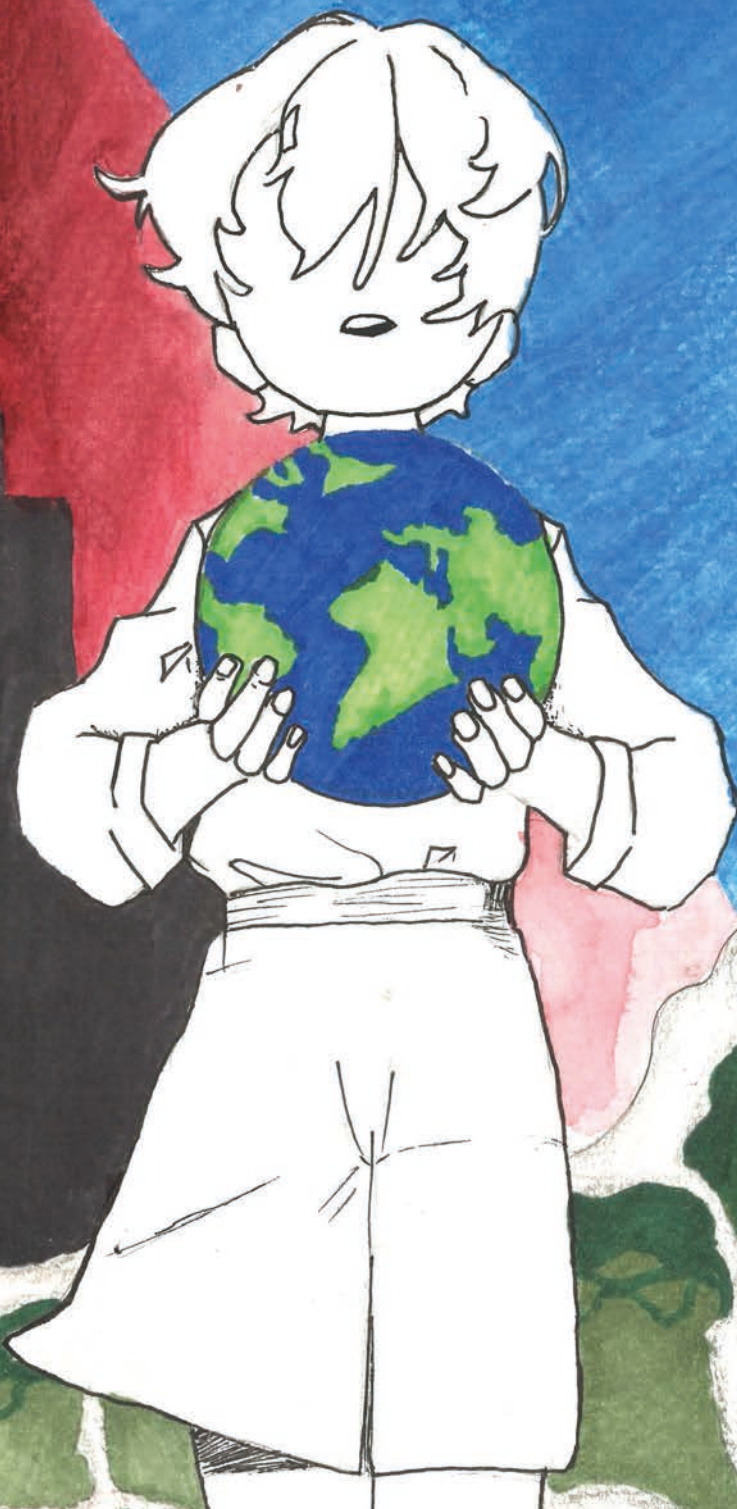




Save the Children

LISTEN. AND ACT.



Listen. And Act.

Children today are growing up in crisis. Across the world, **183 million children face the triple threat of high climate risk, poverty and conflict.** A world still reeling from the human and economic impacts of a global pandemic now faces a **hunger crisis** the size and severity of which has never been seen before – at least 153 million children are facing food insecurity globally.

This year, through a Children’s Week of Action, Save the Children engaged with 3000 children in 29 countries and heard about the changes they want to see. We have collected the quotes, pictures and poetry they shared in order to pass them on to decision makers from around the world. In this brief are included a selection of those quotes, along with a few others from our 2022 ‘child hearings’, a series of consultations that Save the Children held with 58,035 children across 46 countries to hear their thoughts about the climate and inequality crisis.

The summary below captures common views and experiences that children shared with us and want you to know about. They reaffirm that progress the world has made for sustainable development is in peril.

The cost of inaction has become too great, and children are paying the price. The quotes children shared show a deep understanding of the challenges the world faces and that these challenges are not felt equally. Despite complexities, children identified concrete and specific solutions. Children want to be a part of these solutions but their challenges and calls for action demonstrate a clear belief that delivering a greener, fairer future will require political will from world leaders bold enough to take tough decisions.

Cover: “Depending on you – The environment’s future depends on you, either a good or bad future.” Artwork by Hanbyeol Lee, 15, South Korea.



Children and young people from Sulat, Eastern Samar in the Philippines joined a letter-writing marathon called “Paper Boat of Hope”. Photo: Save the Children Philippines

The climate crisis is a top concern for children around the world

66 The climate crisis is a red code for humanity. **99**

Dilasha, Nepal

The most resounding message across all the responses shared by children was that they can see and feel the impacts of the climate crisis on their lives, their communities and their world.

Children who participated in our Children's Week of Action were able to identify contributing factors and that the actions their leaders are taking are not urgent enough. The children we spoke to were particularly worried about increasing greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, extreme weather events, and increased chance and intensity of climate-related disasters:

66 I would like global leaders to put an end to greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. So that us tamariki won't have to live an apocalyptic future. **99**

Behrad, 15, New Zealand

Children linked the climate crisis to loss of access to essentials, including services that ensure they can learn, grow, stay healthy and safe. These included access to:

Healthy food for nutrition

66 Very many children in our village were sick. I was told it was a disease called malnutrition. My father told me it was caused by the drought. **99**

Abdul, Kenya

Clean water

66 The rivers are completely dry in summer, which makes it difficult to obtain fresh water for the subsistence of their homes. **99**

Gilmar, Ecuador

Education

66 Our school classes are often in huts or made of clay, there are often fires in the classes... it is very difficult when it is cold or during the rain season or in the hot weather. **99**

Child from Niger

Many talked about the impacts of the climate crisis on their **health and rights**:

66 Floods and landslides destroyed many people's houses. These people do not have proper shelter, and children are exposed to pneumonia in the rainy season. **99**

Child from Nepal

66 Climate change is causing a lot of disasters. Last month...two children one age 19 years and his sister died. The big one stepped on a ledge to cross the gutter and he fell in. His sister tried to help him, but she also fell. Both drowned. In our area most of the time in the rainy season, this kind of thing happens. **99**

Child from Sierra Leone

66 Girls of Satkhira (Bangladesh) are taking birth control pills from their mother, sister or friends to stop menstruation. Because scarcity of clean water during natural disaster causes serious menstrual and vaginal health issues. **99**

Child from Bangladesh

Children also described **safety risks** linked to the climate crisis, including slow-onset impacts. These included:

Child marriage

66 My village name is Bokulpur, Satkhira. Climate change is making people impoverished. Child marriage is taking place. Their beautiful dreams are being shattered. **99**

Smriti, Bangladesh

Child labour and wider exploitation and abuse

66 Various calamities hit this district every year, due to which the people are becoming poor. Due to poverty, many children are forced to engage in child labour. Therefore, proper planning is necessary to ensure that children are not harmed due to climate change. **99**

Child from Bangladesh

Children who spoke to Save the Children were also able to identify actions that damage the environment as contributing to the climate crisis. Some activities stood out in particular:

Deforestation

66 Why are we letting people cut down trees, we need trees to breathe. **99**

Azaria, New Zealand

Children described the impact of deforestation on their lives and lamented lack of genuine commitment and political will to tackle it, as well as a lack of government's accountability in setting and implementing laws, regulations and sanctions to stop and punish perpetrators.

66 Please tighten the regulations and laws on deforestation. Forests have the effect of absorbing CO₂ through photosynthesis and emitting CO₂. Whole trees were felled in my neighborhood. **99**

N.T., 14, Japan

Children described how their rights to **safe housing and shelter, clean air, access to water and food, health and education** were being compromised by climate events and practices that are harmful to the environment.

66 There is hunger. Before when they were not cutting mangrove trees, there was not much hunger but now they have cut the mangroves there is a lot of hunger. Flooding is a problem. These past days, when the rain came a 12-year-old boy was washed away. **99**

Boy from Sierra Leone

Plastic and waste

66 Rivers in Cachona are really dirty [...] Rats are coming into the houses. **99**

Rosalía, 14, Peru

Many of the children who spoke to Save the Children described worries about the impact of plastic and waste on aspects of the environment that they experience every day, as well as wider impacts on environmental systems.

66 Poor drainage management has polluted Bagmati river. Since our school is surrounded by Bagmati river, the smell becomes intolerable during winter when it doesn't rain. The constant contact with the polluted water might spread diseases amongst children. **99**

Child from Nepal

Inequality and its links with the climate crisis

Many of the children we consulted described their experiences of inequality, both within and among countries.

66 We are experiencing a prolonged drought and people are struggling to get maize because of high food prices. I also note that the gap between the rich and poor is increasing. **99**

Dalton, Kenya

66 I would like to talk about the financial inequality in rural areas. In rural area, there will be lack of money. Some families have many children, but financial situation of some families, only father can earn money. Some families, younger child have opportunity to study but older child has to work to earn money without a chance to study. I would like you to support education of people who live in rural area so they have rights to study. **99**

Child from Laos

66 Sometimes some colleges do not accept students who are pregnant, and they impede them from keep on studying, [these students] do not have help and do not get ahead. Other colleges do not have the necessary resources, do not have water or wifi, this is the case of my college, others do not have water that you can drink. **99**

Maria, 16, Peru

Some of the children we spoke to described links **between the climate crisis and increasing economic inequality**. Many outlined how lower-income communities were being worse affected by the climate crisis. Impacts included:

Access to food and nutrition

66 Families that have wealth are not affected by either economic inequality or feel the impact of climate crisis. They can afford to buy food even when the price is high, or they drive in four-wheel vehicles that will not get stuck in the muddy roads. **99**

Child from Southern Somalia

Poverty, migration and access to education

66 I have observed that climate change leads to widespread poverty. Therefore, children cannot access essential needs. Children in pastoral communities are missing school as a result of constant migration in search of water and pasture for their families' livestock. **99**

Geofry, Kenya



Boys and girls in Madagascar writing letters for Generation Hope campaign. Photo: Save the Children

Some children who spoke to us also recognised that **reforms to address the climate crisis would have to be made carefully to ensure they didn't make life more difficult for families.**

66 I think it's more the responsibilities of companies and the government. Adults have been protesting and switching to electric cars and solar panels, but the press keeps putting the blame on normal people who can barely afford to pay their bills. **99**

Child from the UK

Many of the children we talked to pointed to slow, insufficient, or ineffective action by leaders and to people profiting from the climate crisis as a root cause of these problems and called for more urgent action:

66 The government must: "Show the result", there is planning, there must be an action. Currently, the problem of our country is that we have a plan, but we don't see the results of implementation or if it is implemented, it must be an outstanding work so that society will recognize it. **99**

Child from Laos

66 Hold the few large companies responsible for most of carbon emissions released into the world. **99**

Child from the UK

Some of the children we consulted said that positive change will start with young people. Many of the children who spoke to Save the Children demanded that they and their communities be included in decision-making to address inequality, ensure their needs are met and that action is taken to address the climate crisis.

66 We urge all of you to acknowledge the ideas and efforts of the youth sector in raising awareness and providing actions to resolve the climate crisis that we are currently experiencing. The young generation is next in line to take care of our planet. They are the ones who will suffer the consequences of our harmful actions towards the environment. If we're able to empower and collaborate with you, we're not only solving this climate dilemma; we're also showing that we can create an inclusive environment regardless of your age, gender, race, and social status. **99**

Jan Xerohj, Philippines



Children in Elbasan, Albania performing during the play *Windmill* that discusses climate crisis, environmental issues and social inequality. Photo: Plaku Productions/Save the Children

Solutions to the climate and inequality crisis

Who needs to act on the climate and inequality crisis? All of us, according to the children we spoke to. However, whilst many of the children we consulted stressed the need for awareness raising and that each of us has a role to play, they also made clear that we cannot simply recycle our way out of the current crisis – ultimately responsibility rests on decision-makers.

66 Stop big oil companies now. Be brave and make strong, wise decisions. 99

Ted, 6, New Zealand

66 ...there should be a big change in the government and their actions. The rest of us need system change before it's possible to change much individually. 99

Child from the UK

Children want to be a part of the solution but understand government action is key. Many children who spoke to us stressed that solutions must come from all governments and all people working collectively. Children shared many solutions – these are a few examples:

66 Investing in children: we urge governments to do more to ensure that our basic rights are fulfilled, with education, food, health and protection. 99

Aisha, Katsina Children's Parliament, Nigeria

66 We propose the establishment of dedicated platforms or council that includes children in climate change decision-making processes. The council could comprise children from different backgrounds and religions. 99

Miriam, Zambia

66 Most of the economic disadvantages caused by climate change are in developing countries, so the developed countries need to look at the fact that people in faraway countries who are not doing anything wrong are suffering unreasonably and to urgently create measures to deal with the situation. 99

17-year-old girl living in Japan

66 I want the leaders of that country to issue a law on economic and status inequality. pay more attention to the people, be open about gender, help the poor people, Support people who have knowledge and poor status to get the good opportunities, give equal rights to everyone, whether poor or rich. 99

Child from Laos

66 [...] attach fees to emissions, carbon taxes would encourage businesses to emit less and take responsibility for sustainability of their productions. 99

Children from New Zealand

66 Invest in sustainable agricultural practices, such as drought-resistant crops and water management systems [...] This will not only improve food security but also create jobs and grow the economy. 99

Child from Somalia

66 Stop single-use plastic. 99

Zia, New Zealand



Children in Cusco, Perú drew their demands and the impact of climate change on their lives. Photo: Save the Children Peru

Supporting children's asks by delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals

66 We can choose to pay the bill now, or risk paying a higher price later. **99**

Samreen, Nepal

In 2015, world leaders made 17 promises to children through the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet half-way to the 2030 deadline, **delivery is unforgivably off-track.**

Analysis by Save the Children shows that unless the current rate of progress rapidly accelerates, by 2030:

- 3.16m of the 942m children born will not survive to celebrate their 5th birthday
- Malnutrition will leave more than 1 in 5 babies stunted
- 2 in 5 children who start school will not be able to read and understand a simple sentence by age 10
- 67m of the 414m girls who should be finishing primary school will marry as children
- 2.6 billion – 4 in 5 – children will have experienced at least one extreme climate event including flooding, drought and heatwaves.

It doesn't have to be this way. The SDGs provide a roadmap for charting a way out of this moment of crisis and tackling the pressures of increasingly frequent climate disasters, conflict, global inequality and hunger. But children are rapidly losing trust in leaders. Governments must win back that trust, by uniting across borders and generations to meet the challenges children will confront in their lifetimes.

Children are sounding the alarm and world leaders are running out of time to listen and take action. **Governments must make the 2023 SDG Summit a turning point by generating renewed commitment and ambition to meet the targets, for all.** Failing to deliver for children now undermines the global community's hope for a sustainable, peaceful and prosperous future.

The SDG Summit must be a gamechanger. Save the Children is calling on governments to:

- 1. Announce clear plans to accelerate progress with and for children.** Children's rights and views must be at the centre of efforts and supported by policy. To do this governments must announce clear, time-bound, costed and fully-funded plans to deliver the SDGs that include measures to enable safe, full, meaningful and inclusive child participation.
- 2. Unlock new financing and fiscal space for implementation by**
 - **Investing in children** with more and better funding for safety nets, essential health, nutrition, education and child protection services. These investments will help build a more stable world where children can not only cope during tough times but also reach their full potential and thrive.
 - **Making the global financial system work for everyone**, including through multilateral cooperation and solidarity in line with the letter and spirit of SDG17 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. World leaders must deliver and scale up financial commitments on official development assistance and climate finance (inc. Loss & damage), strengthen global tax and debt systems and policies to ensure the wealthy pay their fair share and ensure lower-income countries are able to invest in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals and safeguarding progress against climate shocks.

66 If you say we are the world leaders of the next generation, leave us a world to lead. **99**

Child from New Zealand

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We extend our special gratitude to the children who kindly shared their messages to world leaders with us and to all the children who courageously take steps, every day, to create the world they want to live in.

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