
SUMMARY of the Article “Child Rights Crisis,” by Jamil Ahmad, Dawn, August 24th, 2024

The article “Child Rights Crisis” by Jamil Ahmad emphasizes the profound impact of the climate crisis on children, particularly in the world’s poorest regions, where the effects are most severe. As the planet endures its hottest summer, the escalating climate crisis is infringing on children’s basic human rights and diminishing their chances for a decent future. Children are disproportionately affected by extreme weather events, which jeopardize their health and overall well-being. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that children born in 2020 will face a significant increase in extreme weather events as the planet warms, a burden not shared equally with older generations. In response, children globally are mobilizing to demand climate justice, seeking to influence policies that will secure a sustainable future. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognized the climate crisis as a form of structural violence against children, urging states to collaborate on mitigating its effects. The situation is particularly dire in middle- and low-income countries, where children face compounded risks from food and water scarcity, health threats, and educational disruptions due to climate-related events like heatwaves, floods, and wildfires. In regions like South Asia, children are already suffering from severe water scarcity and air pollution, leading to physical and mental health challenges. The article calls for urgent, child-sensitive climate policies to address these systemic risks and ensure a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for future generations, highlighting the issue of intergenerational equity as central to the hopes and aspirations of millions of young people.

Easy/Short SUMMARY:

The article discusses how the climate crisis is harming children's rights, especially in poor regions where the effects are most severe. As the planet heats up, children are more vulnerable to extreme weather, which threatens their health, education, and overall well-being. Children born in 2020 will face more extreme weather events than older generations, making their future uncertain. In response, children worldwide are standing up for their rights, demanding action to protect their future. The UN has recognized the climate crisis as a form of violence against children, particularly in poorer countries where they face additional challenges like food and water shortages and educational disruptions. The article calls for urgent action to protect children and ensure a better future for them.

SOLUTIONS of The Problem:

Child-Sensitive Climate Policies

Governments should develop and implement climate policies that specifically address the needs and vulnerabilities of children, ensuring their protection from the impacts of climate change.

International Collaboration

Countries need to work together, sharing resources and knowledge to create a global strategy for mitigating the effects of climate change on children, particularly in poorer regions.

Education on Climate Change

Integrate climate change education into school curriculums, teaching children about the risks and encouraging them to take part in climate action initiatives.

Improve Infrastructure

Invest in resilient infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather events, ensuring that schools, healthcare facilities, and homes are safe for children.

Emergency Response Systems

Develop and implement robust emergency response systems that prioritize children's safety during climate-related disasters, ensuring they have access to food, water, and medical care.

Reducing Outdoor Exposure

During extreme heatwaves, reduce children's outdoor exposure by closing schools and creating safe indoor spaces, while also finding alternative ways to continue education.

Addressing Air Pollution and Water Scarcity

Implement policies to reduce air pollution and improve water management, particularly in regions like South Asia, to protect children's health and development.

Support for Displaced Children

Provide support and protection for children who are displaced due to climate-related events, ensuring they have access to education, healthcare, and psychological support.

Strengthening Legal Frameworks

Enhance legal frameworks to recognize and enforce children's rights in the context of the climate crisis, holding governments and corporations accountable for environmental harm.

Public Awareness Campaigns

Launch public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the impact of climate change on children and the importance of taking collective action to protect their future.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the article:

- Children born in 2020 are projected to experience a nearly four-fold increase in extreme weather events by 2100 under 1.5°C of global warming.
- By 2050, the percentage of children exposed to heatwaves globally could rise from 25% to 100%.
- In 2022, 347 million children in South Asia (55% of all children in the region) experienced water scarcity.
- Children in regions of extreme heat lose up to 1.5 years of education by the time they complete Grade 12 due to climate disruptions.

MCQs from the Article:

1. According to the IPCC, how much could extreme weather events increase for children born in 2020 by 2100 under 1.5°C of global warming?

- A. Two-fold
- B. Three-fold
- C. Four-fold**
- D. Five-fold

2. What percentage of children are expected to be exposed to heatwaves globally by 2050?

- A. 25%



- B. 50%
- C. 75%
- D. 100%**

3. In 2022, what percentage of children in South Asia experienced water scarcity?

- A. 40%
- B. 45%
- C. 50%
- D. 55%**

4. What is one of the main health problems children in South Asia face due to the climate crisis?

- A. Obesity
- B. Diabetes
- C. Stunting**
- D. Asthma

5. What term did the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child use to describe the climate crisis in relation to children?

- A. Structural violence**
- B. Natural disaster
- C. Environmental challenge
- D. Climate injustice

VOCABULARY:

1. **Disproportionately** (بشكل غير متناسب): In a way that is out of proportion; excessively.
2. **Intergenerational** (بين الأجيال): Occurring between different generations.
3. **Biodiversity** (تنوع الأحياء): The variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat.
4. **Vulnerable** (ضعيف): Exposed to the possibility of being attacked or

harmed.

5. **Mobilizing** (مُجَمِّعٌ مُجَمِّعَاتٌ): To organize or prepare something, such as a group of people, for a purpose.
6. **Mitigating** (مُخَفِّفٌ): Making something less severe, serious, or painful.
7. **Enrolled** (مُسَجَّلٌ): Registered or signed up for a course or institution.
8. **Structural Violence** (عُورٌ مُجَمِّعَاتٌ): A form of violence wherein social structures or institutions harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs.
9. **Resilient** (مُتَعَمِّرٌ): Able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.
10. **Stunting** (مُخَفِّفٌ مُخَفِّفَاتٌ): The impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation.
11. **Systemic** (مُجَمِّعٌ): Relating to a system, especially as opposed to a particular part.
12. **Infrastructure** (مُجَمِّعَاتٌ مُجَمِّعَاتٌ): The basic physical and organizational structures and facilities needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.
13. **Collaborate** (مُجَمِّعٌ مُجَمِّعَاتٌ): To work jointly on an activity, especially to produce or create something.
14. **Cumulative** (مُجَمِّعٌ): Increasing or increased in quantity, degree, or force by successive additions.
15. **Impairing** (مُجَمِّعَاتٌ مُجَمِّعَاتٌ): To weaken or damage something, especially a human faculty or function.
16. **Acute** (مُجَمِّعٌ): Present or experienced to a severe or intense degree.
17. **Aspiration** (مُجَمِّعٌ): A hope or ambition of achieving something.
18. **Inequity** (مُجَمِّعَاتٌ مُجَمِّعَاتٌ): Lack of fairness or justice.
19. **Exacerbate** (مُجَمِّعٌ): To make a problem, bad situation, or negative feeling worse.
20. **Deprivation** (مُجَمِّعٌ): The damaging lack of material benefits considered to be basic necessities in a society.

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[Child rights crisis](#)

Jamil Ahmad

AS the planet bakes in the hottest summer ever, with each passing month warmer than the last, the climate crisis is depriving children of some of their basic human rights and reducing opportunities for them to secure and live a decent life. Extreme weather events linked to climate change disproportionately affect children's health and lives. We are facing a child rights crisis, a situation that is already alarming in poor regions that are hit first and worst by climate change.

In addition to the immediate threats, the burden of long-term risks of climate change also falls unfairly on children, as they have to live longer with its adverse consequences.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change notes that "children aged 10 or younger in the year 2020 are projected to experience a nearly four-fold increase in extreme events under 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming by 2100 and a five-fold increase under 3°C warming. Such increases in exposure would not be experienced by a person aged 55 in the year 2020 in their remaining lifetime under any warming scenario."

Concerned about their future, children everywhere have stood up for their rights. An international movement led by children is successfully drawing attention to

the climate crisis by approaching judiciaries, media, and governments. They are trying to influence national and international policies by bringing climate justice for children into sharper focus and asking authorities to take urgent climate action.

The burden of long-term risks of climate change falls on children.

The widespread and deepening threats to children's rights linked to the climate crisis are documented in detail in a 'General Comment' issued last year by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Describing climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss as "urgent examples of global threats to children's rights", it noted that the climate crisis is "a form of structural violence against children and can cause social collapse in communities and families". It called upon states to work together in addressing the effects of climate change on the enjoyment of children's rights.

Nowhere is this structural violence against children more at play than in middle- and low-income countries where millions of children are in harm's way from threats emanating from the multifaceted climate crisis. It is spewing crises in other areas of basic life support — food, water, health, education, and housing — in the developing nations of Africa and Asia where children and young people form the largest segments of the population.

About a quarter of the world's 2.3 billion children live in Asia and the Pacific, with higher concentrations in South and Southeast Asia. Forty per cent of Africa's population is under 15 years. In Pakistan, children make up about 45pc of the fast-growing population. In these regions, the rapid spike in the intensity, scale and duration of heatwaves has turned Earth's surface into an oven, with temperatures crossing 50°C at several points. By Unicef's calculations, the percentage of children exposed to heatwaves globally could climb from the current 25pc to 100pc by 2050.

A quick measure to protect children from intense heatwaves is to reduce their outdoor exposure by closing schools. But this affects education. This year, more than 80m children lost weeks of learning time when schools across Asia and Africa were closed. A World Bank report on the impact of climate change on education showed that students in regions of extreme heat cumulatively lose up to 1.5 years of education by the time they complete Grade 12.



Heatwaves, though, are not the only reason for disrupting education. Wildfires, floods, or damage to infrastructure also increase risks of learning loss and dropping out when schools are closed in low- and middle-income countries. Unfortunately, not all children in these regions are enrolled. Those who remain outside education networks suffer badly.

In South Asia, particularly, air pollution and acute water scarcity expose children to physical and mental health problems. In 2022, 347m, or 55pc of all children in South Asia experienced water scarcity, meaning their regions had inconsistent supplies of water during the year. These issues are impairing children's physical development and retarding their mental growth. Stunting among them is spreading.

Systemic risks associated with the climate crisis will grow if timely action is not taken by all. Governments will have to take the lead to frame and implement child-sensitive climate policies and collaborate with partners, national and international, to ensure a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all children. Clearly, it is a question of intergenerational equity. At stake are the hopes and aspirations of millions of young people.

The writer is director of intergovernmental affairs, United Nations Environment Programme.

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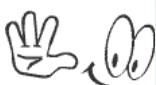
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