



**Working paper 591**

# Ending violence against children while addressing the global climate crisis

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## Key messages

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include the mitigation of both climate change and violence against children. Given the links between these two problems, actions that address both will be more effective in achieving these goals.
- Disaster risk reduction planning that considers the risks of violence against children arising from climate-related shocks will enable more responsive mechanisms to mitigate impacts on children.
- Children and adolescents are crucial agents of change in the global fight against climate change. They are also aware of the climate-related risks they face, so involving them in solutions will generate positive results.



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# Acronyms

<b>ACE</b>	Action for Climate Empowerment
<b>CCA</b>	climate change adaptation
<b>CCDRR</b>	child-centred and child-led disaster risk reduction
<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>	carbon dioxide
<b>DRR</b>	disaster risk reduction
<b>GAP</b>	Gender Action Plan
<b>GHG</b>	greenhouse gas
<b>IDP</b>	internally displaced person
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>LWGP</b>	Lima Work Programme on Gender
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SGBV</b>	sexual and gender-based violence
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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# 1 Introduction

The world is facing multiple challenges with huge impacts on humanity, requiring action from citizens, policy-makers and activists. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets demonstrate the scale and ambition of the current global agenda. Many of these issues are interconnected, as global challenges can be mutually reinforcing. However, this also means that they can be solved synergistically, with actions in one area contributing to positive results in others.

This working paper focuses on two of these critical global challenges: violence against children and climate change. The links between the two are not always obvious, but they exist and are significant in terms of both causes and solutions.

A growing volume of data and evidence shows the scale of violence against children – a violation of child rights with grave impacts on human, social, economic and political development (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Eliminating violence against children is a target under two SDGs: Goal 5 (achieving gender equality), target 5.2, which focuses on violence against women and girls; and Goal 16 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development), target 16.2, ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale (United Nations, 2019a). Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts is central to SDG 13, as well as to targets under SDG 1 (1.3: building the resilience and reducing the exposure of the poor and vulnerable to climate-related extreme events and other environmental shocks and disasters); SDG 2 (ensure sustainable food production and resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity

and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change); SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production patterns) and SDG 15 (protection of forest and terrestrial ecosystems), all of which highlight the need to tackle human-made causes of climate change.

Combating the causes of climate change can also impact positively on certain contexts in which children are at high risk of experiencing violence. This study proposes a framework and provides evidence on the links between the causes and consequences of violence against children and some of the underlying practices responsible for the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are causing climate change. It also establishes connections between some of the consequences of climate change – such as desertification, floods and erratic temperatures affecting agricultural productivity – and an increased risk of violence against children. By shedding light on these connections, our aim is to increase policy and financial attention to address these phenomena together, in a context of competing national and international priorities.

Global attention on climate change has triggered high-level policy and financial action: high-income countries have been urged to mobilise \$100 billion annually by 2020 to address the climate-related needs of developing countries; a Green Climate Fund has been set up (Green Climate Fund, n.d); and guidance abounds for businesses wanting to take advantage of climate change investment opportunities (Morgan Stanley, 2015). Sharing evidence about the links between climate change and violence against children could encourage donors to identify violence as one of the many consequences of climate-related phenomena and to take action against violence as part of a comprehensive strategy to combat climate change and its impacts.

## 1.1 Context

### 1.1.1 Violence in childhood

In 2015, at least three out of four of the world's children – an estimated 1.7 billion – had experienced some form of inter-personal violence (see Box 1 and Figures 1 and 2).<sup>1</sup> When the cumulative impact of violence is considered, almost no children – whether they live in rich countries or poor, in the global North or South – experience violence-free childhoods (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017).

Violence against children includes violence perpetrated by adults, caregivers and other children. Childhood violence also includes the impact on children of witnessing violence in the home, school or community. Violence against children is closely linked with violence against women: both are often rooted in the same patriarchal attitudes, hidden by shame and stigma, and often take place in the home (ibid.). Furthermore, certain situations are in themselves forms of violence against children and violations of their rights – such as child marriage or hazardous forms of child labour – as well as putting children at severe risk of further violence.

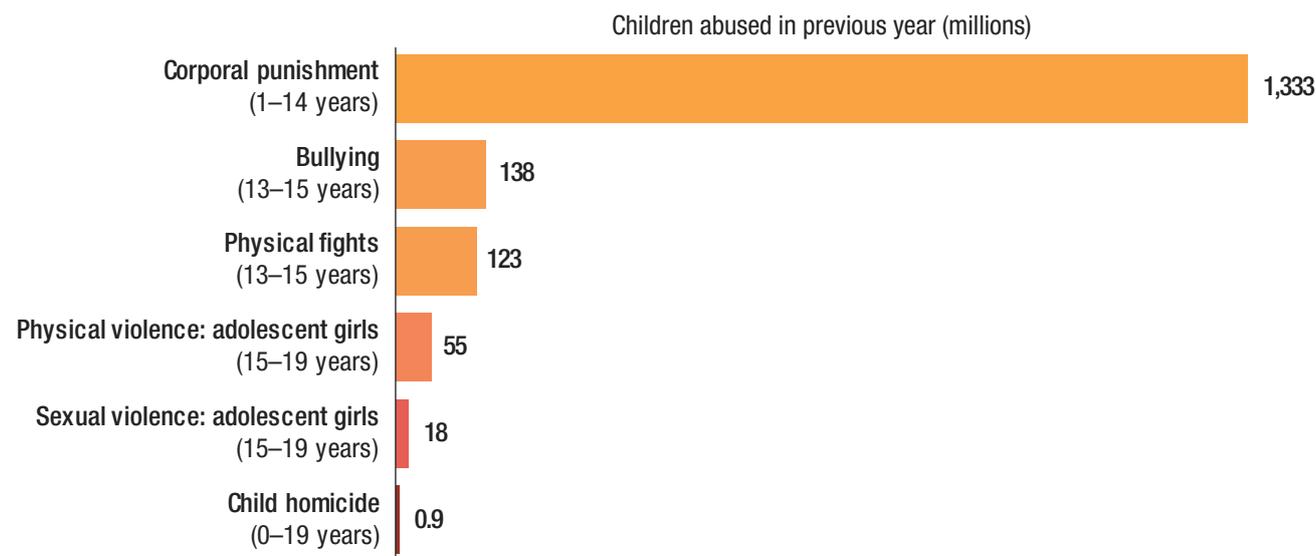
#### Box 1 Definition of violence against children

Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines violence against children as 'All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse'.

Source: UNICEF (n.d.)

Beyond the immediate trauma, fear and physical impact, violence can affect a child's health, education, productivity and future life opportunities. Experiencing violence can lead to long-term depression and behavioural problems, post-traumatic stress, anxiety and eating disorders, and can make young people more vulnerable to substance abuse and poor reproductive and sexual health (Meinck, et al, 2017). Whether they witness abuse or suffer it first-hand, children who are raised with violence learn powerful lessons about using violence to dominate others.

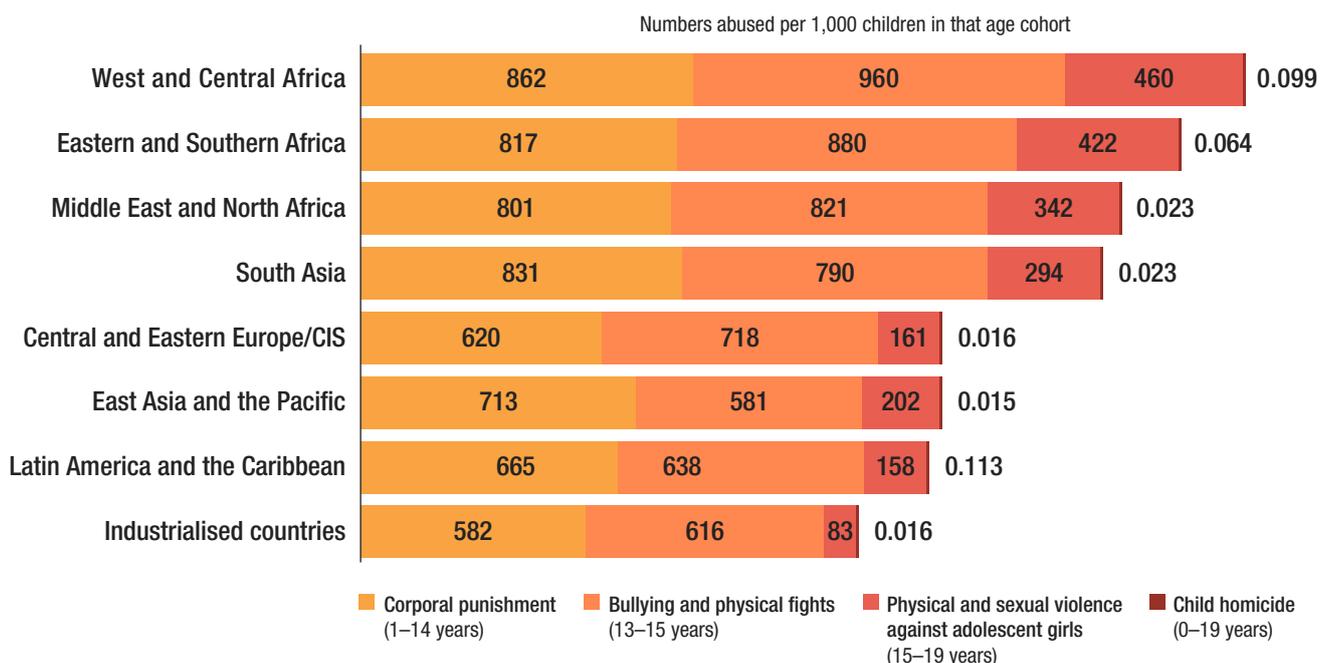
**Figure 1 Global burden of violence against children (2015)**



Source: Know Violence in Childhood (2017)

<sup>1</sup> This estimate includes child homicide, violent discipline (or corporal punishment) at the hands of caregivers, peer violence (including bullying and physical fights) both boys and girls, and sexual and physical violence experienced by adolescent girls given the dearth of comparable data for adolescent boys, despite its importance.

**Figure 2 Regional burden of violence against children (2015)**



Source: Know Violence in Childhood (2017)

### 1.1.2 Climate change

After more than 150 years of industrialisation, deforestation and large-scale agriculture, quantities of GHGs in the atmosphere have risen to levels not seen in three million years. As populations and economies grow and standards of living rise, so does the cumulative level of GHG emissions in the atmosphere, and their effect on global warming (United Nations, 2019a). At the current pace, global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels between 2030 and 2052.<sup>2</sup>

Most things people do, produce and consume result in GHG emissions. For example, the food chain involves land use, infrastructure, transportation and energy production systems. At each stage, emissions are affected by available agricultural and fishing technologies, by intermediaries along the supply chain, by consumers and by technology choices. Technology and choice are not independent: available technologies affect prices; prices affect consumer preferences and consumer preferences can influence the development and distribution

of technologies. Policies, culture, traditions and economic factors intervene at every stage (IPCC, 2018). In other words, many of the factors driving GHG emissions and global warming are shaped by consumer, producer and policy decisions.

The latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) synthesise the observed and predicted impacts of climate change. The main impacts include:

- Unusual and unprecedented heat extremes, expected to occur far more frequently and affect much larger geographic areas. For example, heat extremes in Southeast Asia are projected to increase substantially in the short term, with significant adverse effects on humans and ecosystems.
- Rainfall regime changes and water availability. Even disregarding climate change, population growth alone is expected to put pressure on water resources in many regions. With projected climate change, however, pressure on water resources is expected to increase significantly.

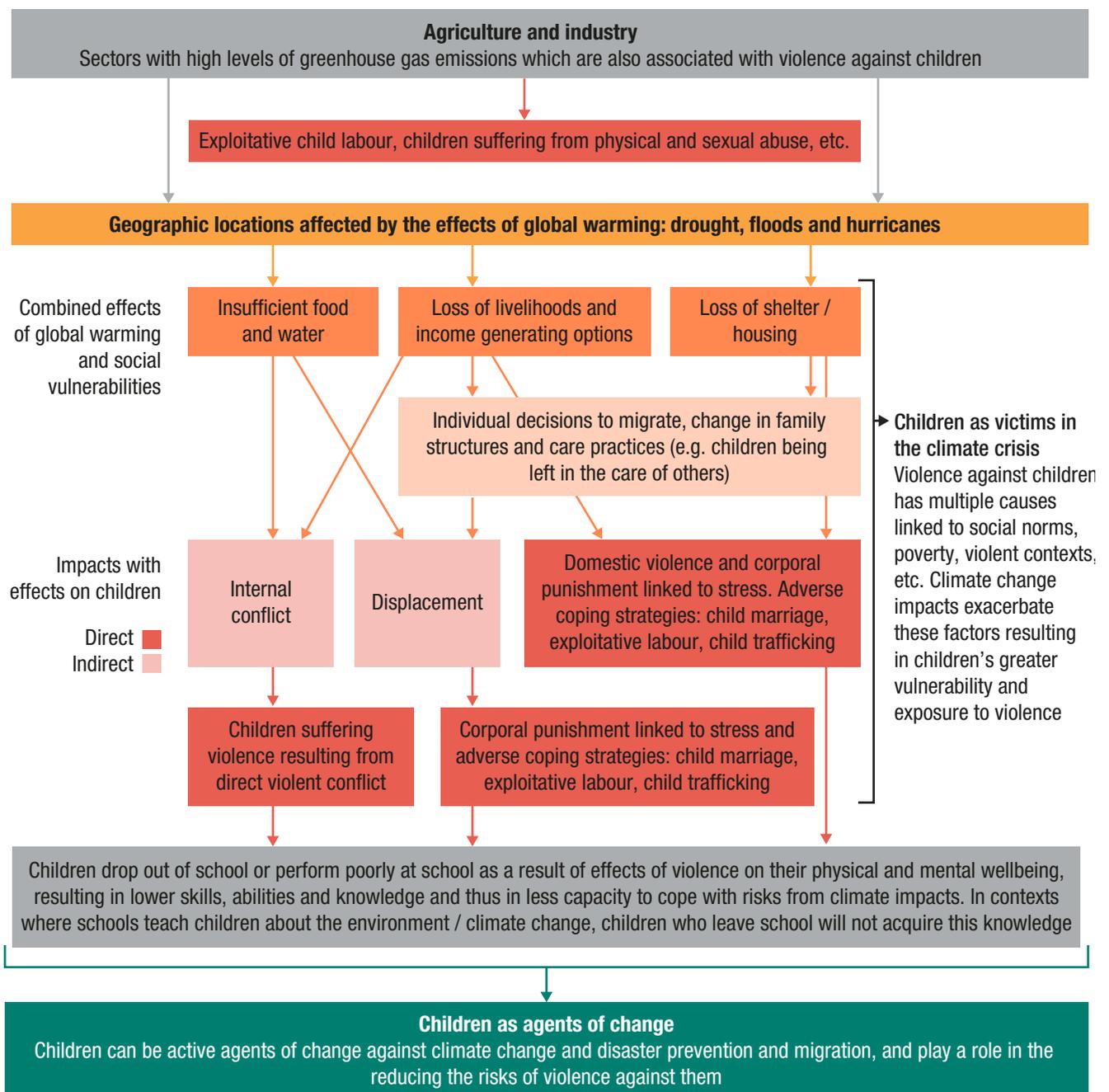
<sup>2</sup> Present level of global warming is defined as the average of a 30-year period centred on 2017 assuming the recent rate of warming continues.

- Agricultural yields and nutritional quality. Crop production systems will be under increasing pressure to meet growing global demand in the future. A significant drop in crop yield is already evident at 0.8°C warming. Global warming above 1.5°C to 2°C increases the risk of reduced crop yields and production losses in sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and South Asia. These impacts would further threaten food security, economic growth and poverty reduction in affected regions.

## 1.2 Framework for analysis

This report explores the links between climate change and violence against children. It looks at cases where climate change is affecting certain geographic locations through specific impacts, including slow-onset and/or extreme weather events. In these cases, the effect on childhood violence can be direct or indirect. The analytical framework in Figure 3 captures the pathways of these impacts, which are explored in chapters 2 and 3. In considering this framework, it is

**Figure 3 Links between violence against children and the climate crisis**



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important to note that, ultimately, individual, policy and corporate choices matter: many of the risk factors are shaped by choices which then aggregate to generate collective impacts. These collective impacts then affect individual children and families.

Chapter 3 explores links that are compounding rather than causal; these are represented in the top segment of the analytical framework in Figure 3. It looks at types of commercial agriculture and industries for which there is evidence of a direct link to increased GHG emissions and thus to climate change, and for which there is also evidence of the use of exploitative child labour. Child labour is both a form of violence in itself,

as well as a risk factor for other forms of violence, including corporal punishment, psychological violence and sexual abuse and exploitation.

Having explored the ways in which climate change can be linked to children experiencing different forms of violence, chapter 4 focuses on how children are and can be agents of change in the fight against climate change and in mitigating the violence they face. It considers how these efforts can be strengthened through disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts that take account of the possible impacts of violence against children, as well as establishing procedures to protect children from violence when climate-related shocks occur.

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# 2 Violence against children resulting from the climate crisis

This chapter explores the ways in which climate change is directly and indirectly aggravating some of the causal factors that lead to violence in childhood. Attaining the SDGs, in particular SDG 16 and target 16.2 related to eliminating violence against children, cannot be achieved without significant improvements to the current challenges posed by climate change. While the links between these two phenomena are not often noted, they are clear and important. The aim of this chapter is thus to provide insights for decision-makers, practitioners and activists, in both developed and developing countries, about how the manifestations of the climate crisis, such as more frequent disasters, can exacerbate violence against children. This can inform more holistic preventive and protective actions, as well as including a range of actors not typically involved in child protection – such as authorities and grassroots actors and children engaged in disaster preparedness planning – to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

## 2.1 Impacts of the climate crisis on violence against children in non-displaced settings

Research increasingly identifies the impact of slow-onset disasters and recurrent, less extreme climate events on communities, and the implications of such events for resilience and adaptation strategies. For example, annual and extended droughts and recurrent flooding and crop failure caused by changes in weather patterns can lead to food and water scarcity, food and fuel price shocks and reduced income for

families whose livelihoods depend on agriculture. These events exacerbate existing socioeconomic factors such as poverty and gender inequality and existing risks of violence against children, as well as creating new risks of violence. In such contexts, children can face violence in a wide range of forms.

### 2.1.1 Domestic violence

Domestic violence – that is, violence in the household against women and children – as well as the use and abuse of violent discipline by parents/caregivers increases with parent fear, stress and depression, which can be caused or exacerbated by recurrent droughts, flooding, crop failure and resource scarcity. Maternal stress, for instance, can spike under these circumstances as women’s mental health deteriorates due to depression, anxiety, frustration, feelings of parental incompetence, domestic violence or household conflict, among other factors (Bartlett, 2008). Loss of livelihoods can also create a ‘crisis of masculinity’ where men, unable to carry out their traditional roles, experience depression and increased stress and abuse alcohol and drugs, all of which can contribute to increased domestic violence and family conflict (Skinner, 2011, in Le Masson et al., 2016). In cases where a family’s lack of resources means children are sent to live with relatives or alternative caregivers, they can be at higher risk of physical and psychological abuse.

A growing body of evidence has shown that climate change is a serious aggravator of gender-based violence (Habtezion, 2013), affecting women and girls in particular. Recent

analyses note that this phenomenon is not limited to developing countries, but also occurs in developed countries, although the topic is currently under-researched. Still, recent evidence from natural hazard-related disasters, such as bushfires and droughts in one developed country, found that the risk of domestic violence increased in rural areas resulting from the social and psychological pressure arising from loss of income (UN Bonn, 2019).

### 2.1.2 Child marriage

Child marriage – defined as marriage before the age of 18 – is a form of violence against children and often heightens the risk of sexual and domestic violence. Other harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation or cutting, are also associated with child marriage, under the misconception that the act will ‘increase the value’ or appeal of a girl for marriage (Evidence to End FGM/C, 2018). Child marriage often increases in crisis contexts, such as recurrent droughts and crop failures (see Box 2). The benefits for a family include reducing the size of a household and the number of people to feed, or the financial windfall of a bride price (Otzelberger, 2014). Parents/caregivers may regard child marriage as a coping mechanism to provide stability where

resources are limited and families are unable to feed everyone. Child marriage may also be viewed as a way to protect girls from other forms of violence, including harassment and sexual assault (Girls Not Brides, 2016).

### 2.1.3 Sexual violence, trafficking and exploitation and child labour

Where food and water scarcity require all family members to search for resources, children can be left alone and unprotected. Where children are required to search for resources, girls especially can be at risk of sexual violence and trafficking for exploitation (UNICEF, 2015). Where climate-influenced poverty and limited resources mean that families cannot provide for all members, certain or all children may be required to work in hazardous or exploitative forms of labour, including transactional sex, to enable the survival of the rest of the family (Bartlett, 2008; Samuels et al., 2011, UNICEF, 2015).

## 2.2 Impact of climate-related conflicts on violence against children

Climate change can contribute to or exacerbate violent conflict, which directly and indirectly increases the risk of violence against children (SIDA, 2018; see Box 3). While more evidence is needed on the direct links between climate and conflict, there is growing acknowledgement that the effects of climate change on resource quality and access can serve as a ‘threat multiplier’ (United Nations, 2019a). In cases of land and water insecurity, for example, climate and security issues can compound each other, increasing the threat of violence and instability.

Land degradation (Nugent, 2018) shaped by climate issues, for instance, can intersect with conflict and instability and impact children through their greater exposure to community-level violence. Climate change can also lead to conflicts within families and disputes over access to land, creating family stressors and intra-familial violence that can affect children (Wehrmann, 2008). These dynamics can lead to child stress and abuse, peer-to-peer violence and gang-related abuse (United Nations, 2019b). In South Sudan, historical land disputes exacerbated

#### Box 2 Climate change and child marriage in Bangladesh

Disasters related to natural hazards exacerbate poverty, insecurity and lack of access to education – all factors that can increase rates of child marriage. In Bangladesh, increasingly frequent floods, droughts and tropical cyclones are compounding a pre-existing crisis where 52% of Bangladeshi girls are married before they are 18. Research by Human Rights Watch found that families were making decisions about marriage for reasons directly related to climate-influenced disasters – some, for example, married off a daughter in anticipation of losing their home to river erosion.

Source: Sundaram (2017)

### **Box 3 Violence affecting women and girls in Plateau State, Nigeria**

Bloody clashes between farmers and nomadic herders in Nigeria's central Plateau State have claimed many lives, as each group vies for the region's increasingly scarce farmland. Competition for farmland has long been a flash-point in parts of Africa, but with climate change putting more pressure on resources it has become a major source of instability.

Against this backdrop of insecurity, women and girls often become targets, and face ongoing sexual violence and domestic abuse. Specific incidents include forced marriage, sexual assault by security forces deployed to areas of unrest and displacement and destruction of livelihoods.

Source: Taft et al. (2016)

by environmental change led to rights violations and abuse of children, including killing, sexual violence and abductions (UNSC, 2018).

## **2.3 Climate-induced displacement and its impacts on violence against children**

Where the effects of climate change cause displacement or forced migration, the risks of violence against children are heightened (see Box 4). The types and severity of violence against children depend on factors such as the context of displacement, its duration and the conditions in which children live. Existing economic and social inequalities are often exacerbated, in turn contributing to an increase in violence against children.

### **2.3.1 Physical and emotional violence from parents/caregivers**

Parent/caregiver stress and fear resulting from challenges linked to forced displacement, such as the inability to provide for children, limited accesses to vital resources and living in inadequate settlements, can increase rates of domestic violence and the use of violent

discipline, as well as physical or emotional abuse of children.

Displaced children with disabilities are often at higher risk of violence from parents/caregivers than children without disabilities due to lack of specific resources or knowledge required to care for them (Peek and Stough, 2010). Parents/caregivers may also find it difficult to care for children while dealing with the trauma of displacement (ibid).

### **2.3.2 Sexual and gender-based violence**

Children are more vulnerable to sexual violence in refugee camps, which are generally crowded, with inadequate living quarters, typically lacking privacy, security and adequate lighting, and where routines or 'normal' life are interrupted (Bartlett, 2008).

Children are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence in camps where gathering resources such as firewood or water requires leaving safe areas. The responsibility placed on women and children to cook and provide sources of fuel for the family (Women's Refugee Commission, 2006) may also increase the risk of domestic violence/family conflict.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and girls in displacement is increasingly recognised as a central protection concern by organisations working with refugees,

### **Box 4 Climate-related child exploitation in the Horn of Africa**

In the Horn of Africa, climate change has exacerbated the impact of drought, which – together with conflict and poverty and vulnerability – has displaced 3.7 million people in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, and left 15 million severely food-insecure. Children, who make up a high proportion of the displaced, are particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation. During drought in 2010–2011, the number of underage girls sold into child marriage in exchange for livestock increased as families struggled to survive.

Source: Oxfam (2017)

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yet denial about its occurrence remains prevalent and cases under-reported (ICRC, 2019). SGBV against men and boys in all contexts is even less acknowledged or understood. However, the limited existing data indicates that SGBV against men and boys in humanitarian settings is much more prevalent than previously thought, since gender norms prevent many survivors from reporting incidents and accessing services, and SGBV programming prioritises women and girls. Where SGBV against men and boys goes unaddressed, there is a risk that survivors engage in negative behaviours, such as family conflict and domestic abuse, perpetuating a cycle of violence (UNHCR, 2012).

### **2.3.3 Trafficking, exploitation and child labour**

Children are significantly vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking when displaced (UNICEF, 2019). Those who have been separated from their families are particularly at risk (UNICEF, 2017a). Forms of violence and abuse include trafficking of children into exploitative and hazardous labour (IOM, 2019). Boys are typically trafficked into labour such as mining, arduous construction work and sex work. Girls are at risk of sexual exploitation or being forced into domestic work, where they often have to work long hours and are exposed to sexual abuse, or being sold for child marriage.

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# 3 Violence against children in industries that contribute to climate change

This chapter discusses areas of agriculture and industry where current practices of production and consumption contribute to climate change/ environmental degradation, and also to violence against children through hazardous child labour (referred to in this section as ‘child labour’) and exposure to trafficking, exploitation and physical and sexual abuse (Box 5). Tackling harmful practices synergistically on these two fronts can therefore contribute toward making progress in the achievement of several SDGs simultaneously.

Global efforts to end child labour focus on alleviating the socioeconomic factors that drive children’s engagement in hazardous work; developing legal frameworks and commitments from governments to protect children’s rights; and engaging with businesses to promote corporate social responsibility and transparency. While there is evidence of global progress, in sub-Saharan Africa the number of children in hazardous work is actually increasing (ILO et al., 2019). Poverty drives households with children to engage in any available livelihood options, despite their risks. This is why effective policies and actions against child labour must include fostering alternative livelihood options for adults that integrate mechanisms promoting environmental sustainability, such as introducing more effective production technologies that

## Box 5 Definition of hazardous child labour

Hazardous child labour or hazardous work is work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Source: IPEC-ILO (n.d)

reduce GHG emissions or encouraging customers to switch to alternative and more sustainably produced goods.

The areas of agriculture and industry addressed here are aggravators of the climate and ecological crises; their current practices require significant transformation – or elimination – if these sectors are to become sustainable. The argument can therefore be made that investment in and promotion of strategies that seek to act to neutralise the environmental impacts of these sectors, while being responsive to child rights, would contribute both to reducing climate change effects and eliminating violence against children. These joint actions would contribute to the pursuit of SDG 16, which seeks to ‘promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development’.

### 3.1 Child labour and greenhouse gas emissions in the production of low-cost garments, footwear and textiles

The global demand for low-cost garments and footwear – or ‘fast fashion’ – has an enormous impact on the environment and climate through carbon emissions, water consumption and pollution. The fashion industry is responsible for an estimated 10% of global carbon emissions – and this is projected to rise to a quarter of the global carbon footprint by 2050 (UNFCCC, 2018). Emissions occur at various stages of the supply chain: the production of raw materials, such as cotton and plastic; the production of textiles and garments; the transportation of garments; and the disposal of textiles or garments by landfill or incineration (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

The global consumer demand for cheap garments is met by the exploitation of workers in low- and middle-income countries. Such practices have been increasingly investigated by labour and human rights organisations. The use of child labour in the production of cotton, textiles and garments has been identified in a number of countries (US Department of Labor, 2018; see Box 6):

- **Cotton:** Argentina, Azerbaijan, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, China, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.
- **Textiles:** Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Vietnam.
- **Garments:** Argentina, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam.

The use of child labour at all three stages of production is a direct violation of children’s rights and a form of violence against children, as it brings children into contact with harmful chemicals and heavy machinery; such hazardous work is classed among the worst forms of labour. Child labour can also lead to or exacerbate children’s exposure to additional forms of violence and abuse, including sexual violence, in unsafe and unsupervised environments.

#### Box 6 Children facing violence in the cotton industry

Forced and child labour is common in the cotton industry. Children as young as five are recruited and sometimes forced to work for little or no pay in cotton fields or factories where raw cotton is processed. They may endure terrible conditions, including long hours and exposure to hazardous pesticides, as well as physical and sexual abuse. This type of hazardous labour in the cotton industry can seriously affect children’s physical and psychological development and can prevent them from completing their education. In Gujarat, India, a child working on a cotton seed farm receives less than \$0.70 per day and may work up to 12 hours – leaving them no time for education – and in extreme temperatures, putting their health at risk. In Uzbekistan, cotton harvesting by children was organised and controlled by the central government until 2012. Each fall, shortly after the start of the school year, the government ordered schools to close and school administrators to send children out to the fields, where they remained until the cotton harvest was brought in. Children were made to work from early in the morning to the evening without sufficient food. Exhaustion, heatstroke and malnutrition were common among child labourers. Physical and sexual abuse of child cotton labourers was also widely reported. Schoolchildren were given harvest quotas as large as 50kg of cotton per day and are beaten or threatened with bad grades or expulsion if they failed to meet their quota.

Sources: World Vision Australia (2013) and The Cotton Campaign (n.d.)

Because hazardous child labour is illegal, employers who have children in their workforce go to great lengths to hide it. As such, company-driven social compliance audits generally fail to detect child labour. Even in the formal sector, illegal workers and child workers are hidden

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away when auditors visit plants. Many workers do not have identity papers and have no official proof of their age. Given that some children seek work to alleviate poverty, they may lie about their age. Agents who recruit workers for spinning mills or garment factories have also been reported to provide factory management with falsified records about their recruits (SOMO, 2014).

Campaigns to introduce industry regulations and change consumer behaviour usually focus on either the environmental or the labour-rights aspects of fast fashion, but rarely on their combined impacts. There are some exceptions: the Clean Clothes Campaign, for example, advocates for labour rights at all stages of garment production, calling for transparency from individual retailers and brands as to how and by whom their clothes are made, while also highlighting environmental impacts. This strategy – raising consumer awareness in high-income countries – has had some success in reducing consumption of fast fashion. However, the potential to boycott non-compliant companies can be limited by practices such as ‘greenwashing’, where companies falsely suggest to consumers that they are doing more good than harm. Corporate social responsibility and other self-regulating or voluntary commitments to address the social impacts of the garment industry are regarded as another way for companies to protect their reputation without actually changing harmful practices (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2019). Government intervention through regulation, taxation and rewards for good practice has been limited, but could have a significant impact by making production and consumption standards compulsory rather than voluntary, as well as financially beneficial. There is also growing emphasis on the need to recognise the prevalence of SGBV and exploitation in the garment industry, and address the obstacles to justice faced by victims (Global Labor Justice, 2019). Multi-stakeholder initiatives can successfully bring action against these two problems. The Better Work programme, for example, a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank, is bringing

diverse groups together, including governments, trade unions, global brands and factory owners, to improve compliance with labour standards and promote decent work in supply chains in the garment industry (8.7 Alliance, 2019). This same coalition could be enlisted to strengthen environmental standards in the industry.

### **3.2 Child labour in agricultural production with high levels of deforestation**

There is an increasing global demand for palm oil for use in the production of food, hygiene and beauty products, as well as biofuel. Palm oil production contributes to climate change through carbon emissions caused by the deforestation carried out to clear land to grow oil palm trees. This also affects wildlife. Emissions from palm-based biofuels have three times the climate impact of fossil fuels (Malins, 2017). The main producers of palm oil – Indonesia and Malaysia – account for 85% of global supply (WWF, 2018a). Child labour is used in production in both countries (US Department of Labor, 2018). In Indonesia, children aged 8–14 are carrying out hazardous work and working without safety equipment on plantations where toxic pesticides are used, often carrying heavy sacks of palm fruit that can weigh from 12kg to 25kg (Amnesty International, 2016). Research in Indonesia found that 61% of children in hazardous labour were working in palm oil production; in 2015, the country produced more CO<sub>2</sub> than the United States (ibid).

Policy recommendations from a child rights perspective emphasise the need for mandatory transparency from palm oil companies and greater government regulation of the industry to ensure that workers’ rights are protected and labour standards upheld (Amnesty International, 2016). Environmental-based strategies around raising consumer awareness to reduce palm oil consumption should also consider alternative and safe sources of income for children and adults in these contexts (Abdul Ghani, 2019). However, stricter measures to enforce ‘sustainability’ certification need to be supported by governments and relevant multilateral agencies if they are to be credible, and to really

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have an impact on improving environmental and child labour practices. Research by Amnesty International 2016 found that, despite using child labour, some palm growers in Indonesia are certified as producing ‘sustainable’ palm oil under the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.<sup>3</sup> This indicates that the Roundtable’s scrutiny on participants needs to be tightened.

There are also concerns about the environmental and child rights impacts of cocoa production, particularly in Côte d’Ivoire, the world’s largest producer (40% of global supply). The deforestation rate in the country is one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa at 200,000 hectares annually. One-fifth of children aged 5–17 in Côte d’Ivoire are involved in some form of hazardous labour related to cocoa farming, including carrying heavy loads and selling, transporting or handling agro-chemical products (UNICEF, 2018).

The often informal and family-oriented nature of farming in Côte d’Ivoire, and farmers’ dependence on cocoa for their livelihoods, present major challenges to addressing the industry’s child rights and environmental impacts. UNICEF has suggested that focusing on the local and sector level, rather than interventions in the supply chain, would be most effective in addressing violence against children and child exploitation in the cocoa industry (ibid). These local initiatives need to begin with expanding livelihood options for children in cocoa-growing regions, and their families.

Cattle farming is another agricultural activity producing a high level of emissions. Total emissions from global livestock represent 14.5% of all GHG emissions linked to human activity. Cattle (raised for beef and milk, as well as for inedible outputs, such as manure and draft power) represent the majority (65%) of livestock sector emissions (Gerber et al., 2013). Livestock production contributes to 40% of the global value of agricultural output and supports the livelihoods and food security of almost a billion people. However, the problem of child labour in this sector is often ignored. In a number of countries, child labour is used

to cut costs, with children often involved in hazardous forms of labour where they are at risk of injury or illness. In Brazil and Ecuador there is evidence of children being used in the slaughter of animals (US Department of Labor, 2010). In countries such as Chad, Ethiopia and Lesotho – and particularly among certain ethnic groups – children are mostly involved in cattle herding. Depending on the conditions, herding, shepherding and handling livestock can still constitute hazardous work. Injuries from animals include being bitten, butted, jostled, stamped on, gored or trampled (FAO, 2013). Children are not generally provided with protective footwear or clothes (ibid).

Hazardous child labour in commercial farming needs to be curbed through regulation and enforcement. However, reducing child labour among these often-nomadic communities will require addressing the issue with an understanding of lifestyles that intertwine cultural values with production needs. A variety of interventions can be promoted that focus on the quality of life of children who are part of cattle herding communities, while simultaneously mitigating emissions. One of these is making extension and agricultural support services more widely available to increase the productive capacity of adult herders. Such services can direct communities towards better practices and technologies; promote the introduction of mitigation mechanisms and production-enhancement measures (Gerber et al., 2013); and build the capacity to implement them. Such moves could make this activity less labour-intensive, thus requiring less work by children.

Awareness of animal agriculture’s role in global warming is increasing among the public in high-income countries, with campaigns to change consumer behaviour and shift animal-based diets to reduce global demand for beef. This could result in an overall reduction in the sector, and therefore in GHG emissions. However, efforts from an environmental perspective to curb demand for and consumption of beef and cow-based products should take a child rights’ approach in the provision of alternative sources

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3 A global body set up in 2004 to clean up the palm oil sector after a series of environmental scandals. See [www.rspo.org/about](http://www.rspo.org/about).

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of income for children who choose to work or find it necessary to work in this industry, as well as for their families, as children may be exposed to equal or greater risks of violence and exploitation if the sector shrinks.

This is the case for all the GHG-intensive industries discussed above. Providing alternative livelihoods to workers in these industries requires regional, national and sector-based solutions. Using regulatory and consumer pressure to eliminate or transform industries that employ children – or even making them more environmentally and socially responsible – addresses both climate change and violence against children.

### 3.3 Child abuse in the tourism industry

The number of international tourists increased from 527 million in 1995 to 1.2 billion in 2014. Greater access to low-cost travel across all continents and to under-developed areas has both environmental and child rights impacts. Until 2019, tourism was estimated to be responsible for nearly 5% of global carbon emissions, of which three-quarters are transport-related, with the airline industry's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions between 2013 and 2018 increasing 70% faster than predicted by UN's International Civil Aviation Organization in 2018 (Graver et al. 2018; Topham, 2019). Prior to the slowdown in air-related travel resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the US, China and the European Union (EU) were responsible for 55% of all air travel-related carbon emissions. At 2019 rates, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, n.d.) forecast that, by 2050, the global tourism sector will generate an increase of 154% in energy consumption, 131% in GHG emissions, 152% in water consumption and 251% in solid waste disposal.

Tourism's economic benefits mean that governments often do not address the unregulated and unsustainable aspects of the sector. Travel and tourism workers are often exploited through low pay, long and unpredictable working hours and temporary contracts. These pressures increase the likelihood of parental stress and anger-related violence

against children, who are also vulnerable to abuse due to lack of supervision. In many countries, children engage in hazardous and exploitative labour to financially support their families (ECPAT, 2016).

The expansion in travel infrastructure has facilitated more opportunities for 'tourists' who seek sexual contact with children, resulting in a significant increase in child sexual exploitation (ibid). These 'tourists' take advantage of vulnerable children that some tour operators, hotels, leisure venues and other tourism-related establishments facilitate them access to (ibid.). In recent years South, Southeast and East Asia have seen significant growth in the tourism sector, and an increase in child sexual exploitation by both foreign and domestic tourists.

From a child rights perspective, better regulation of the travel and tourism sector is promoted through the development of legal protections, making private companies more accountable to protecting child rights, and raising public awareness of harmful practices.

Meanwhile, some countries are integrating eco-/sustainable tourism into their sustainable development plans through such lenses as SDGs 8 (economic growth and employment), 11 (consumption and production), 12 (cities and human settlements) and 14 (life below water) (UNWTO, 2017).

Integrating a child protection perspective into the development of sustainable tourism means that both issues can be addressed simultaneously. This would require a comprehensive sectoral plan that takes full account of tourism's current and future economic, social and environmental impacts. Such a plan would also have to address the needs of visitors, the industry itself, the environment and host communities, with a clear focus on the identification of risks for different groups and vulnerable children, as well as putting mechanisms in place to prevent and protect them from any form of violence and abuse.

A comprehensive plan for sustainable tourism would also need to take into account the socioeconomic implications for families whose livelihoods depend on tourism as well as ensuring that the necessary regulations and coordination mechanisms at the country-level are in place, in order to have effective preventive and protective

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measures. This can be done, for example, through targeted training for tourism workers participating in sustainable tourism initiatives, so that they have the capacity and the confidence to respond to child protection concerns appropriately. Another crucial recommendation is clear corporate policies for travel and tourism companies, to send an unambiguous signal of their refusal to be accessories to the exploitation

of children. Companies gain reputational benefits for being active players in upholding children's rights; promoting certification or recognition for tourism-linked companies to uphold environmental and child protection standards may be good for business, while contributing to protecting children, as seen in the example from Mexico in Box 7.

### **Box 7 A 'child-friendly' hotel industry in Mexico**

Working jointly with the government, UNICEF developed an action plan to transform Mexico's hotel industry into a competitive and sustainable sector using a child rights approach. It emphasises how creating a 'child-friendly' environment for employees will increase consumer appeal and improve worker performance. Hotel operators are encouraged to consider how environmental damage and resource scarcity caused by industry activities both reduce consumer appeal and raise child protection concerns, as well as the financial benefits for hotels that are able to demonstrate to customers that they are contributing to sustainable development both from an environmental and child rights perspective.

'Prevention of harm or negative impact to people, especially the most vulnerable, should not be seen as a burden but as an opportunity to strengthen competitiveness and sustainable development' (UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights during visit to Mexico).

Source: UNICEF (2017b)

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# 4 Children as agents of change

Chapters 2 and 3 looked at cases where children are victims of abuse and violence: either because the climate crisis puts them (and their families) in contexts of conflict or high levels of stress, or because they are engaged in carbon-intensive industries that use child labour. This chapter focuses on a different side of the equation, exploring the role of children and adolescents as agents of change in the fight against climate change, and how children can push for measures to reduce GHG emissions, raise awareness about climate change and help prevent and reduce the impacts of climate-related disasters on them and their communities.

## 4.1 Children-centred and children-led disaster risk reduction

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction recognises the important role of children in contributing to DRR, including climate change adaptation (CCA) (UNISDR, 2012). However, their contribution and potential are often not acknowledged by local governments and other agencies (World Vision International and Plan International, 2009) which do not integrate children's perspectives into national adaptation plans. Meanwhile, conferences on DRR/CCA that do acknowledge the voices of children and young people have been prone to presenting children's participation in a tokenistic way.

DRR plays a key role in helping communities, including children, to anticipate and adapt to longer-term impacts of climate change, but also protects the most vulnerable from harm resulting from, or occurring after, a disaster. DRR and CCA initiatives can also protect against the negative coping mechanisms that

children often turn to in order to support their families, such as leaving school to support their parents or siblings during times of disaster (Babugura, 2008). This is why it is crucial to ensure that interventions to tackle violence against children are systematically integrated into DRR plans.

There is, however, currently limited analysis documenting how initiatives to end violence against children have been embedded in DRR planning, particularly in countries prone to natural hazard-related disasters. Data is not systematically generated or captured to enable the rigorous documentation of such cases. This means that, while many DRR plans identify violence against children as one of the risks from disasters, it is difficult to find case studies where integrated approaches to violence against children have been deployed as part of a country's emergency preparedness and response planning, or where the results of such planning have been assessed. Collecting this type of data is important as it will contribute to generating evidence about how addressing violence against children in DRR in the short term can contribute to more peaceful and sustainable mitigation of the effects of climate change in the long run. This is an area where further specific research is necessary.

Children have their own knowledge of risks and their own experiences of disasters, meaning that their coping mechanisms and priorities can differ from their adult counterparts (Tanner et al., 2009a; Haynes, et al, 2010). In Nepal, children taking part in a participatory video project requested adequate infrastructure to secure safe passage to school during flooding or landslides, and livelihood support for their family to ensure that they could complete their

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schooling (Plush, 2009). In the Philippines, schoolchildren who had been taught about disasters through risk mapping and vulnerability assessment discovered that their school was in a high-risk landslide zone. They campaigned within the school, wrote letters and enlisted the support of the former state governor as well as the headmaster to hold a community-wide referendum (which included children) on the school's relocation. A new permanent school was opened in a safer location, demonstrating the power of children's voices and the importance of working with local networks and leaders who can champion agendas at different levels (Mitchell et al., 2009).

Children can identify problems, particularly human-induced and societal risks, that adults often overlook or underestimate (e.g. social exclusion or alcohol abuse) (Tanner et al., 2009b). Without a good understanding of children's priority needs before or after a disaster, risk management initiatives might overlook strategies that could better protect children against violence and other challenges – or, worse, they could even aggravate risks. Children can, and do, play an active role in reducing disaster risks, benefitting not just the children themselves but also their families, schools and wider communities (Hore et al., 2008; Manyena et al., 2008). It is therefore critical that children are involved in DRR. Child-centred/focused DRR (paying specific attention to children's needs in planning and interventions) and child-led DRR (engaging children in designing, implementing, communicating and advocating for interventions) can make significant positive contributions to children's resilience (Back et al., 2009; UNISDR and Plan International, 2012), including by reducing the risk of violence and improving the mechanisms they have to prevent or seek protection from violence (Bild and Ibrahim, 2013; Theytaz-Bergman, 2013). This aligns with concepts such as child survival, development, participation and protection as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A comprehensive review of child-centred and child-led disaster risk reduction (CCDRR) highlighted a number of positive strategies that best support children and their communities to

cope with disasters and protect themselves (Back et al., 2009). Children act as:

- analysers of risk and risk reduction activities
- designers and implementers of DRR interventions at community level
- communicators of risks and risk management options (especially to parents, adults or those outside the community)
- mobilisers of resources and action for community-based resilience
- constructors of social networks and capital.

Children are resilient and can adapt to environmental changes, thereby enhancing the adaptive capacity of households and communities (Bartlett, 2008; Manyena et al., 2008; Ronan et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2008). Through their involvement in CCDRR, children develop social skills including communication, negotiation, debate, cooperation, compromise and decision-making, as well as gaining self-esteem from having their views and ideas acknowledged (Hore et al., 2008). Newly acquired knowledge, awareness, experience and skills can support many other aspects of children's lives and futures, which may also help protect them from violence and harm. Through these spaces, children can contribute to their own protection from violence, and also identify protection risks faced by other children, which can then be identified and planned for in national adaptation plans.

## 4.2 Children and climate activism

Children and young people are often positioned – and now increasingly position themselves – as the generation who will be most impacted by climate change, and who will have to overcome the legacies of climate and environmental inaction (Cutter-Mackenzie and Rousell, 2018). Environmentally aware and empowered children and adolescents can be powerful agents of change because they bring new ways of thinking and planning across all sectors of society, from engaging in politics, changing consumption practices and establishing more environmentally friendly policies in their workplace, to becoming local, national and global activists. Child and youth environmental activists in the global

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South, at the forefront of the fight against climate change and environmental degradation, are holding their governments to account for failing to act on the climate crisis (Unigwe, 2019). Indigenous youth activists such as Nina Gualinga (WWF, 2018b) and Autumn Peltier (Nagle, 2019) have drawn international attention to the damage already inflicted on the environment and the disproportionate impact of climate change on indigenous communities. Where environmental activists on the frontline are increasingly targets of violence, child and youth activists may face heightened risks of violence. This is particularly true for indigenous girls, who are often already acutely exposed to violence (UNFPA, 2013).

Since 2018, European-led climate protest movements such as Fridays for Future, Youth Strike 4 Climate and Extinction Rebellion have spread across the world, with increasing numbers of young people joining disruptive non-violent protests, such as skipping school or taking to the streets. In this new global activism, the majority of protesters are adolescent girls. The movement was ignited by one adolescent girl, Greta Thunberg. From her first climate strike in August 2018, standing alone in front of the Swedish parliament building, Thunberg gained support from her parents and then the attention of the press and social media, until she became the figurehead of the Global Climate Strike that mobilised millions of children across the world just a year later. In a survey of more than 100 US climate strike organisers and nearly 200 participants in a protest in Washington in September 2019, 68% of organisers and 58% of participants identified as female (Kaplan, 2019).

The endless conspiracy theories and denial of facts. The lies, hate and bullying of children who communicate and act on the science. All because some adults – terrified of change – so desperately don't want to talk about the climate crisis. This is hope in disguise. We're winning (Greta Thunberg).

These young activists show the power that 'champions' can have in influencing the attitudes of others, in this case raising both children's and adults' awareness of the urgency of tackling climate change. However, the movement's high visibility has also been met with a significant backlash. Young climate activists have become targets for online abuse and face daily insults, coordinated attacks, harassing direct messages, doxing (the practice of retrieving, hacking and publishing someone's personal information), hacked accounts and even death threats.

Violence against children thus manifests in new forms of abuse: intimidation and harassment of young people active on social media. This phenomenon is recent and research on the prevalence of cyber-violence, or other forms of violence against young climate activists, is nascent. It is not clear who the main perpetrators of abuse are and, more worryingly, what the impacts are on adolescents' safety and mental health. This violence might exacerbate the psychological vulnerability of children who protest against political inaction. Their concern over the state of the environment and their prospects is the reason why they become activists in the first place, but when they speak out, they find themselves on the frontline of the backlash. There have been collective online responses to protect children, including the creation of hashtags such as #CreepyDeniers, #ClimateBrawl and #TeamMuskOx to flag problematic social media profiles and report accounts targeting children.

In addition to cyber-violence, activists who take to the streets are also at risk of being trapped in street riots and subject to police repression. In June 2019, tear gas was used by police in Paris to evacuate Extinction Rebellion activists occupying a bridge, illustrating the violence faced by climate activists, as well as other human rights defenders engaged in non-violent action (Le Monde, 2019).

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# 5 Policy debates and recommendations

Based on the analysis above, this concluding chapter reflects on some key policy debates around climate change and the (in)visibility of violence against children in those debates. Based on the evidence of links between climate change and violence against children, it also reflects on how to strengthen potential synergies for more holistic actions by donors, governments, the private sector, communities and children. It presents key recommendations for actions that work simultaneously to prevent violence against children while reducing risk factors that contribute to the climate crisis.

## 5.1 Greater policy attention to climate change as a factor contributing to violence against women and girls

Discussions under the UNFCCC are increasing attention to how climate change contributes to violence, particularly against women and girls.<sup>4</sup> SGBV has started to gain visibility in analyses within the framework for climate action as an essential component in the ongoing fight to eliminate gender-based violence. This framework points to the importance of greater involvement of women from diverse backgrounds (e.g. ethnicity, gender, disability status) in order to ensure that actions taken are informed by their needs and insights on solutions for climate action.

While the UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the Lima Work Programme on Gender

(LWGP) emphasise women's participation in local action and policy processes, they do not specifically mention the need to tackle violence,<sup>5</sup> particularly against children, as a consequence of climate change, nor do they refer specifically to the need for children's participation. Making this more explicit may garner greater policy support. It is important to recognise that men and boys are also affected by climate-related violence, and that effective measures to prevent violence and promote local responses must involve women, men, girls and boys.

## 5.2 The SDG agenda is about ensuring synergies to achieve interconnected goals

Violence against children and climate change are interlinked, and action is needed on both fronts. The evidence of the effects of climate change on children and adolescents shows that these impacts are not an issue for the distant future; they are affecting people's lives – present and future – today. Evidence about these links may improve decision-makers' investment and policy decisions by enabling them to work to maximise benefits for the most vulnerable, particularly children suffering from violence. For instance, investing in social protection mechanisms linked to DRR – what is being termed 'Adaptive Social Protection' – can help foster household resilience and mitigate against negative coping strategies.

DRR planning should also be informed by good practices in interventions to end violence;

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4 See <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-increases-the-risk-of-violence-against-women>.

5 See <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-gender-action-plan> and <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-lima-work-programme-on-gender>.

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methods such as improving caregiving practices to reduce corporal punishment and abuse and setting up adequate referral mechanisms can act on both problems. Six countries in the Sahel are currently implementing the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme, which works on these different areas synergistically. The programme has a social risk reduction component that includes working with parents and communities to prevent violence against children before disasters occur, with the intention of mitigating negative impacts on children at the point where disaster strikes (World Bank, 2018). Strengthening and broadening these types of interventions in countries where they are already in place, while also expanding the approach to other countries suffering from climate shocks, would help improve the situation for children and their families. Ensuring that data is collected and evidence generated specifically about these programmes' impacts on violence against children will help to build good practice for joint actions on these two important global issues. This is currently absent.

### **5.3 Make industries more accountable for harm to the environment and to children**

Regarding industries and sectors for which there is evidence of a 'double effect' on climate change and child exploitation, such as those discussed in chapter 3, decision-makers, activists and practitioners should foster collaborative approaches to apply pressure from different actors and vantage points, thereby increasing the possibility of impact. For example, child rights- and environmental justice-focused actors could collaborate on establishing corporate commitments for supply chain transparency. A combined campaign approach would enable consumers to make choices based on both issues, reducing consumer demand for products from companies that use harmful production processes. Combined investment and sharing of resources to address the interlinked issues of cheap consumables, child exploitation and environmental damage would also enable current efforts to move past corporate pledges and business 'certifications' and demand real

accountability for abusive practices at all points of production and consumption.

Ultimately, the decision to purchase these products or to opt for more expensive (but responsibly produced) alternatives is up to consumers. Nielsen (2015) found that 66% of global consumers report being willing to pay more for sustainable brands – an increase in 55% from 2014. The same study found that 73% of global millennials are willing to pay extra for sustainable offerings – up from 50% in 2014. Child rights and climate activists can join forces to make information more visible to consumers about the dual impacts in the production of certain consumables. This may also show other producers that there are economic gains to be had from transforming their production processes to minimise impacts on vulnerable populations, particularly children, as well as on the environment.

### **5.4 Alternatives for child labourers in these sectors**

In cases where violence against children is linked to exploitative labour in agriculture and industry, part of the policy focus should be on enforcing global treaties and national legislation to ban child labour, and to work across the production chain to guarantee that children are not suffering from violence and exploitation. However, in addition to such approaches, policy makers must recognise the needs of poor households whose children are involved in exploitative labour, and should consider measures that support income-generating alternatives for adult caregivers. For example, requiring employers to provide a 'living wage' to workers and expanding effective child- and gender-sensitive social protection would help to avoid the need for children to supplement their family's income and would also relieve parental stress, which can be a driver of violence against children. Safe, non-exploitative and age-appropriate work opportunities for children, such as planting family gardens or selling products in local markets, should also be considered, since losing income-earning options may lead children towards other unsafe sources of income, putting them at equal or greater risk of violence or exploitation.

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## 5.5 Address existing drivers of violence when building resilience

Reducing violence against children that is caused or exacerbated by the effects of climate change means addressing the existing drivers of violence while building resilience. Building resilience in parents can simultaneously build resilience in children and help reduce the risk of violence against children. Investments to strengthen and diversify livelihood opportunities through the development of life skills, information on how to plan for sustainable income-generating activities and strengthening access to micro-credit should contribute to stabilising the situation of children and their families. Complementing these investments with broader actions to foster women's empowerment can reduce the need for communities to relocate during some types of disaster. It is necessary to explicitly include the promotion of interventions to prevent violence against children in these plans, particularly those that can tackle the root causes of violence embedded in adverse social norms, lack of protective mechanisms, dearth of supportive mental health services for parents (particularly during disasters) and negative parenting practices.

## 5.6 Protect children's and adolescents' voices

Children and adolescents have the right to express themselves – indeed, it is vital that their voices are heard on the issue of climate change – and collective action must be taken to protect that right. Children and adolescents are raising awareness about the climate crisis and bringing attention to the actions that governments, companies, international agencies and ordinary citizens must take to prevent climate change from reaching an irreversible 'tipping point'. Children are both victims and crucial agents of change in the fight against global warming. As such, there should be greater investment by donors and governments in building child participation structures that promote informed activism by children and adolescents. There should also be increased attention to the safeguards necessary to protect children who are bullied because of their climate activism.

Youth has played an enormous role, a fantastic role, throughout this year in order to raise awareness, in order to impress the need to take action urgently ... I want to recognise all of you, all of your voices. Each individual voice counts in making this possible (Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, speaking at COP 25).

## 5.7 Promote resilience and preparedness to respond to violence in contexts of climate change

Children and young people are able to identify risks that are often invisible to adults, and they have tools and innovative ideas that are responsive to their own specific needs. It is important to involve youth in environmental activism at the local level; it is also important to promote youth group discussions to identify cases of violence and their causes, since young people can help identify ways to tackle violence in their community. Promoting children's active participation in identifying risks to their well-being that may result from climate shocks at the local level, as well as in developing prevention and response strategies, are effective ways to achieve more sustainable solutions. Disaster risk preparedness should include a more comprehensive definition of risks, including those associated with violence against children, to ensure that mechanisms are in place to prevent shocks, and respond to them when they occur.

## 5.8 Promote local participation and listen to the voices of those affected

Humanitarian actors need to listen more carefully to the voices of people affected by climate shocks and related displacement. Communities may already be responding to violence and require specific support, rather than receiving models of attention that are not useful for their situation and contexts. In this sense, support should enhance local solutions and promote the involvement of children and

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adolescents as part of the solution, rather than undermining the power and processes of local actors.

## 5.9 Education as key to tackling the climate crisis

Investment in more and better education is crucial to tackle the climate crisis. Providing children with education that helps them get better jobs than their parents, that teaches them to protect themselves from violence and to promote peace, and that teaches them how to be a good citizen of the planet and protect it from climate impacts can be a winning strategy on multiple fronts. It is increasingly important to invest in climate and environmental education to equip a new generation with the knowledge, awareness and skills needed to tackle climate change and other environmental challenges. There has been a growing movement within the UNFCCC, expressed during COP 25, to push for a critical mass of countries to commit to the environmental and climate education agenda.<sup>6</sup> This has the potential to bring significant returns for children and the environment, today and in the future.

## 5.10 More data and research on the links between climate change and violence against children

More systematic quantitative and qualitative data that enables an analysis of how violence against children is affected by climate change is needed. This includes participatory research with children and youth to understand the issue from their perspective. Drawing on the analytical framework prepared for this report, it is possible to identify areas for further research. More research that unpacks the direct and indirect causes and effects of violence against children resulting from climate change will strengthen policy engagement to promote synergies between actions on violence against children and climate change in the context of the SDGs. There is a need for data and more rigorous documentation of case studies and experiences where DRR interventions have incorporated explicit planning to end violence against children. Where possible, it would be important to document the results of experiences that combine actions to cope with natural hazard-related disasters with those that explicitly seek to prevent violence against children.

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/news/call-for-all-countries-to-commit-to-climate-education-by-cop26>.

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