

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS YOU TOO

As we saw in the first lesson, the climate is a very complex matter, its components act and feed on each other like a network where, when one element changes, a long chain of changes is triggered, which in turn cause other effects and so on...

Global warming not only increases temperature, but **also contributes to increasing poverty**, because its effects especially affect those who least contributed to creating the problem, such as children and teenagers, who have inherited a crisis caused by the generations before them.

BUT WHY ARE CHILDREN MORE HELPLESS AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE?

Those who study this phenomenon think that there are mainly three reasons:

1. **Those that concern humanity and our living in communities (social)**, because the immediate effects of global warming affect those who are not responsible for the problem the most: above all the poor, young people and children.
2. **Reasons concerning the availability of money (economic)**: for example, living in old houses, perhaps without clean water and without adequate nutrition, represents an even more serious risk today, precisely because of the simultaneous presence of extreme climatic phenomena.
3. **Linked to how the body of the little ones is made (biological)**: especially in the first years of life children get sick more easily and recover more slowly, and this is a greater problem if climatic phenomena lead to situations with contaminated water and lack of hygiene.

Many children are already facing climate risks such as cyclones, floods and extreme temperatures, which affect their chances of survival and well-being. Some very dangerous **diseases** for children are also linked to climate change, as they tend to intensify with heat and drought, such as cholera, diarrhea, dengue fever and malaria.

Children are more in danger, especially up to the age of 4, because their body is not yet «trained» enough to regulate its own temperature and they are at a higher risk of dehydration than adults.

The climate crisis also brings along problems related to the **unavailability of food** (think of damaged crops in countries where one lives mainly from agriculture), or to hygiene in the event of a **decrease in the availability of water**. The lack of adequate nutrition and clean water during childhood can lead to serious problems in the growth of children



CHILDREN IN THE CITY

Cities are real "heat islands": they consume a lot of energy and emit a lot of CO₂ (over 70% of total emissions), they retain heat more than a forest or any natural area, something that is partially due to the way in which they are built. It is for this reason that children who live in cities may be more affected by the effects of climate change, especially those who live in suburban neighborhoods, often with little greenery, lots of buildings and lots of cars



MIGRATING BECAUSE OF THE CLIMATE

The likelihood of having to migrate due to causes related to natural disasters has doubled since the 1970s. Weather-related threats now account for 87% of all disaster-related displacements. The impact of climate change and the growing concentration of populations in areas prone to storms and floods mean that more and more people are at risk of having to relocate (see lesson "Climate injustices").

WHAT SHOULD ADULTS DO TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENSURE THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES?

Looking at the world from the point of view of girls and boys means protecting the planet that adults will leave as a legacy and being able to guarantee fair access to education, combating inequalities, poverty, discrimination and social disadvantage.

Here is what adults should do:

- **ensure the environmental education of the little ones** because everyone's behavior must change;
- **listen to young people more**, provide places and opportunities that allow them to express themselves and facilitate their active participation in society
- **intervene on everything that generates imbalances**, injustices and inequalities between generations;
- **support families** to ensure the well-being of children;
- **foster the encounter and support between generations and between families.**



Amidst all the challenges we are facing, few things have remained constant: the unwavering resilience, energy and ingenuity of young people around the world.

Sarah Anyang Agbor, AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology

Young people are the agents of change who are building a better tomorrow together with us today. We need to listen to them; we need to give them the opportunity to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships



When children and young people speak, the world should listen.

Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director

SOURCES

- IDMC (2019), *Disaster displacement: a global review (2008-2018)*
- Save the Children (2019), *Il tempo dei bambini – Atlante dell'infanzia a rischio 2019*
- UNICEF (2020), *Mortalità infantile ancora in calo nel mondo, ma il COVID minaccia i progressi*
- UNICEF (2019), *Ogni diritto per ogni bambino*
- UNICEF (2011), *L'impatto dei cambiamenti climatici sui bambini: l'UNICEF alla Conferenza ONU di Durban*



STORIES OF (in)NATURAL CALAMITIES



What happens when a family's home is affected by events such as fires or flood? What changes, especially in the lives of children?

With this activity you will be able to reflect on these questions and try to imagine the future together.



WHERE

In the classroom.

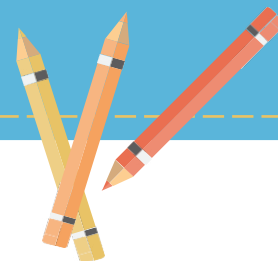


HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

A meeting of at least two hours, or two separate meetings.

WHAT DO I NEED?

- A printout of the stories attached
- Drawing paper
- Crayons/markers/tempera



HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Read the two stories attached to class. If you want, to make the narration more engaging, you can accompany it with the projection of photos of the context of the phenomena described and of the places where the stories are set.

Divide the class into two groups and assign each group one of the two stories. Each group will have to illustrate different aspects of the assigned story and imagine a possible ending. Encourage the children to think about the following aspects to make their drawings: how do you imagine the house of the people in the story before the extreme weather phenomenon? And after the event? And the rest of the neighbourhood/city (schools, hospitals...)? Will anything change in the work of the parents of the children? Who can help these families? Will they be able to continue living in their country? Will the children be able to continue going to school? What will they be able to do when they grow up?

The drawings can therefore, for example, represent: the house before and after the adverse event, the city/town before and after the phenomenon and particular buildings such as schools, the phenomenon itself, the children in the story and their families, the emergency aid, children and their families immediately after the event and a few years after the event. Within the group, each child decides which aspect to focus on.

Save the last half hour for sharing children's drawings and closing questions. If necessary, feedback and final reflection can be done in a second meeting in order to leave time for the children to finish the drawings at home.

IN CONCLUSION

After sharing the drawings of the two groups you can make posters, one for each story. Then observe them together and try to answer these questions with the children:

1. Do you notice any differences between the stories of the two groups? If yes, which ones?
Above all, think about the differences between the two countries in which the stories are set
2. How would you feel if you were those children, the protagonists of the stories?

ANNEX

THE HOME OF A CALIFORNIA FAMILY AFFECTED BY A FIRE

One morning, 5-year-old Frank was awakened by the sound of the fire alarm. Frank Recounts: "I woke up and saw the fire at the foot of the bed." Frank immediately yelled at his 9-year-old brother Ron, "There's a fire!" The two brothers jumped out of bed and ran to their parents' room to warn them

Ron and Frank's mom ran into the bedroom and found a pillow on fire; shortly after the fire she invaded the whole room. She yelled at everyone: "Get out of the house immediately!". She grabbed their newborn brother, dad, and two older children and they all ran out of the house.

"We just stood there, stunned, watching our house burn and collapse to the ground within minutes," said Ron's mom, "Other houses in the neighborhood were also engulfed in flames."

As they stood outside in the dark, the children started to feel cold and everyone noticed they were wearing only pajamas, not even a pair of shoes. "At that point I realized that we were left without a roof", says the father, "without a house, clothes or food: we had nothing left".

Then, out of nowhere, a Red Cross van appeared – what a relief to see them! ...

What happened next?

THE HOUSE OF A FAMILY FROM MOZAMBIQUE HIT BY A CYCLONE

In the night between 25 and 26 April 2019, the island of Ibo on which 10-year-old Diara lives was hit by tropical cyclone Kenneth, the strongest ever recorded in this area. The rain had already started in the afternoon and, with her family (mom, dad and 3 younger siblings), Diara had taken refuge in their home. Outside, strong winds peaking up to 180 km/h and incessant rains had blown down the trees. Then at some point the roof of the house flew off!

"It was a very long night and the rain continued for days: we pulled ourselves together with our neighbors... many other families saw their houses unroofed", said Diara's mother, "When the rains and the wind started to give us a break the whole village had changed, even the school where Diara studies suffered serious damage".

"We immediately got busy to keep our families safe", says the father, "fortunately several volunteers and associations helped us..."

What happened next?

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