

WE STAND
AS ONE



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND CLIMATE CHANGE





ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report includes voices from hundreds of young people around the world and carries their messages about how climate change affects them, the action necessary to fix it and their right to be part of the solution. Much of this report was written by children and young people based on consultations conducted by them.

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This report is for Finn Evenhuis Vines, born August 2015. May your world be cooler than your dad's.

**“I CARE ABOUT MY FUTURE
AND MY FRIENDS’ FUTURES.”**

Ektemel, Year 10, Parramatta, Sydney



Damaged buildings and burning debris after Typhoon Haiyan in Santo Niño village, Tanauan, Leyte, the Philippines

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A teacher and student prepare to plant trees as part of their lesson on climate change in Myanmar.

FOREWORD

By Imogen Morrissey, 21
Plan International Youth Ambassador in Australia

I know that I speak on behalf of many young Australians when I say that I am confused and frustrated. Why does our government refuse to take climate change seriously when, as a country, we have the capacity to make a difference.

Young people are rarely invited to have their voice heard on things that matter. We are described as having potential, as though our power to bring about change lies dormant. We are proclaimed as being our world's future, as though we don't exist in the present. We are handed platitudes in exchange for our patience. But climate change won't wait for our generation to grow up and take action. Change needs to happen now and we *will* have a say in what our current and future world looks like.

In May 2015, I travelled to the Philippines with Plan International Australia to consult with children and young people whose lives have been affected by climate change.

Before getting involved with Plan International and speaking with children and youth in the Philippines, I was focused on what my own country was doing to respond to our environmental crisis. I was aware climate change was affecting the rest of the world, but I had never given much thought to who exactly might be most affected. Listening to the children and young people in the Philippines, I learned their experiences of climate change have made them scared of climate-related disaster in the present and frightened about the future. I learned that we are all vulnerable to displacement, disease, reduced living standards and loss of life because of our changing climate, but children and young people in developing countries are significantly more at risk.

As Youth Ambassadors for Plan International Australia, this year we decided to focus on climate change and its impact on children and young people in developing countries. After conducting consultations with youth across Australia, with the help of Oaktree and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, it became apparent that climate change isn't just a priority issue for us, but for pretty much everyone else our age too.

Unsurprisingly, we, the collective of Australian youth, have opinions. Lots of opinions. And they all come down to one thing: the Australian Government is not doing enough.

Through talking to young Australians, we also discovered they have a very good idea about just how little the Australian Government is doing to combat climate change, especially in comparison to the rest of world.

Australian youth demand serious investment in renewable energy and an immediate shift away from activities that create carbon pollution and destroy our nation's natural environment. They want our Government to take action not just to protect our future but the futures of children and young people in developing countries at most risk from the impacts of a changing climate.

“THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS NOT DOING ENOUGH.”

Our world is breaking. Why won't you fix it? Mines are scarring our earth's skin and our world is suffocating from greenhouse gases. Pollution creates sores on our earth's body and the planet is catching fever. Until we respond to this crisis, we will go down as the worst doctors ever. Weren't we taught that prevention is better than cure?

I encourage you to read this report to find out what the young people of Australia and developing countries really think about climate change *and* what they want done about it. They have a right to be heard. After all, their future is in your hands.

“OUR WORLD IS BREAKING. WHY WON'T YOU FIX IT?”

By Marinel Ubaldo, 21
Climate Change Activist in the Philippines

Being a young person in the Philippines is not that easy. What will happen tomorrow is unpredictable because of climate change. We have to live with disasters influenced by climate change every day.

During these disasters, children and youth are the most vulnerable to being harmed. We are experiencing the most tragedy, even though we are contributing just a small amount of the greenhouse gases that cause the problem.

I feel a sense of urgency to take action – I know that our children will suffer more if we don't act now. The future of the next generation will depend on the actions that we take today. I am not saying this for my own sake but for the sake of my generation and the coming generations.

The voices of youth are not being heard because of a lack of opportunity. While it's often said that youth are the hope of the nation, how can we be a hope if the nation doesn't give us the opportunity to speak out on the issues that matters to us? Because climate change is impacting on our education, health and safety, we have a right to be heard.

“CLIMATE CHANGE IS EVERYBODY'S CONCERN.”

It's not too late to take action to lessen the impacts of climate change but if we don't change our lifestyles and mindsets, climate change will continue to grow and endanger our world.

When my community tries to replace what has been lost during the last disaster and prepare to weather the next storm, another comes and undoes our work. Our contribution to change is just a drop in a rising ocean. Yet, developed countries can do something to address this problem because of their wealth and power but refuse.



Imogen and Marinel in Eastern Samar in the Philippines.

Climate change is everybody's concern. What concerns everyone can only be resolved by everyone. But how can we lessen the impact of climate change when those countries who are most responsible for the increasing greenhouse gases don't take real action to address the problem?

This report shows that young people in developing countries like the Philippines, want young people and governments in developed nations like Australia to take the action necessary to mitigate human-made climate change. The people of Australia must make their government take action because my people are paying the price for your contribution to global warming.

As a major contributor to the greenhouse gases, the actions Australia decides to take to address climate change will have an impact on the world, for good or bad. Please act for the sake of those who are already bearing the brunt of dangerous climate change, children and young people in developing nations like mine.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Our Australian consultation findings: children and young people want action now

Our youth-led climate consultations with 435 Australian youth and children revealed:

- Climate change is a very important issue for young Australian people and children.
- Ninety per cent of participants said climate change was an important issue for them.
- Ninety-one per cent did not believe the Australian Government was doing enough to address climate change.

Young Australians want the Government to prioritise climate change in three ways. Firstly, they want to adopt renewable energy technology like solar and wind to be promoted. Secondly, they want the Government to take a lead on the international stage and set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for Australia necessary to tackle human-made climate change. Finally, they want the environment to come well before profits.

Our Australian consultations revealed that young people care about climate change because it is unfair to the world's poorest who are most at risk from the impacts of climate change. They told us as a wealthy nation that has profited from carbon polluting industry, we can afford to do more to mitigate and adapt to climate change and help other poorer countries do the same. Instead of lagging behind other developed countries to take action on climate change, young Australians want our government to take the lead in protecting our environment for future generations.



Ben, Australia
"We have a planet and it is our home. I don't want my home to be damaged, unhealthy and weak."

1.2. Our consultation findings from the Philippines, Vietnam and Nepal: children and young people in developing nations want us to do our fair share

Young people and children in the Philippines told us they are already experiencing the effects of our changing climate – including drought, unprecedented intense heat and increasingly frequent typhoons.

Youth in the Philippines said Australian children must take action and unite through social media to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change, lobby their government and big-polluting business. Children and youth from Nepal and the Philippines also counselled young people in Australia to take the lead in adopting clean technologies, using less fossil fuels and planting new trees to mitigate climate change.

Young people and children from the Philippines, Vietnam and Nepal told us they want the Australian Government to use its wealth and power to take action on climate change and secure children's future through reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, adopting clean energy and supporting young people and listening to their opinions about this issue.



Tirtha, 16, Nepal
"Stop climate change, ensure child right.."



HV Bai, 12, Vietnam
"To the Australian youth, please join me in sharing to the world how climate change has brought negative impacts on our lives."

1.3. Climate change is about our human rights

The facts: climate change and children

- Of the estimated more than 150,000 deaths every year attributable to climate change early last decade, an estimated almost 90 per cent were children.¹
- Climate change is increasing the occurrence of extreme weather and natural disasters. When disaster strikes, children are at higher risk of injury or death than most adults because of their smaller size and reliance on older people for their survival.²
- Climate change is making it harder for communities to access clean drinking water³ resulting an increase in children dying from diarrhoea.⁴
- Climate change and drought is driving an increase in global food shortages which are set to dramatically increase the number of children not getting enough to eat.⁵
- When climate-related disasters interrupt children and young people's schooling, many never return to complete their education, especially girls.⁶
- Children and young people, forced to migrate because of a changing climate, face an increased risk of being exposed to conflict, hunger, or being forced into working in hazardous industries.⁷

Children and young people are much more than just the human rights victims of climate change – they have the **right and ability** to be part of the solution and participate in decision-making about climate change at a local, national and international level. In fact, from the Philippines to Australia, they are already taking bold action to lobby for action and make their communities more resilient to our changing climate.

1.4. Our call to action on climate change

"We, the young people of Australia, call on the Australian Government to take the lead to stop climate change by:

- Doing our part to keep temperature rise less than 2 per cent above pre-industrial levels by reducing domestic emissions by at least 40 per cent below 2000 levels by 2025, 60 per cent by 2030 and progress towards zero net emissions by 2050.
- Increasing investment in renewable energy in Australia and fund access to affordable renewable energy across the developing world.
- Embedding learning about Australia's contribution to climate change in the national curriculum, including the impacts on the poorest countries, and conducting nationwide annual youth consultations about what young people want the government to do to address climate change.
- Addressing the causes and impacts of climate change in the poorest countries by contributing \$400 million in 2016/17, including through the Green Climate Fund (this must be new and additional to Australia's existing aid commitments)."



Wena, 12, the Philippines
"Please do something to prevent climate change."

2. INTRODUCTION: THE SCHOOL THAT MOVED

After a landslide tragically killed 1,100 people in 2006 in the Philippines town of Guinsangon in Southern Leyte, the Philippines Government ordered a study which found the Santa Paz National High School and its 379 students were directly in the path of a potential future landslide. The Department of Education recommended that the school be moved.

There was fierce opposition from some sections of the community, who argued that “vague warnings” of a future disaster were not enough to warrant action. Local storeowners, who sold snacks to the school students, argued that a move would be bad for their business.

When the Santa Paz students saw that the adults in their community were not making decisions to keep their school safe, they took action. Supported by Plan International, they started a letter writing campaign to the local school superintendent which led to a community-wide referendum. When the students won, the school was relocated to a nearby safe area.

Marjon, then a 16-year-old student, said, “With the new school I no longer worry when there is heavy rain. I can concentrate on my studies. The petition campaign paid off well. It made us more aware of our rights to be heard and our power to make change.”

Our climate is changing, putting all children’s lives in the pathway of disaster, especially those living in poverty in the least developed nations.

Just like the story of the moving school, in this report children and young people voice their concerns about dangerous climate change and make the case for why they should be part of the solution to this global threat. In fact, children and young people are already powerful agents of change – contributing to successful adaptation and risk reduction within their communities and influencing climate change decision-making.

“THE PETITION CAMPAIGN PAID OFF WELL. IT MADE US MORE AWARE OF OUR RIGHTS TO BE HEARD AND OUR POWER TO MAKE CHANGE.”

As we approach Conference of the Parties meeting in Paris (COP 21) this December, the message of children and young people involved in this report is clear. It is unacceptable that children in the poorest nations, who have contributed the least to climate change, are most at risk. Instead, they demand that Western nations like Australia, which have become rich from the big polluting industries chiefly responsible for climate change, do the most to stop it.

Unless the world unites to take the necessary action, we will deny children’s right to a sustainable future and they will inherit an environment which increasingly threatens their development and survival.

2.1 Climate change: what is it, who is responsible and why 2015 matters

2.1.1 What is climate change and global warming?

Human activity like industry, power generation, land clearing and transport creates greenhouse gases (including carbon dioxide) at higher levels than our planet can absorb. As a consequence, the concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere is increasing, resulting in less energy escaping our atmosphere, which in turn causes average temperatures around the globe to rise. Rising temperature caused by human activity is commonly referred to as ‘anthropogenic’ climate change, meaning climate change that is caused by humans rather than natural variations in our climate, such as changes in solar activity.⁸ We are already experiencing the impacts of anthropogenic climate change. As our climate grows hotter, global weather patterns are becoming more extreme driving an increase in catastrophic floods, droughts, famine, rising sea levels and the spread of disease.⁹

2.1.2 What needs to happen?

Globally, there is strong scientific consensus that the world must act quickly to limit climate change to 2°C above pre-industrial levels if we are to avoid the most grave and irreversible consequences for humanity.¹⁰ These consequences include global food and clean water shortages caused by drought and flood, forced migration of tens of millions of people and mass extinction of animals.

Limiting warming to below 2°C isn’t easy – it requires significant worldwide action: global net emissions need to be reduced by 40 to 70 per cent by 2050 compared to 2010 levels, and fall to nearly zero by the end of the century,¹¹ and 60 to 80 per cent of the world’s current coal reserves need to be left in the ground.¹²

Australia’s Climate Change Authority has recently recommended that Australia adopt a range of 40 to 60 per cent reductions from the year 2000’s levels by 2030.¹² The Australian Government’s target is not high enough. In August 2015 it announced an emissions reduction target of only 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030¹⁴ – this is equivalent to a target of 19 to 22 per cent below 2000’s levels.¹⁵ Unless we commit to a higher target, Australia risks lagging behind the rest of the developed world on climate action.

Ending our dependence on fossil fuels and reducing our global greenhouse gas emissions (also called, mitigation) will not be easy and requires the cooperation of all countries to

shift to clean sources of power. We all have a responsibility to reduce climate pollution but wealthy, high-polluting nations like Australia should do more to cut emissions by adopting renewable power sources and assisting other poorer nations do the same. While developed countries like Australia have profited the most from big-polluting industries, children and young people in developing nations are most at risk if we don’t take action now. As a wealthy nation blessed with a thriving renewables industry and ample sources of wind, sun and water to produce clean energy, Australia can afford to do more to help ourselves and others.¹⁶

2.1.3 Why this year (and every year after) matters

To reduce greenhouse gas concentrations in our atmosphere and stop dangerous anthropogenic climate change, the world must act as one. This year, the world’s leaders will meet to forge a new international agreement on climate change at the annual Conference of the Parties meeting in Paris (COP 21). The Conference of Parties is the highest decision-making body of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), the current international treaty to address climate change.

The new agreement enacted at COP 21 will be an important step in determining the world’s blueprint to tackle climate change. For the agreement to be successful, it must secure “ambitious and equitable commitments from countries so that they will move away from heavily polluting fuels such as coal and move quickly towards renewable energy.”¹⁷

In the lead up to COP 21, countries like Australia have already announced their national climate mitigation targets and will make financial commitments to support climate change adaptation in developing nations through the Green Climate Fund (this global fund, set up under the UNFCCC, redistributes money from the developed to the developing world, in order to help developing countries adapt to and counter climate change).¹⁸

Under the Copenhagen Accord and Cancun Agreements, developed countries including Australia, promised to give their fair share of climate finance to developing countries and pledged “US\$100 billion per year by 2020.”¹⁹ Academics from the Australian National University have concluded that for Australia to fund its fair share of this global commitment – based on Australia’s wealth and greenhouse gas emissions – it should finance “around 2.4 per cent, or \$2.4 billion a year by 2020.”²⁰ It is likely Australia will make a pledge about what it will finance at COP 21.

Right: HT Xon, 11, Vietnam:

“To the Australian youth: you and I, we together can share with the world how climate change has brought negative impacts on our lives.”

2.1.4 Climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals

This year, world leaders came together in New York in September to agree on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the next set of global goals to tackle global poverty.

While the SDGs recognise that the UNFCCC is the paramount intergovernmental forum for negotiating a global response to climate change, the SDGs will complement any agreement reached in Paris this year.

SDG Goal 13 explicitly commits all member states to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts” through:

- strengthening all countries' resilience and capacity to adapt to climate-related hazards and natural disasters.
- integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning.
- improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.
- developed country Parties to the UNFCCC implement their commitment to jointly mobilise US\$100 billion annually by 2020 to help developing countries respond to climate change and fully operationalise the Green Climate Fund through its capitalisation as soon as possible.
- promoting mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalised communities.



3. THIS IS WHAT WE THINK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

3.1 Consultation findings from Australia

3.1.1 About our consultations in Australia

Plan International Australia developed a consultation process to find out what young Australians really think about this issue. In partnership with Oaktree and The AYCC we have consulted with more than 435 young Australians to find out how they feel about climate change, and what they want the Australian Government to do to take responsibility for the impact our emissions are having on children and young people both here in Australia and in developing countries.

For more information about these consultations see Appendix 1 at the end of this report.

3.1.2 This is what we think about climate change

Young people believe that climate change is a very important issue.

Ninety per cent of participants stated climate change was an important for issue for them (67 per cent said it was very important, 23 per cent said it was important, 6 per cent were not sure and only 4 per cent believed the Government was doing enough).

Most of the young people we consulted felt climate change is so important it needs to be addressed immediately through concerted action by the Australian Government.

We want action!

Ninety per cent of participants said the Australian Government is not doing enough to tackle climate change. As Alex in Year 11 recognised, "Individuals can do little things [but] governments can enact big policy changes that have a bigger impact." Although many participants recognised the individuals also have a role to play in stopping climate change. Sarmad, 24, said, "everyone is responsible. No one is exempt"

Many consultation participants also expressed a strong view the Australian government should be doing more, because Australia has the capacity, the resources and the wealth to do more of the heavy lifting to stop climate change.

"We are the sunniest and windiest country on Earth, but we're not taking advantage of this."
George, Year 11

We want Australia to take the lead in tackling climate change globally

The young people we consulted said not only that the Australian government should do more, but that the Australian government should take the lead on addressing climate change on the global stage. This was both because Australia is a developed wealthy nation, but also, as Ken from Year 9 says, "we are one of the highest per-capita emitters, we need to set an example to other countries to reduce emissions." Many participants said they wanted Australia to take the lead by setting stronger domestic emission reduction targets and penalising big polluting companies.

"We need to set stronger emission targets. Penalising companies that pollute works to reduce our impact."
Alex, Year 11

Many consultation participants also noted that instead of leading on climate action, Australia was currently lagging behind most other developed nations.

3.1.3 Our priorities for action by the Australian Government

Our participants were very clear about their priorities for actions they want taken to address climate change. We based our call to action (see section 6) on what they told us.

Our number one priority: Australia must invest in clean energy

Consultation participants want the Australian government to invest in clean energy like wind and solar power (30 per cent of all votes cast).

Our number two priority: the Australian Government must take the lead

The next highest priority for our consultation participants was for the Australian Government to take a lead in stopping climate change through setting tough emissions targets (20 per cent of all votes cast).

Our number three priority: the Australian Government must stop putting profits above the environment

In our consultations, participants repeatedly stressed people and the environment are more important than the profits of private companies whose business depends on emitting greenhouse gases (19 per cent of all votes cast).

3.1.4 This is why we care about climate change

Climate change is unfair to the world's poorest – we should do our bit to help

Our consultations revealed many young Australians are worried about the effects that climate change is already having locally and globally, and understand that it's not just an environmental issue, but a humanitarian one. "We need to combat climate change itself, but we also need think about the effects it's already having on people. Foreign aid is important for this." Patrick, Year 11. There was an understanding among many participants that it is often people in developing countries who suffer the most from the impacts of climate change.

"WE ARE THE SUNNIEST AND WINDIEST COUNTRY ON EARTH, BUT WE'RE NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THIS"

George, Year 11

We are all connected

Young Australians feel connected to young people around the world around the issue of climate change. Kevin Year 10 said, "We are all linked. People are more important than money."

In our consultations, participants recognised that because climate change affects everyone on the planet, we all must share responsibility for finding the solution. Hannah, Year 10, also said "Climate change affects everyone. No amount of money can compensate for some losses, so we should prevent them."

3.1.5 Climate change is about our future

Participants sent a clear message that climate change is important because it is about their future. Many said they wanted Australia to take climate action necessary to protect our environment for future generations and to safeguard the future of all people, particularly those living in developing nations.

"We need a home for future generations."
Emma, 15

"A healthy environment = healthy future! It's our job to ensure future generations enjoy our world like we have."

Alex, 16

"I want future humans and animals to live happily and safely."

Emma, 16

3.1.6 We need more information

Through these consultations, we found that some young people felt that they did not have a great understanding of climate change, or that they were confused about the sometimes conflicting information they received and wanted to know more about the facts. Many of those who knew about the effects of climate change said that educating young people about climate change is vital, as they feel that being armed with the facts makes it more likely that young people will think it is a priority issue and want to take action.

"EDUCATION IS VITAL"

Monique, 19

Our consultations in Australia.

Below: Monique, Australia
"Education regarding climate change is the first step in the right direction."



3.2 What do children and young people in developing nations think?

Plan International consulted with young people in the Philippines, Vietnam and Nepal to find out what children and young people in developing nations think about climate change and the action they want big-polluting developed countries like Australia to take.

3.2.1. MY CONSULTATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

by Plan Youth Ambassador Imogen Morrissey



Imogen interviewing Marinel in Easter Samar, the Philippines.

In May 2015, I travelled to the Philippines equipped with a camera, a notebook, and a list of questions. I set out to consult with children and young people from across the Philippines, all with three things in common:

- They had all experienced, first-hand, the effects of the world's rapidly changing climate.
- They were all educated, a little or a lot, on climate change.
- They were all doing something to address climate change.

I ran consultations with groups of four to 15 children and young people, aged between 12 and 14 years old. At every site I visited, I also conducted at least one interview with a young person who was particularly passionate about taking action on climate change (several of these one-on-one interviews are included in this report). All of the children and young people I consulted were current or former participants in Plan International's Climate Change Adaptation Projects conducted throughout the Philippines. During my consultation trip, I spoke to children and young people in Manila, Tanay, Tacloban and Hernani (Eastern Samar) and Liloan (Southern Leyte).

The questions I asked children and young people in the consultations included:

- How has climate change affected your life?
- How have you helped your community respond to the risks associated with climate change?
- What do you think children and young people in developed countries, like Australia, should do about climate change?
- What do you think governments of developed countries, like Australia, should do about climate change?

The children and young people who spoke to me did so freely. Many were passionate and vocal in their opinions about the current state of our world's environment and what actions we, as citizens of the world, should take on climate change.

How has climate change affected your life?

Many of the children and young people I spoke to had experienced at least one natural disaster in their lifetime. These disasters included drought, flash floods, landslides and typhoons, including the super typhoon, Haiyan which devastated the Philippines in November 2013. Children in Southern Leyte also described how the sea level is slowly rising and the sea is much closer to the houses in their community now than when they were first built.

I visited the Philippines at the beginning of summer when many children spoke of the heat which, in recent years, has been intense and severe, unlike anything the children's grandparents or parents had ever experienced. They told me this extreme weather was affecting community's crops and fishing businesses, and left many children suffering regularly from heatstroke. Many children also expressed worries about having enough food and water in the future.



Imogen and Pia conduct a consultation with the CARE group in the Philippines.

How have you helped your community respond to risks associated with climate change?

All of the children and young people I met were part of a youth group in their community organised or supported by Plan International. While these groups engaged in a diverse range of different activities like radio broadcasting and theatre, they all had a shared focus on caring for the environment and helping communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. For example, all the children were engaged in raising awareness about climate change, waste management and recycling, regular community clean-ups, and tree and mangrove planting.

What do you think children and young people in developed countries, like Australia, should do about climate change?

When asked this question, all of the children and young people I consulted answered by saying that Australian children and young people should raise awareness about climate change in their communities. Some suggested they could do this by forming a youth group or using social media. Some acknowledged that awareness-raising is challenging because grown-ups can be selfish and people can be ignorant, but that young people have to persevere.

All of the children and young people I spoke to also said that their peers in Australia should

engage in activities which help communities mitigate or adapt to climate change, such as segregating waste, planting trees and using appliances and vehicles which produce less emissions. It was also suggested that Australian youth get political by lobbying the government or boycotting or protesting against big greenhouse gas emitting projects.

What do you think governments of developed countries, like Australia, should do about climate change?

The children and young people I consulted were very clear about what they wanted the Australian government and other governments of developed countries to do. The first was to listen to and support young people with their ideas and plans. They also demanded that governments of developed countries, especially Australia, be proactive and start action to mitigate climate change right now. They also insisted that governments, like Australia, make big polluters minimise their emissions and not abuse natural resources. Several suggested that Western governments enact strict policies or laws that prevent activities that contribute to climate change, encourage citizens to help protect the environment, and use more sustainable technology, like solar power. The children and young people also stated that it isn't as hard for governments of developed countries to be innovative and switch to more sustainable technology because they are wealthy.



Mariaclair, a climate change leader in the Philippines.

MARIACLAIR, 14

A YOUNG COMMUNITY LEADER WHO CARES

Mariaclair is 14 years old and in Year 9. She is quiet and shy, but also a natural leader as the President of the climate change child advocates group, CARE. Her favourite subject is maths. "I love solving," she says.

Mariaclair was in Year 5 when she first learnt about climate change through a seminar run by Plan International. She says she was initially "shocked" to learn about the effects of climate change. Yet, in 2013, Mariaclair says she experienced the effects of climate change first-hand when the super typhoon, Haiyan, struck her village. Mariaclair hid in her home with her family. During the storm, the windows smashed and broken glass was flung across the room. When Mariaclair talks about this time she becomes much more reserved and points to a scar on her wrist. It's from the smashed glass. It acts as a reminder of what happened during the super typhoon and of the effects of climate change. Mariaclair says she feels "sad" when she thinks about this.

Mariaclair says that "climate change is the biggest problem in the world" because everyone is affected by it. In her own community, Mariaclair advocates about climate change and its effects as part of the Plan-supported Children's Coalition for Adaptation and Resilience (CARE). She has also participated in activities such as planting trees as a means of adapting to climate change as it helps prevent landslides during heavy rainfall. When Mariaclair helps her community like this she feels "happy".

Mariaclair says that, "It is very important to respond to climate change." She wants to encourage children and young people in Australia to help their communities adapt to and limit climate change too. She wants to see a future where all people are informed about climate change and know what to do.

3.2.2. Our voice in photos: Children have their say about climate change in Philippines, Vietnam and Nepal.

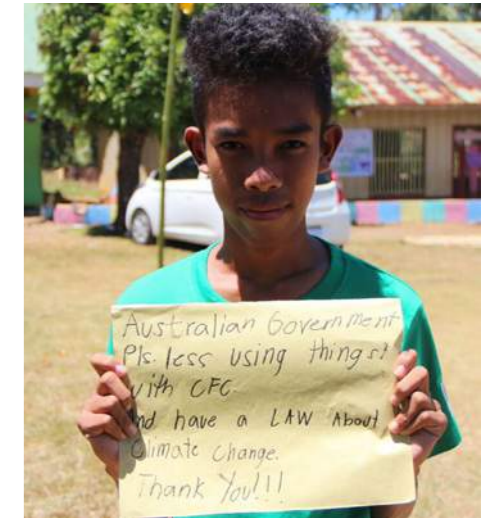
Plan International asked children in the Philippines, Vietnam and Nepal to share photos of them holding messages to the Australian Government.



HT Sang , 14, Vietnam.



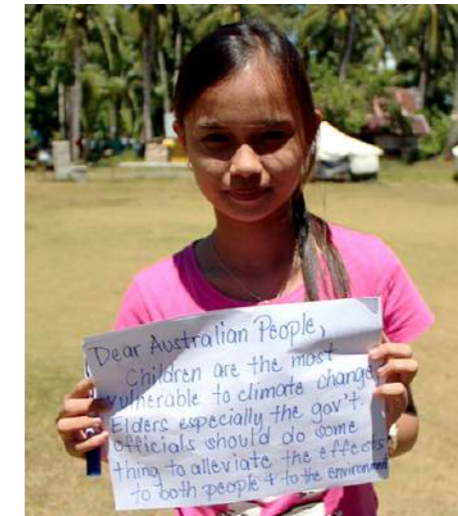
Sanchita, 12, Nepal.



Edmar, 14, the Philippines.



Rabin, 15, Nepal.



Monique, 15, the Philippines.



HV Đưng, 13, Vietnam.

"The Australian Government should act to reduce sea level rise, and rescue the salt-marsh areas."



HT Sa, 11, Vietnam.

"The Australian Government should provide support to other countries to increase the application of clean energy."



Mario, 16, the Philippines.



Kiran, 15, Nepal.

4. WE HAVE A RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE AND WE ARE MAKING NOISE

When it comes to dealing with climate change, children's and young people's voices must be heard at a local, national and international level – not just because they have the most to lose from dangerous climate change but because they have a right under international human rights law to participate in decisions about climate change which affect them.²¹

4.1 Give us the skills to participate meaningfully

While this report recognises that children and young people are already involved at all levels of society in making decisions about climate change action, they cannot be expected to engage meaningfully in local adaptation, policy dialogues with governments or coordinated campaigning, without first being empowered with the necessary education and skills.

For children and young people to participate in decision-making about climate change, they must be:

- given access to information and education about the issue.
- consulted by governments and decision-makers about their views.
- involved in decision-making processes about issues that affect them.
- supported to collaborate with other young people to mobilise on issues that matter to them.²²

All children and young people must be given a genuine opportunity to participate, irrespective of wealth, gender, race, religion, location, ability or level of education. However child and youth consultations, especially in developing nations, “are often held in urban areas and in the official language(s) of the country, thus excluding uneducated, rural and poor youth [and children].”²³ Civil society organisations and international NGOs like Plan International can play an important role in uniting and training marginalised young people to participate and maximise their voice as advocates for change.



YOUNG PEOPLE FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

MARINEL'S STORY BY IMOGEN

Marinel is a bright 17-year-old girl with a broad smile. She is passionate about climate change.

She lives in a small community in Eastern Samar with her parents. The community is on a peninsula, surrounded by the Pacific Ocean. Many people in the community make their living through fishing. It is a tight-knit community, where everyone knows each other and does communal things like sharing food. Marinel finished high school in March. Her favourite subjects were Science, English and Maths. She is going to university soon to study social work. Marinel says she chose to study social work because she loves being in a community, where she can help people, and because she loves listening to people's stories.

Marinel first started learning about climate change in 2012 when she became involved with Plan International's climate change adaptation project in her community. She says that before she learnt about climate change, she didn't care about the environment because she didn't know that it was so vulnerable to human behaviour. Now, Marinel feels “empowered” because her knowledge about her world has broadened – she knows why climate change exists, and how to mitigate it.

In November 2013, Marinel personally experienced the effects of climate change during the super typhoon, Yolanda (Haiyan). Typhoon Yolanda struck her community and her home. The storm surge was four metres high and submerged the port, damaged infrastructure, and destroyed her house. All of Marinel's belongings were destroyed and she lost all of the poems, stories and ideas she had composed and collected. She says that this made her feel sad and helpless. Her family now have a new home, but Marinel says it isn't like before.

Marinel is now taking action on climate change in her own community. She participates in Plan International's climate change adaptation projects and now teaches at youth camps to pass on everything she has learnt to the younger children. She has also organised mangrove plantings, a community clean-up, recycling and waste-segregation activities, and written a song with other children and young people to teach her community about climate change. Marinel says it feels AWESOME to take action on climate change! She says it feels good to be young and doing something for the environment.

However, Marinel has been challenged by the grown-ups in her community who don't take seriously what she has to say. Marinel says some “grown-ups are selfish” and only think about the short-term and not the future. For example, some adults participate in dynamite fishing, which can destroy coral and the ocean's ecosystem, damaging the fish population for future generations. They tell Marinel and other children and young people in the community that they are “just children” and the adults know what is best, not them.

**“GROWN-UPS ARE SELFISH”
AND ONLY THINK ABOUT
THE SHORT-TERM AND NOT
THE FUTURE.**

Despite this, Marinel has received some positive reactions from adults in her life, such as her parents. She says her parents listened to her and followed her behaviour when she changed her lifestyle, for example separating out waste. Marinel says this created a “chain of information,”

where people are now listening and defending the principle of climate change and even proposing action themselves!

Marinel tells young people in Australia that they need to be aware of climate change and realise that it is relevant to them and their world. Young people in Australia need to get engaged to take action!

Marinel says the Australian Government needs to make changes to prevent and mitigate climate change in Australia. The Australian Government should have a “strict policy on stopping pollution in Australia. Stop it happening instead of trying to remedy the problem once you have created it.”

Currently, Marinel is participating in a documentary about her life and her passion for the environment and stopping climate change. In the future, Marinel hopes to be a global activist on climate change.

Marinel, 17, from Eastern Samar, the Philippines

4.2 New opportunities to be heard

Children and young people are increasingly challenging the status quo and opening up new avenues to participate in decisions about climate change at an international, national and local level. (For children and young people's capacity to engage in local community-driven climate change adaptation, see section 4.3 of this report).

4.2.1. Children and youth on the international stage: the road Paris

In the past, children and young people's unique voices have too often been ignored in international debate and agreements about climate change. For example, the 1992 *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (the first international treaty to end climate change) is 25 pages long but does not make a single mention of the impacts of climate change on children or young people or their right to be involved in decision-making about how best to respond to it.

Fortunately, over the last decade, there are new opportunities for children and young people to participate in climate change negotiations and policy-making. The formation of the *UN Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change* in 2008 has given young people a new avenue through which they can influence the Conference of Parties (COP) meetings and draw attention to young people's views on climate change.²⁴ Building on these reforms, prior to COP 15 in December 2009, the UNFCCC secretariat granted a "provisional constituency" status to youth non-governmental organisations (referred to as YOUNGO). YOUNGO's new standing has permitted youth to participate in intergovernmental meetings including through addressing high-level sessions at the COP and meeting with high level officials to the Convention including its president.²⁵

Since these reforms, children and young people have consistently attempted to influence the COP meetings and "drawn attention to young people's views on climate change including the issue of intergenerational climate justice."²⁶ Many of these young people have engaged with COP through the International Youth Climate Movement, an international coalition of youth organisations "working to inspire, empower, and mobilise members of the younger generation to take action on climate change."²⁷ Overall, while there is growing space for a youth voice

at COP, there is still room for improvement as most young people's participation is restricted to the Conference of Youth in the lead up to COP21.²⁸ However when COPs are held, young people organise workshops, media events, and silent demonstrations outside of the formal proceedings.²⁹

In December this year, the world's leaders will meet to reach a new global agreement on climate change at the Conference of Parties (COP 21) in Paris – for more details about COP 21 see section 2.1.3 of this report.

While Paris represents an important opportunity to reach a new international agreement to reverse catastrophic human-made climate change, COP 21 is far from the only opportunity for children and young people to influence international climate policy and action. After Paris, children and young people can continue to hold their leaders to account for the promises they make at Paris or demand that they do more if their commitments fall short of what is necessary. Whatever is agreed to in Paris, tackling climate change will require ongoing effort from all nations for generations to come. Children and young people alive now and yet to be born will be key to driving this action.



CARE leaders sharing knowledge about the impacts of climate change on their rights at the Municipal Children's assembly (Hernani, Eastern Samar, the Philippines).

4.2.2. Children and young people at the national level: Australia

While the Australian Government has created few opportunities for children and youth to participate in decision-making about how Australia should respond to climate change, young people have regularly united and mobilised to advocate and influence how our government responds to this issue at home and in the international arena.

YOUNG PEOPLE DEMANDING CHANGE IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) shows what young people are capable of when they unite to tackle climate change.



Australian Youth Climate Coalition

Established in 2006, the AYCC is a youth coalition of 25 other youth organisations with the shared aim of "educating, inspiring, empowering and mobilising an entire generation in the struggle for climate justice and a clean energy future." The AYCC has over 100,000 individual members who form part of the Global Youth Climate Movement. Every year since its formation, AYCC has sent a delegation of youth advocates to United Nations conferences on climate change.

In 2009, the AYCC held the first ever national youth climate vote which gave 37,500 young people the opportunity to vote on the renewable energy targets they wanted the Australian Government to adopt. The AYCC has also lobbied for climate change during Federal election campaigns and has organised youth climate summits.

In the lead up to COP21, the AYCC is campaigning, on behalf of young Australians for the Government to:

- reduce Australia's pollution by at least 40% by 2020.
- invest in transitioning to 100% renewable energy within 10 years.
- move Australia beyond coal and gas.

This report, through uniting the voices of young Australians, represents another key moment where children and young people have told the Australian Government that they want them to take strong action now to stop climate change in its tracks. To find out what young Australians said they want, see section 3.1.

4.2.3. Children and young people at the national level: developing nations

There are increasing formal opportunities for young people in developing nations to be involved in national decision-making about climate change. *The 2010 Cancun Adaptation Framework* (agreed at COP 16) included a decision to "establish a process to enable least-developed countries to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plans" as a mechanism for accessing climate finance.³⁰ This decision "opened the door to addressing the special vulnerabilities and fulfilling the rights not only of poor people in poor countries, but

of children" and young people.³¹ However, a study conducted by Plan International and the Institute of Development Studies found that very few of these plans explicitly targeted children or youth and none recognised children and young people's own innate ability to help countries and communities adapt to or mitigate climate change.³² This situation has not stopped young people in developing nations from mobilising to influence their governments' decision-making about our climate. From places as diverse as Nepal and El Salvador, young people have come together to demand that their leaders take urgent action to address climate change.³³

CARE radio hosts interview their Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Officer and a local meteorologist about climate change.



4.3. This is how we can be involved in climate change adaptation in the community

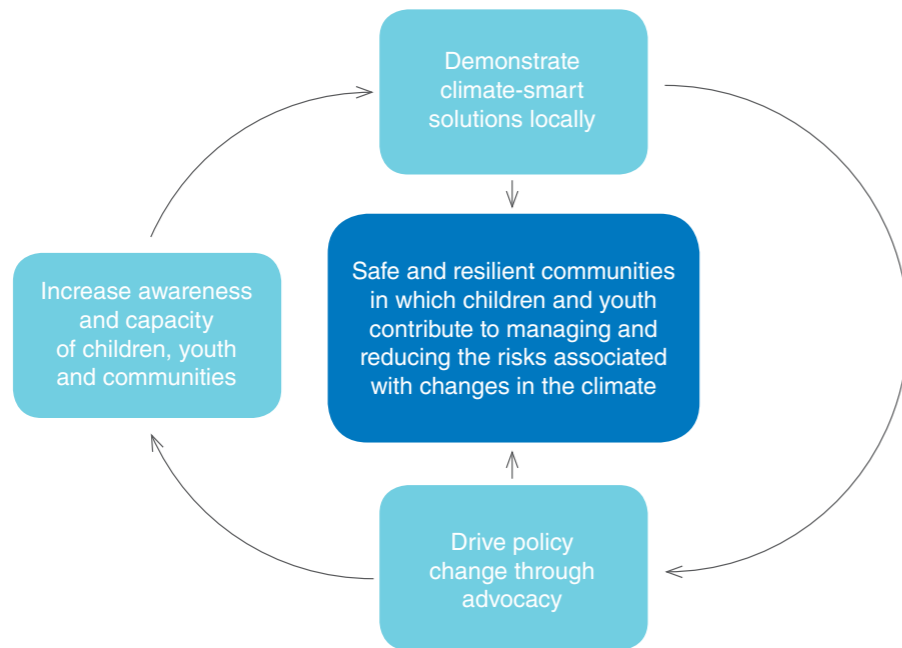
Children and young people around the world are already engaged in climate change adaptation actions, helping to make both themselves and their communities more resilient.

4.3.1. Plan's Approach: Child-Centred Climate Change Adaptation (4CA)

Plan International takes an innovative approach to climate change adaptation which fosters

children's and young people's agency. We empower communities to explore how and why the climate is changing, the impact on children's and young people's rights, and start a conversation between adults, children and young people about the essential roles they can all play in making their communities safer.

We call this work Child-Centred Climate Change Adaptation (4CA) because these programs put children front and centre of decision-making about responding to the sometimes deadly risks of a changing climate.



Cross-cutting issues: Children and youth participation; inclusion; ethnicity; gender; disability; accountability.

A. Build Awareness

Our approach focuses first on building community awareness about climate change in order to empower children to be active participants in climate adaptation. In partnership with communities, we develop and utilise child-friendly education materials on climate change including teacher manuals and student books, cartoons and animation films, and games. These are adapted to the local setting, to make sure the materials are meaningful. Plan International also uses peer-to-peer learning to build children's and young people's knowledge about climate change, empowering them to share this new knowledge with their peers and wider community.

B. Help communities identify risks and resources for action

Building on this improved knowledge and understanding of climate change causes, impacts and adaptation actions, Plan International then works with children and their communities to understand and analyse their specific climate

risks and the strengths and resources available to them. Based on that analysis, we provide small grants to support children and their communities to implement and monitor small-scale and context-appropriate adaptation initiatives. These actions include: tree planting and reforestation; home and school gardening; mangrove planting; training in videography, photography and story-telling; rain water harvesting; and income-generation activity like mushroom farming.

C. Support children and young people to advocate for themselves

Children and young people are also supported to advocate for climate change action, from local through to national and international levels. Plan International supports young people to have a voice on climate change through engagement with policy-makers, running and participating in forums, and by building their skills to harness media to get their message out and share information (through case studies, online discussions, newsletters, etc).



CARE officers and members ready to take on the challenge. Behind them is the ocean that destroyed their homes (Hernani, Eastern Samar, the Philippines).

CASE STUDY: CHILDREN'S COALITION FOR ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE (CARE), HERNANI, THE PHILIPPINES

Written by: Lestre, 16 – CARE President and Lourraine, 16 – CARE Vice President, with support from Arnold D. Peca – Adviser/Mentor

Hernani is a small municipality in the province of Eastern Samar, Philippines. It faces the Pacific Ocean in the east, while the other sides are surrounded by mountains. Almost half of the about 8,000 people who live in Hernani are children. The majority of the families there depend on fishing and agriculture to make a living. Like any other areas facing the Pacific Ocean, tropical cyclones are common. While climate-related hazards are part of everyday life, a baseline study conducted under Plan's Child-Centred Community-based Climate Change Adaptation (CC-CBA) project in 2012 found that local people's and officials' awareness of about climate change and its impacts was low.

In response, this project supported children in the local community to establish Children's Coalition for Adaptation and Resilience (CARE). In turn, CARE has organised and empowered other children and young people in the community to become peer educators and climate change advocates using theatre, radio broadcasting and other awareness-raising activities.

When Haiyan came ...

In addition to the work of the CC-CBA project in Hernani, the onslaught of super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 also challenged local attitudes about climate change. Tragically, 83 people died, thousands of houses were destroyed and millions of livelihoods were lost. Immediately after the hurricane, relief workers and supplies flooded into Hernani, while recovery and rehabilitation work followed in the next few months.

We organised ourselves to speak out ...

Lourraine, Vice President of CARE recalls that meetings and consultations about how the community should rebuild and make itself safer from the impacts of climate change were happening everywhere. While other municipal

governments were involving the children in these consultations, in Hernani they did not have a seat at the table.

"[We were wondering] what was wrong. So we organised ourselves and lobbied for representation in the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Assembly – a forum through which CSOs can communicate their views to the local government – and in the [municipal] council," she said. After a series of meetings and much lobbying, CARE successfully convinced the local government to participate.

And we created change!

CARE's representation was tested in November 2014 during the formulation of Hernani's Local Poverty Reduction Action Plan (the framework for local programs and projects that will directly address the needs of the poor and marginalised sectors of a municipality). CARE successfully advocated for the plan to address issues faced by poor young people in their community. Because of their advocacy, the plan included a response to the issues such as poverty, being out of school, early marriage and gender discrimination. Because of their efforts, climate change and disaster were also integrated into the plan.

Their advocacy paid off in other ways. The local Mayor appointed a child representative to the Municipal Development Council. He also agreed to allocate significant funding to climate change adaptation projects. The Municipal Council also passed a resolution creating the Local Youth Development Council. Climate change adaptation measures will also be integrated in some programs, such as education and awareness-building.

When adults respected our right to participate, we helped make our community safer for everyone from the impacts of climate change.



Jednel, 11, lives by the beach in Tanauan, Leyte, a town that was badly hit by typhoon Haiyan, the Philippines.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE IS ABOUT OUR HUMAN RIGHTS

Climate change threatens the rights of the most marginalised children and young people through undermining their right to be alive, health, food and human development.

5.1. Right to be alive

Dangerous climate change is a threat to children's and young people's lives and has already wrought a terrible human cost. Of the estimated more than 150,000 deaths every year attributable to climate change early last decade, an estimated almost 90 per cent were children³⁴ and 99 per cent of these deaths occurred within developing countries.³⁵ According to some estimates, in this decade alone, about 175 million children will be negatively impacted by climate change.³⁶

5.1.1. Death and injury during extreme weather events

Climate change is driving an increase in extreme weather events like droughts and floods throughout the world.³⁷ While not all natural disasters are directly linked to climate change, the vast majority of people impacted (98 per

cent) by disaster are affected by disasters which are in part "influenced by climate change, such as floods or droughts."³⁸ Over the last 20 years, the average annual number of natural disasters has doubled from about 200 a year in the 1980s to more than 400 a year in this decade.³⁹

Children are most at risk from climate-related disasters in our region. This is because more disasters happen in the Asia-Pacific than anywhere else in the world.⁴⁰ Between 1996 and 2005, over two-thirds of the people killed by natural disasters lived in Asia.⁴¹

If we do not act quickly to stem dangerous climate change, things are set to get much worse. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UNIPCC) predicts that if we do not take action, it is "extremely likely" that climate change will cause increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and weather disasters.⁴²

Climate change in Australia

Australia is one of the developed countries that will be worst affected by extreme weather and is already experiencing more frequent and intense droughts, heatwaves and other extreme weather events.⁴³ Since 1910, Australia's climate has warmed by almost 1°C and since the 1940s every decade has been warmer than the one that came before it.⁴⁴ These changes are putting pressure on our infrastructure, health system, and farmers. Yet, because of the size of our economy and the strength of our infrastructure, we are in a better position to withstand the effects than developing nations similarly prone to natural disasters.



Parents grieve at their family grave in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in the city of Tanauan, Leyte, the Philippines.

5.1.2. Children are most at risk when natural disasters strikes

Children are more at risk during natural disasters because they are smaller, depend on adults for their safety and are often vulnerable when separated from their parents.⁴⁵ Young children living through disaster may also be at increased risk because they are unable to read or understand warnings or disaster response instructions. During floods, children are also less likely to know how to swim than adults.⁴⁶ Climate-induced sea-level rise, flooding and extreme weather events also destroy housing and create unsafe living conditions for children and young people. While children are usually most at risk

during extreme weather events, United Nations research also suggests that youth living in South Asia, Central America and the Pacific also face a heightened risk or harm.⁴⁷

Serious natural disasters also typically lead to a breakdown in health systems, education and other supportive environments children and young people need to reach their full potential. Parents or guardians usually have less time to focus on their children and increased anxiety and stress. In this difficult environment, children themselves face a higher risk of stress and trauma but also of neglect, abuse and exploitation.⁴⁸

5.2. Right to health

Climate change is a threat to children's and young people's health, especially in poorer developing countries.⁴⁹

5.2.1. Water

There is growing scientific consensus that changes in temperature and rainfall have already changed the distribution of some water-borne illnesses and infections⁵⁰ (see section 5.3 for more information about the link between climate change and fresh water contamination). Waterborne disease – caused by unsafe drinking water – is one of the biggest threats to children's health globally and climate change will only make matters worse. Every year, two million children aged under five die from diarrhoea⁵¹ – about 1,600 children every day.⁵² An estimated 85,000 of these annual deaths can be attributed in part to climate change.⁵³ Rising temperatures also lead to an increase in diarrhoea. Studies conducted in Peru and Fiji suggest that for every 1°C in temperature, diarrhoeal disease increases by a margin of three to eight per cent.⁵⁴



Children wash their hands at a Plan International Child Friendly Space in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in Eastern Samar, the Philippines.

5.2.2. Vector-borne diseases – Malaria

Rising temperatures mean vector-borne diseases like malaria will likely spread to new areas. This will affect developing nations most as they have less capacity to fight its spread.⁵⁵ Rising temperatures in Africa are “predicted to result in an additional 40 to 60 million people being exposed to malaria.”⁵⁶ If we do not take the appropriate action to mitigate climate change, 60 per cent of the world's population (compared with 45 per cent at the moment) may be in a malaria transmission zone by 2100.⁵⁷ Worldwide, children under five make up 78 per cent of all

malaria deaths.⁵⁸ In 2012, malaria killed about 627,000 people, three quarters were children under five years old.⁵⁹ So it is young children who will likely be the most affected by the spread of malaria into new zones.

5.2.3. The air we breathe

Climate change is increasing air pollution “from both ground level ozone and bushfire smoke”, making the air we breathe less healthy, especially for children.⁶⁰ More pollutants from fires, dust storms, burning fossil fuels and pollen (as the pollen seasons starts earlier) and other allergens in the air will likely drive increasing numbers of children suffering asthma and other respiratory illnesses.⁶¹

In fact, a recent report by Doctors for the Environment Australia found that, “[t]he current global increase in childhood asthma could be partly explained by increased exposure to allergens in the air driven by climate change.”⁶² Every year in Australia, about 1,250 children are admitted to hospital for asthma or respiratory because of fossil-fuel related air pollution.⁶³

5.2.4. Heat stress

Climate change is expected to magnify the frequency and intensity of extreme heat during the day and at night.⁶⁴ Because children need more water than adults and usually spend more time outside, they are more likely to be affected by extremes in temperature.⁶⁵ Extreme heat during pregnancy has also been linked to lower infant birth weight.⁶⁶ Heat stress will also be particularly hard on youth in Africa as more than half lack adequate shelter.⁶⁷

5.2.5. Mental health

In the aftermath of disasters, studies suggest children face a higher risk than adults of suffering from prolonged bouts of trauma, sleep disturbance, depression and other mental illness.⁶⁸ One study conducted in Queensland, Australia, after Cyclone Larry in 2006 found that one in ten children in the affected area suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.⁶⁹ After the 2010 floods in Pakistan, 73 per cent of school children aged 10 to 19 displayed high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder with displaced girls most likely to be affected by trauma.⁷⁰ Studies also suggest that the mental health of children and young people is often impacted when their parents or carers experience increased stress during times of drought and disaster.⁷¹

5.3. The right to water and food

Climate change is making it harder for communities to access clean drinking water.⁷² Flooding, storms and cyclones contaminate water supplies⁷³ and rising sea levels make water saltier,⁷⁴ while drought dries up natural fresh water sources and concentrates contaminants.⁷⁵ The UNIPCC predicts that “if global temperatures increase by 2°C, an additional 1 billion to 3 billion people will experience water stress.”⁷⁶

Today, 45 million people are estimated to be hungry because of climate change.⁷⁷ By contributing to drought, irregular rainfall, freak weather events and threatening global fish stocks through ocean acidification, climate change makes it harder for humans to grow, access and afford food.⁷⁸ Global food shortages and price rises are set to dramatically increase the number of children not getting enough to eat.⁷⁹ The UNIPCC predicts with high confidence that in places where local temperatures increase 2°C or more above late 20th century levels, climate change will have a very negative impact on the production of staple crops, essential to human survival, like corn and rice.⁸⁰ Research suggests that children and young people, among the world's three billion people who rely on subsistence farming for their livelihood, will be hit the hardest.⁸¹

Climate change is also making food less affordable for the poor. Climate change contributed to the 2008 food crisis which drove up the price of staple foods by between 20 to 50 per cent in some countries and triggered a significant increase in child malnutrition.⁸² In 2011 “freak weather events in China (drought), Canada (record rain), Russia (drought and fires), Ukraine and Kazakhstan (drought) and Australia (torrential rain) combined to send global wheat prices soaring.”⁸³ As food costs rise, it limits the money families have on hand to afford things like school fees or medical care, further undermining children and young people's education and health.⁸⁴



Community members collect buckets and aqua tabs distributed by Plan International in Rakhine State after flooding in Myanmar.

Farmers harvesting their improved rice crop in Quang Ngai province, Vietnam.



5.4. The right to reach our full potential

5.4.1. Interrupted education

When natural disasters strike, many children and young people can no longer go to school for the simple reason that their school has been destroyed. When disasters interrupt children and young people's schooling, many never return to complete their education, especially girls.⁸⁵ Flooding and droughts in India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Uganda, Nicaragua, and Mongolia resulted in significant declines in school attendance, which lasted up to a decade.⁸⁶ For children and young people who return to school, the long-term psychological impacts of the disaster can have an ongoing negative impact on their ability to learn.⁸⁷ When agricultural income falls due to the effects of a changing climate, families can often no longer afford to send their children to school.⁸⁸

5.4.2. Forced migration and children's development

Ultimately, rising sea levels, environmental deterioration, drought and natural disasters are predicted to become a significant driver of population displacement and migration in this century.⁸⁹ In 2012 alone an estimated 32.4 million people were displaced by environmental disasters.⁹⁰ Globally, about 600 million people currently live in low-lying coastal zones at direct risk of "sea-level rise, stronger storms and other seaward hazards induced by climate change."⁹¹ Many of these zones, (about 14 per cent) are located within the least-developed countries.⁹²

A deteriorating environment – due to climate change – is estimated to drive the migration of 150 to 200 million people by 2050.⁹³ This movement will put significant pressure on receiving countries, especially those developing nations under-resourced to support large influxes of climate refugees.⁹⁴ Climate change may also increase the risk of violent conflicts "by amplifying well-documented drivers of insecurity such as poverty and economic shocks."⁹⁵ The consequential breakdown of medical and social services, and the heightened risk of disease will pose a risk to both child and youth development.⁹⁶

For children and young people, this migration will likely result in disruption in the home and schooling and expose them to a higher risk of civil and political unrest.⁹⁷ Displaced children and youth will also face an increased risk of not getting enough to eat, being forced into work before they are ready or being recruited to hazardous industries.⁹⁸

When entire populations flee in the aftermath of disasters, many children become orphaned or separated from their primary carers. Young people also risk protracted period of displacement within refugee camps with limited mobility or prospects of finding decent work.⁹⁹ When children and young people move alone without identity documents, they are often denied access to basic services like education and healthcare.¹⁰⁰ This puts them at increased risk of exploitation by opportunistic adults including being trafficked into prostitution or recruited into armed militias.¹⁰¹ Even when children are fostered in other families, they remain at risk of exploitation and abuse.¹⁰²

5.4.3. Poverty and work

Climate change threatens to undermine the great strides the world has made towards development for all since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed in 2000.¹⁰³ It also threatens to deny hundreds of millions of children the right to live a life free from poverty. From 1980 to 2012, the World Bank estimates that total reported losses due to increasingly frequent natural disasters amounted to \$4 billion;¹⁰⁴ this is impacting children's economic wellbeing.¹⁰⁵ International goals to end poverty cannot be achieved without a significant reduction in anthropogenic climate change.¹⁰⁶

The UNIPCC predicts (with medium confidence) that climate change will lead to slower economic growth, "make poverty reduction more difficult, further erode food security and prolong existing

and create new poverty traps" and inequality in both developed and developing nations alike.¹⁰⁷ The Asian Development Bank estimates that, unless we take decisive global action on climate change, by the year 2100 "the economic loss to the Pacific alone could range from 2.9 to 12.7 per cent of annual GDP."¹⁰⁸

Unabated climate change will also likely drive young people into poverty by limiting their prospects of finding decent work. Young people's livelihoods are typically impacted more than adults in times of crisis, and it is likely that climate change will make these impacts worse.¹⁰⁹ For instance, "youth from the poorest families cultivating the most marginal areas are most likely to be forced to seek employment in the informal sectors, in which young people are already overrepresented, and therefore become vulnerable to low-paid, low quality jobs."¹¹⁰

A school destroyed by flood in Myanmar.



Among the wreckage of Typhoon Haiyan, Bilmar and Christian sit on a discarded sofa in Santo Niño village, Tanauan, Leyte, the Philippines.

5.5. Girls' right to equality

Girls are more likely to be severely harmed or killed during natural disasters than boys. In places like Nepal, when floods strike, girls are at greater risk as they are more likely to be at home when waters rise, and less likely to know how to swim.¹¹¹ One study commissioned by Plan International in Africa estimated women and children are up to 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster.¹¹²

When disasters strike, girls also face an increased risk of child marriage as families try to secure the future of their daughters and earn much needed income through dowry.¹¹³ In Niger after the food crisis, Plan International found that out of 135 adolescent girls, 64 per cent were already married and 39 per cent had children. The average age of marriage was 14.¹¹⁴ Where adolescent girls lose their identity documents during disasters, it becomes much harder for local authorities to intervene to stop child marriages as they can no longer verify a girl's real age. Girls also face an increased risk of violence (including sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking) following disasters and crises,¹¹⁵ both inside and outside of the home.¹¹⁶

Climate change also risks making girls' already unfair domestic burden even worse. In developing nations, girls usually carry an unfair share of household responsibilities compared to boys, such as collecting fuel for cooking and water.

As water resources are becoming scarcer in poorer nations, girls have to walk even further to fetch or buy water.¹¹⁷ Girls are also often the "first to be pulled out of school to care for siblings or to do housework or to help their mothers earn a living in the absence of a father" when times are tough following disasters or droughts.¹¹⁸ For instance, after the 2010 Pakistan floods, 24 per cent of girls in grade six left school compared to only six per cent of boys.¹¹⁹ Girls are also more likely to go hungry during food shortages – which often occur during disasters, crises or drought – particularly "in households where land-holdings are small, water is scarce and human resources are limited".¹²⁰



Girls wade through flood water in Ganjam district, India, in the aftermath of Typhoon Phailin in 2013.

Girl rocks her cousin to sleep as the baby's mother queues for aid at church in Cagayan de Oro in the aftermath of Typhoon Washi, the Philippines.



5.6. Climate change and justice

Climate change is not just unjust because it threatens children's and young people's rights. Climate change is unfair because:

1. Those least responsible will suffer the most

First, it is unfair that children in the least developed nations, who have contributed the least to climate change, will suffer the most if we do not act now to stop it.

2. Intergenerational justice

Secondly, children born now or in the future have the same right to live in a world which can sustain them and in which they can reach their full potential (the concept is often referred to as "intergenerational justice.")¹²¹ Unless we act now, current and future generations of children

will inherit a world in which it will be much more difficult to survive or thrive it has been for than their parents.

3. Those who have profited the least, risk poverty the most

Finally, it is unfair that while wealthy Western nations like Australia have historically profited the most from sharing the profits of big polluting industry, it is children and young people in developing nations, now and in the future, who most risk being forced into poverty because of climate change. While responding to dangerous climate change should be every nation's concern, it is only right that developed nations with more money, resources and technology do more to reduce our dependence on carbon (this is often referred to as the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities.")¹²²

How much does Australia contribute to global carbon emissions compared to other nations?

Rising carbon dioxide levels from the burning of fossil fuels are a major contributor to climate change and climate change.¹²³ Wealthy developed nations like Australia emit much more carbon than poorer nations and the United Nations estimates that since the 1950s developed countries have contributed as much as three quarters of humanity's greenhouse gas emissions yet make up only 15 per cent of the global population.¹²⁴

While Australia makes up a tiny 0.3 per cent of the world's population, we are the 13th largest producer of carbon in the world¹²⁵ with a recent Australian Climate Change Authority report

suggesting we use more carbon per capita than any other developed country.¹²⁶ Australia produces an incredible 28 times more carbon per capita than the average person in a developing nation and 84.5 times more carbon per capita than people in the least developed nations.¹²⁷

One of the main reasons why we use so much carbon is that coal accounts for about 75 per cent of Australia's electricity generation.¹²⁸ Australia is also the world's largest exporter of coal.¹²⁹ Much of our worst quality and heavy polluting coal is exported to countries like India to be burnt there.¹³⁰

Schoolchildren in Myanmar practice transmitting early warning messages during disaster simulation.



6. OUR CALL TO ACTION ON CLIMATE

“We, the young people of Australia, call on the Australian Government to take the lead to stop climate change by:

- Doing our part to keep temperature rise less than 2 per cent above pre-industrial levels by reducing domestic emissions by at least 40 per cent below 2000 levels by 2025, 60 per cent by 2030 and progress towards zero net emissions by 2050.
- Increasing investment in renewable energy in Australia and fund access to affordable renewable energy across the developing world.
- Embedding learning about Australia’s contribution to climate change in the national curriculum, including the impacts on the poorest countries, and conducting nation-wide annual youth consultations about what young people want the government to do to address climate change.
- Addressing the causes and impacts of climate change in the poorest countries by contributing \$400 million in 2016/17, including through the Green Climate Fund (this must be new and additional to Australia’s existing aid commitments).”

“We are leading on per capita carbon emissions, so we also need to lead action”

– David, Year 10

"We need to combat climate change itself, but we also need think about the effects it's already having on people. Foreign aid is important for this."

– Patrick, Year 11

“Australia has a responsibility to pioneer the global fight against climate change. We have the financial capacity, we have the capacity regarding our natural resources, and we have the educational capacity. Our current targets are NOT ambitious enough! It is not a matter of cost, but of priority!”

– William, 24

“Education is vital!”

– Monique, 19

“Politicians in Australia are ignoring the change that other countries are already making.”

Florence, Year eight

"We need to stop promoting mining. Coal is not good for humanity. Renewable energy is."

– Chloe Year 10

Schoolchildren in Myanmar planting trees as part of their lesson on climate change awareness.



ABOUT US

About the Plan International Youth Ambassadors

The Plan International Youth Ambassadors are a group of young Australians who are passionate about human rights and environmental issues. As a group of diverse young individuals from across Australia, we strive to protect and promote children's rights by advocating for the rights of children in Australia and overseas. Some of us sit as youth advisors on Plan International Australia's Board sub-committees. The rest of us support Plan International's advocacy and fundraising campaigns.

As Youth Ambassadors, it is our mission to create a space where young people can engage with the global issues that directly affect them, and facilitate the sharing of ideas about how we, as young people, can influence change on a national and global scale. Our vision for the future includes the expansion of our team of eleven, and increased engagement with other young Australians.

About Plan International

Founded more than 78 years ago, Plan International is one of the oldest and largest children's development organisations in the world. We work in more than 51 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to uphold and defend child rights and lift millions of children out of poverty. Plan International is independent with no religious or political affiliations.

Our work with children in climate change

At Plan International, our mission is to empower the most marginalised communities in developing countries to improve their safety and build resilience in response to the threat of dangerous human-made climate change. In our work, we recognise the inherent right and capacity

of children and young people to participate in decision-making and action about climate change at a local, national and international level.

Where we work

Plan International Australia works with children in climate affected communities throughout our region including in Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam, as well as the Pacific (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands). For more information about the climate change adaptation work we do with children and young people, see section 4.3 of this report.



About Oaktree

Oaktree is an Australia-based non-government organisation that works to build community and political support for action on ending extreme poverty, and works with locally-based organisations across the Asia-Pacific. Founded in 2003 and incorporated in 2008, Oaktree is run by young people aged 16 to 26, and overseen by an advisory board.

Internationally, Oaktree partners with developing communities to support quality educational opportunities for young people, aged from 12 to 30 years. In Australia, Oaktree focuses on educating and training young people to be effective agents of change, and advocates for policy change through sustained, community-driven campaigns. The organisation is Australia's largest youth-run organisation.



About the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC)

The AYCC's mission is to build a generation-wide movement to solve the climate crisis before it's too late. We believe that climate change is the single greatest threat facing humanity, and puts young people and future generations at risk. We also believe that addressing the climate crisis is our biggest opportunity to create a world that is more sustainable, just and fair.

We believe that the only way to solve the climate crisis is through a social movement – a groundswell of support and momentum that is powerful enough to inspire the change we need and hold decision-makers to account.

At the AYCC, we believe that the best way to build this movement is to give young people the tools to make it happen. It's our future at stake, and it's our creativity and vision that will inspire those around us to act. That's why since 2007 we've helped thousands of young Australians take action in their schools, their universities, and their communities, and take part in campaigns that put climate change in the national spotlight. The AYCC now has more than 120,000 members, 100 local groups, and more than 500 regular volunteers.



APPENDIX 1: CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Through the use of our ‘Consultation Toolkit’ (which included blind votes, surveys and open discussion) we sought the opinions of young Australians on whether or not they felt it was important for Australia to play a leading role in contributing to the international discussion and action about combating climate change. It was during this process that we sought their opinions on who they deem ‘responsible’ for tackling climate change and if the Australian Government is doing its fair share’ to safeguard young Australian’s future.

Consultation participants

The majority of consultations were conducted by young people from Oaktree and AYCC in secondary schools with students aged 15 to 18. Plan International Youth Ambassadors also consulted with some of their peers aged between 20 and 24. We consulted a broad range of young people from Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia and the ACT.

The Consultation Process – what we asked and how we asked it

We wanted the consultations to be fun and engaging. We also wanted them to be informative – not only for us to share information, but for students to share their knowledge with each other. We designed the questions to uncover what young people think about the issue through conversations, giving a lot of time for discussion.

Key area of enquiry	Activity
How important this issue is to young Australians and why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blind vote at the beginning of the consultation asking participants to raise their hands if they think climate change is an important issue A sliding scale and discussion, asking students to place themselves on the scale of how important climate change is and to then have a discussion about why they answered that way
What young people think the Australian government should be doing to take action on climate change	<p>“Jelly Bean” ranking exercise asking students to rank the top three priorities from five statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Australian Government needs to stop promoting polluting industries like mining. The Australian Government needs to stop putting profits above the environment. Australia must take a leading role in stopping climate change through setting tough emissions targets because we are a large contributor to the problem. The Australian Government must invest in clean energy like wind and solar power. Australia should support communities in developing nations most vulnerable to climate change through our foreign aid budget.

The consultation activities varied slightly in their implementation, and we addressed this by adjusting the data we received in the following way:

- where there was uncertainty in data provided, we excluded it from the final analysis; and

The consultations were designed around three key areas of enquiry:

- How important this issue is to young Australians and why;
- What action young people think the Australian Government should prioritise to take action on climate change; and
- for young people in favour of taking action on climate change, their rationale for this belief.

The consultation process began with a blind vote before giving the participants any information about the issue of climate change and children’s and young people’s rights. This was so we would have some data to compare to our second area of enquiry by asking the same question at the end of the process. We then showed a brief presentation outlining the key issues related to climate change and children’s and young people’s rights. Following the presentation, we asked participants to enter data on a sliding scale to gauge how important they thought climate change is and a short discussion about why. We then did a ranking exercise to understand what young people think the Australian Government should be doing to take action on climate change. The final activity was the comparison blind vote.

The table below indicates how consultation activities addressed the key areas of inquiry.

- percentage-based findings represent the total percentage of participants answering a particular question (ie. where only 400 out of a possible 435 participants responded to a Yes or No proposition, the “Yes” percentage was determined as a fraction of 400 votes. Therefore 200 yes votes would be a 50 per cent “yes rate”).

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