



United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention
Article 6 stakeholder group inputs under the Amended New
Delhi Work Programme

February 2012

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Earth Child Institute (ECI) is a civil society observer to the UNFCCC and a member of the Youth NGO (YOUNGO) constituent group, working to ensure that the rights, needs and capacities of children are recognized and acknowledged within policy guidance associated with Articles 3 and 6 of the Convention. For further information, please contact us at: info@earthchildinstitute.org.

Overview:

Recognizing that the current New Delhi Work Programme (NDWP) does not specifically recognize children as key stakeholders, this paper seeks to encourage Parties to the Successor Work Programme to acknowledge and include specific reference to the rights, needs, and capacities of children, who comprise close to half the population of many developing countries. It contends that integrated, empowering education for sustainable development, delivered through schools as a targeted social safety net for communities, can prevent development setbacks caused by climate change.



Child Rights and Climate Change

Mother Earth is home to 2.2 billion people under the age of 18 today,¹ all of whom are particularly vulnerable to a changing climate and degrading environmental conditions while also being essential stakeholders to, and key beneficiaries of, global environmental governance. Nearly half the population of the developing world, and one-third of the world overall, are children and adolescents.² In light of these numbers, one might imagine that policymakers the

world over would take action to shift the behaviours of their young citizens, to engage, empower, and reduce their vulnerability; yet children represent our planet’s largest untapped natural resource with the greatest potential to turn the tides of the environmental crisis facing us today.

The protection of children’s rights and environmental conservation are thus inextricably linked. While it is universally recognized that poverty is a major cause of human rights violations and a barrier to sustainable development, the importance of a healthy and safe environment – and the right to it – must also justly be considered within the scope of development and poverty eradication. A safe and healthy environment is fundamental to the human rights of children as well as to their development.

Within the scope of the UNFCCC, children have gained recognition as “major parties and stakeholders” in addressing global climate change. Indeed, the foundational principle of inter- and intra-generational equity, as encompassed within the Convention, necessitates the adoption of children’s rights and child-specific concerns as central to climate policymaking.

In addition, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in force in virtually every country in the world, is a primary source for justification of this platform for action. It explicitly recognizes the importance of the natural environment for the growth and well-being of children

¹ World Population Foundation, http://www.wpf.org/reproductive_rights_article/facts#young_people.

² United Nations Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division, <http://esa.un.org/unpp/p2k0data.asp>.

in its Preamble and requires that State Parties take account of the dangers and risks of environmental pollution (Article 24) and educate children to respect nature (Article 29).³

Further, it should be underscored that a majority of the world's 370 million indigenous peoples are children or adolescents.⁴ Indigenous children in forest communities are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of deforestation, yet they are the world's best hope for maintaining the traditions of their peoples and protecting the forest ecosystems, thus ensuring the well-being of all children worldwide.⁵ The UNFCCC specifically notes that the needs of local and indigenous communities should be addressed when action is taken to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries.⁶

³ Convention on the Rights of the Child, accessed at <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>.

⁴ UNICEF. The majority of the 370 million indigenous people worldwide are children or adolescents, and that they are often among the most marginalized and vulnerable members of society. UNICEF statement to the UNPFII, 2008.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ UNFCCC (2008) *Report on the workshop on methodological issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries*, Note by the Secretariat, 29th Session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, Poznań, 1–10 December 2008 FCCC/SBSTA/2008/11 at paragraphs 71 and 72.

Environmental Education as a Response to Climate Change

“Children’s knowledge of biodiversity is in decline at a time when we need future generations to be more engaged and aware in order to halt its loss. This highlights a very real need to educate our children as the future guardians of our planet, to provide them with the knowledge they need today to preserve the natural world for tomorrow.”

-UN Convention on Biodiversity/Airbus study, 2009

Any discussion of environmental conservation without adequate attention paid to the role of education is incomplete. Indeed, a closer inspection of the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation relates back to attitudes, priorities, and behaviours that undermine the proliferation of pro-environmental action. Moreover, scientific evidence increasingly highlights the need for large-scale, systemic change in our consumption and production patterns if we want to effectively address global climate change. Life skills-based environmental education is an available and valuable tool for achieving such change and can serve as an insurance policy against the loss of ecosystem value and functionality.

The *quality* of the environmental education, however, is of central importance. But what is quality education? Within the context of climate change policy, this is a particularly relevant question as environmental education is increasingly being viewed as a critical strategy for climate adaptation and mitigation. There are a number of evidence-based models that can be used as guides on how to improve adaptive capacity and to positively impact consumption behaviours. Some key features include highly context- and culture-specific methods of instruction as well as hands-on and participatory activities customizable for locality. Environmental education for sustainable development has built upon these key elements and is now gaining momentum, albeit slowly.

Inputs on the Amended New Delhi Work Programme (ANDWP) Review

In an analysis of the issues affecting children and their educational options, a rights-based approach should shape the dialogue, strategies, and actions taken to amend the New Delhi Work Programme. Education, particularly post-primary education, has important individual benefits in terms of adaptive capacity over a lifetime, especially for girls. These benefits extend beyond the child to affect her family and society as a whole. Thus, a strategic opportunity now exists to educate and empower children and young people in the developing world with the critical thinking and sustainable values and tools they'll need to contribute to and potentially lead a truly green economy. As children become educated and empowered they will be armed with the tools to free themselves from poverty, and their future livelihoods will support the development of peaceful societies, healthy environments, and sustainable economies.

While the impacts of climate change on children will be severe, children and young people are not passive victims of a changing climate, but are leading change in their communities around the world. UNICEF, ECI, the British Council, and partners have documented quantifiable results and moving stories of the benefits of engaging young people in powerful climate adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives, valuable policy development, new technology creation, and implementation of climate change solutions. From the UK's youth panel advising the Department of Energy and Climate Change 2050 Pathways⁷; to young William Kamkwamba's wind turbine made from waste materials inspired by a book in his library in rural Malawi⁸; to a 13-year-old girl in the USA who started her own program to recycle used cooking oil into biofuel that provides home heating to local families in need⁹; to the success of REDD+ through forest community school participation,¹⁰ children are demonstrating their capacities to be adding real value to climate action – in policy, in adaptation initiatives, and in mitigation measures.

Considerable strides have been made through recognition of youth and children as a major stakeholder constituency to the UNFCCC, but the needs and capacities of youth and children are

⁷ http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/about/youth_panel/youth_panel.aspx.

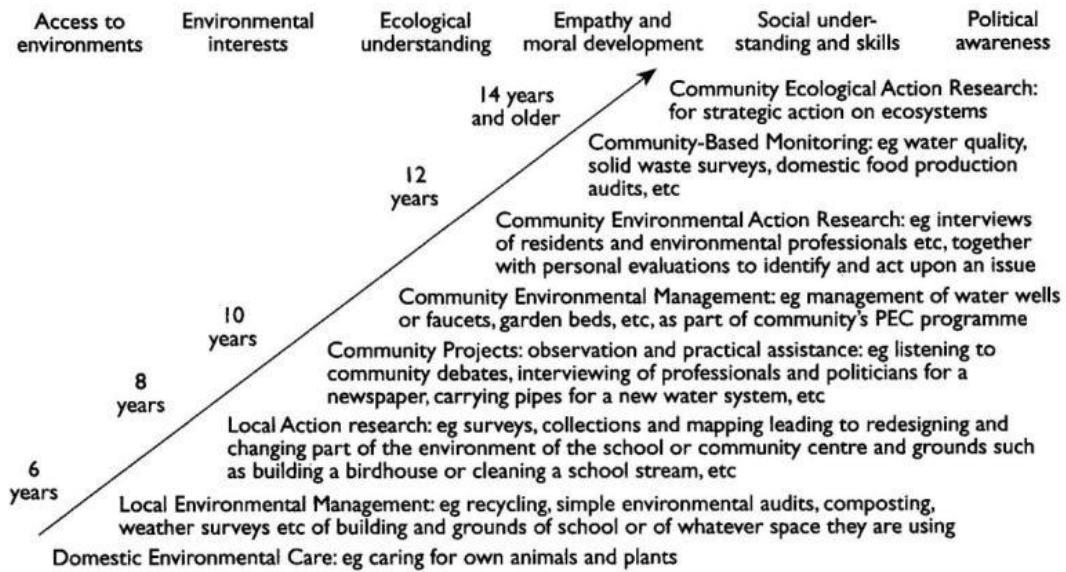
⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8257153.stm>.

⁹ <http://www.earthchildinstitute.org/archives/1613>.

¹⁰ http://www.earthchildinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Power-of-One-Child--One-Tree-Investment-Case.final_.pdf.

vastly different in scope. Although well-intended, the integration of children and youth into a single “constituent group” has proven to be flawed in practical application evidenced by the 20-year track record of the CSD Major Group, which has unconsciously fostered a barrier to representation and inclusion of children in policy and programming largely because of challenges related to differentiated capacity for interest in and actions related to adaptation, rights, and needs at the various stages of child and adolescent development.

The figure below from Roger Hart’s *Children’s Participation in Sustainable Development: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care* (1997) illustrates children’s evolving capacity to participate in the development and management of environments, demonstrating that from the age of six (or even earlier), there is an interest and capacity in caring for animals or plants. As the child gets older, their interest and involvement can be broadened to helping with local environmental management, and then to working on local action research and monitoring.



Source: Hart, Roger (1996), *Children's Participation in Sustainable Development: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care*, Earthscan, London

Whereas the CRC defines a child as someone between the ages of 0-18, the UN definition of Youth extends to age 25, a critically important yet vastly different population in terms of

capacity and interest, with emphasis on higher education, skills for employability, economic opportunity, and strong desire to build a more sustainable world, among other things.

The ANDWP opportunity for practical consideration of differentiated inter-generational approaches to mainstreaming climate change education into primary, post-primary, and non-formal education opportunities for children and adolescents presents itself at this time as a viable social strategy to reduce risk and mitigate leakage in protected forest areas, shift behaviours toward sustainable consumption, and increase adaptive capacity of impoverished communities (both rural and urban) worldwide.

Data collection and indicators by which to assess the participation of children in non-formal and alternative educational options are necessary to substantiate the largely anecdotal evidence base. This will allow for a better assessment of the effectiveness of environmental education as a strategy to reduce risk and increase adaptive capacity in most vulnerable communities as well as allow for better programmatic planning, evaluation, and, ultimately, policymaking. Rigorous studies on the impacts of strategies used in, and the cost-effectiveness and comparative advantages of, alternative education programmes in community-based agro-forestry, disaster risk management, renewable energy, water projects, and other environmental initiatives are necessary to determine their effectiveness in achieving their goals and subsequently in improving the lives of children and adolescents.

Recognition of the gap and urgent need for the financing of climate change environmental education of children and adolescents – especially girls – in primary schools, post-primary schools, and alternative educational settings in the amended New Delhi Work Programme are necessary if we want to empower youth with the capacity to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

Inputs on Successor Work Programme

1. Empower Youth Leadership to Engage Children

Children, endowed with curiosity about the world around them, can be the catalyst for lasting change in their community, especially when engaged in fun and stimulating ways. With regard to the environment, it is essential to nurture an inter-generational approach. Participatory life skills-based education is crucial for developing adaptive capacity and the knowledge and understanding of the environment and its natural limits. Additionally, empowering youth leadership to mentor and guide children can reduce risk and mitigate climate change through conservation and restoration of local environments, and fosters the accumulation of experience necessary to lead tomorrow's sustainability practices and policymaking.

Earth Child Institute is taking action to ensure that the voices, opinions, and local actions of children are recognized in intergovernmental processes at Rio+20 and COP18. In collaboration with the Environmental Conservation Education program at New York University, ECI has launched Power of One Child – Global Action Classroom, an innovative, digital, and international youth-led initiative for child engagement focusing on connecting children from different countries around the world who are taking action to improve their local environments. The Global Action Classroom is creating a unique opportunity for children in the elementary and middle school age range to share their local actions and skills with their peers around the world, to learn of the environmental challenges facing other kids, and most importantly to discover that they have global partners in their efforts to conserve the local environment. Each country site will be matched with one to two partners in other international locations to form an Action Team that will meet digitally, plan and execute their activities together, and share resources where possible. Preliminary working group meetings have shown promising results.

When youth are engaged in creative practices that foster a more sustainable and responsible relationship with the environment, it becomes more likely that the children themselves will ultimately make the connections between the problems and solutions. Awakening and nurturing this ability to analyze and think critically in younger generations is pivotal to ensuring lasting

change as well as offering an opportunity to digress from the “business as usual” attitude that plagues older generations with inaction.

For many developing countries, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS), immediate implementation of adaptation solutions to climate change is crucial. Their high vulnerability to climate-related hazards means that many communities need to come up with and implement innovative adaptation strategies.¹¹ The capacity to do so is strongly dependent upon each country’s ecosystem, and socio-economic, educational, and political structures.

2. Empower Adolescent Girls

Gender is a contributing factor to child vulnerability, since in many places boys and girls have different lifestyles and responsibilities. Adolescent girls often assist with domestic tasks like fetching water and cooking, whereas boys may assist with herding cattle or working in the market to supplement family income. These differences inevitably point to different types of vulnerabilities for girls and boys in the face of climate change. The workloads of women and girls also increase disproportionately during drought and in the aftermath of natural disaster because of a need to work harder even as their health deteriorates and working conditions worsen.¹² Educating and empowering girls about the connection between their patterns of behaviour and environmental degradation is a necessary step on the road to addressing these issues.

The Center for Global Development’s article, “Girls Count; A Global Investment and Action Agenda,” comes to similar conclusions regarding economy, women, and the environment:

Girls’ welfare is fundamental in determining economic and social outcomes. At the macroeconomic level the **size and competitiveness of tomorrow’s labor force will be shaped by today’s girls’ education and skill-building** and by how much

¹¹ UNDP EEG BDP, A Toolkit for Designing Adaptation Initiatives, New York, 2010.

¹² Nelson, V., K. Meadows, et al. (2002). "Uncertain Predictions, Invisible Impacts, and the Need to Mainstream Gender in Climate Change Adaptations." *Gender and Development* 10(2): 51-59.

these girls use their education and skills in formal and informal economic activity. Moreover, future economic growth hinges in part on how well developing countries take advantage of the bulge in the population of productive age.¹³

Therefore, by opting to invest in educational, economic, and social advances for adolescent girls, the UNFCCC would be initiating a multifaceted approach to combating both poverty and environmental degradation.

3. Foster and Mainstream Climate Change Environmental Education

“A quality, child-centered education that empowers children to identify and solve problems in their communities, whatever they may be, is the highest form of adaptation technology.”¹⁴

- ECI Founder, Donna Goodman

International Institute on Child Rights, Sion, Switzerland, 26 October 2011.

As we break the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation down to their lowest common denominator, most of us can increasingly agree that it is a deficiency in human knowledge about the environment that has led to unsustainable practices, which have gradually spread across the globe in the name of “development.”

An example of this is found in ECI’s white paper, “Forest Community Schools: A Child-Centered Strategy to Mitigate Leakage in REDD+”:

Through student leadership, the association between what is taught in the classroom and practical adaptation measures to nurture the local environment and community can also build momentum for change. To illustrate this point, it has been demonstrated that children are effective at teaching and influencing behavior changes in their parents. The city of Los Angeles had an amazing 90 percent

¹³ Levine, Ruth, Cynthia B. Lloyd, Margaret Greene, and Caren Grown. *Girls Count; A Global Investment and Action Agenda*. Publication. Center for Global Development, 2008. P 1 of 96.

¹⁴ Goodman, Donna L. *UNFCCC and Child Rights; An Intergenerational View of Global Environmental Policy* for International seminar, Climate Change: Impacts on Children and their Rights. Earth Child Institute, 26 Oct. 2011

compliance when they started their recycling program, as compared to other large cities, which were able to engage less than half of their residents into compliance. What made the difference? Before implementation in Los Angeles, an educational program was conducted in the public schools by a local non-profit organization called Tree People. This program reached a critical mass of 250,000 elementary school children (approx. 40 percent of all students) over a two-year period. **These children in turn educated their parents, thereby ensuring the success of family action when the municipal recycling program began.**¹⁵

The evidence is clear that mitigating climate change and environmental ruin is a daunting challenge with serious implications for present and future generations, especially for those who are most vulnerable – the children of developing populations. However, despite what seems to be insurmountable obstacles to sustainability, education has and always will be the key. By incorporating environmental learning into existing educational frameworks, at local and regional levels, in formal and non-traditional educational settings, and by engaging and empowering youth with capacity-building life skills and knowledge, environmental issues and their consequent effects can be more effectively addressed and vulnerabilities can be reduced.

¹⁵ Earth Child Institute, Planet2025 Network for the Carbon War Room (2011) Forest Community Schools: A Child Centered Strategy to Mitigate Leakage in REDD+, <http://www.earthchildinstitute.org/Forest%20Community%20Schools,%20A%20Child-Centered%20Strategy%20for%20mitigating%20leakage%20in%20REDD+.pdf>.

Earth Child Institute (ECI) is an international NGO committed to combating climate change, deforestation, and water scarcity by investing in hands-on environmental and educational projects with and for children, both in and out of schools. We engage with and support empowerment of the world's 2.2 billion people under the age of 18 to facilitate the planting of trees and to ensure access to safe water, sanitation, clean energy, and nutritious food. We believe in creating new and participatory solutions for community-based sustainable development that will reduce risk and increase resilience to the changing global environment.

ECI's mission is implemented through three key program areas:

International policy and advocacy: Influencing global environmental governance to acknowledge the rights, needs, and capacities of children in policies addressing REDD+, climate change, water, sanitation and hygiene, the green economy, and children's environmental health.

Participatory environmental program development: Development of games, participatory tools, and other curriculum resources as well as training of teachers for implementation and use of these resources.

Global networking for implementation: Creating opportunities for youth leaders to engage with and empower children with life skills-based participatory environmental education through campaigns that yield meaningful and verifiable results, such as our tree-planting program: 2.2 Billion: Power of One Child + One Tree = A Sustainable Future for All.