

Climate Crisis Fuels Rising Violence Against Children: Evidence Across Child Protection Research



Watch the session recording [here](#)!



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Climate crisis severely affects children globally, increasing exposure to hazards and protection risks.
- Climate shocks cause cascading livelihood failures, disrupting systems and services, and driving harmful coping strategies and exploitation risks.
- Research across India, Kenya–Ethiopia borderlands, and Southern Africa shows rising sexual violence, child labour, child marriage, school dropout, and psychosocial distress during and after climate shocks
- Climate adaptation must be understood and funded not only for hazards but also as a primary prevention strategy for child protection, such as ensuring school retention, social protection linkages, and other protection-sensitive design.
- Joint needs assessment, unconditional cash assistance, livelihood strengthening, and local protection systems strengthening are critical to build resilience and prevent child protection risks.

Embedding child protection in climate adaptation is not a nice-to-have; it is a structural requirement for effective response.



NEW EVIDENCE SHOWS

- Severe drought almost triples the rates of sexual exploitation against girls.
- Child brides, living in drought settings, with loss of education, experience almost four times the risk of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), compared to those with education.
- Children affected by droughts and living in IDP camps are highly vulnerable to child labour, child marriage, sexual exploitation, physical abuse, trafficking, school dropout, and psychosocial impacts.

- 21% of households affected by cyclones in Sundarbans, India, were compelled to use adverse coping mechanisms such as selling assets, withdrawing children from school, and resorting to child marriage and child labour.
- Children affected by recurrent cyclones endure persistent impacts – education loss, lack of care, and psychological distress.
- Every disruption in the Food Security and Livelihood Sector translates to a real impact on a child's nutrition, education, and their future.

KEY POINTS FROM PANEL DISCUSSION

- **Climate adaptation and mitigation should be used as a primary prevention strategy to interrupt the risk pathways** such as through anticipatory action, safeguarding education continuity, strengthening household resilience, and scaling up shock-responsive social protection systems, before escalating to protection risks to children during and after climate shocks.
- **Children are not only as a vulnerable population but as capable agents of change.** Children understand their own realities and the resources available to them. Meaningful engagement with children in climate adaptation programmes shapes preparedness and responses more effectively and in a more contextually appropriate way.
- **Child protection and education should be embedded in national and local climate governance, with flexible multi-sectoral funding and more investment in local capacities.** Institutional barriers and fragmented funding streams currently prevent frontline teams from delivering fully integrated protection-sensitive climate adaptation and responses.
- **Multi-sectoral and inter-operational data and joint shock-responsive triggers are key.** There is a fundamental timing mismatch between food security early warning systems and child protection action triggers, while asset depletion often precipitates school dropout, hazardous labour, or child marriage within 6 to 18 months after a shock.
- **Safeguarding and PSEA mechanisms must be scaled with assistance to prevent harm linked to aid delivery.**
- **Community-driven demand and embedding child safety into local governance increase local accountability and response capacity.**



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FURTHER READING

- Aangan (2025), The Vulnerable Child and the Climate Crisis: Why We Must Keep Children at the Center of Climate Action. Available [here](#).
- IFRC (2025), Embedding Education and Child Protection in Anticipatory Action. Available [here](#).
- Plan International (2025), Toolbox: Integrated Child Protection and Food Security Programming in Humanitarian Action. Available [here](#).
- Terre des Hommes Netherlands (2026), Factsheet – Climate Change: A Growing Threat to Children. Available [here](#).
- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2026), The Impact of Funding Cuts on Children and their Protection in Humanitarian Contexts: An Analysis One Year On. Available [here](#).
- University of Oxford (2026), Drought is Associated with Increased Risk of Sexual, Physical, and Emotional Violence. Available [here](#).