

ACTION NEEDED TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN NOW & FOR THE FUTURE GENERATIONS

To combat climate change, policymakers across the world must foster the movement away from fossil fuels, hold industry and polluters accountable for their emissions, enact aggressive climate adaptation measures, and hold true to their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement.

Across the world, investments are needed to build capacity and assist in the transition towards a greener economy, encourage climate friendly education systems, include vulnerable populations within policymaking strategies, invest in climate infrastructure, and implement adaptation and mitigation measures.

Since children and women are some of the most vulnerable to the threat of climate change; particularly in the Global South, frameworks must be set in place to protect these climate vulnerable groups, including investments in maternal and child health, expansion of opportunities and support for education and livelihoods, and increasing investments in early childhood development.

The early childhood community can play a critical role in the efforts to create a more sustainable world and cleaner and safer communities for our children. While no one is expected to become a climate expert overnight, given the impact the environment is having on young children, we all need to become more attentive to news and reports related to these issues. Below are a number of actions steps you can take to make change:

Increase awareness of the impact of climate and environmental issues on young children

- 1. Become better informed.** In order to help assure a more sustainable future, we all need to learn more about climate change, environmental risks and the impact they are having on children and families.
- 2. Build public awareness.** Once we are better informed about the issues, we need to share this information with others through our networks and with policymakers in our communities, to promote children's rights in relation to the environment and to hold governments accountable.
- 3. Document evidence.** Early childhood providers and child development researchers can be in the vanguard of collecting firsthand evidence about how changes in the environment are affecting children including threats such as food shortages, health concerns, malnutrition and migration. This is critical in ensuring proper planning and adaptation to the delivery of basic services and enhance governments' capacity to better understand the needs of young children and where to direct funding.



Mitigate damage and build protective factors

4. Initiate actions to mitigate environmental damage. There are increasing environmental risks threatening the well-being of children and families, from air pollution to contaminated water supplies. Early childhood advocates can join forces with others in the community to help bring attention to these issues and work for improvement.

5. Increase protective factors through the development of quality early childhood services that build the social emotional wellbeing of children and support social and economic supports for families, both of which can help build resilience.

6. Prepare for emergencies. Natural disasters are becoming more and more common, from hurricanes to flooding and extreme heat. All communities, including early childhood programs, should have plans in place and be ready to help children and families in case of an emergency.

Promote a sustainable environment through early childhood programs

7. Promote environmental early education to teach children to care for the earth. Children can learn to care for the earth from an early age. Integrating a respect for living things and care for the natural environment are important curriculum issues for early childhood programs that helps build curiosity and bring new content into the teaching of science and basic skills. Laying strong foundations for future generations on the impacts of climate change may possibly change the narrative.

8. Encourage environmentally friendly actions among families and communities. Caregivers play a role both in the home and community and they should be empowered to create a safe and secure environment for children. Parent engagement is a cornerstone of an early childhood program. Enlisting the whole family and communities in environmentally friendly practices, can provide new opportunities for encouraging child parent interactions at home and garner community support.

9. Build eco-friendly early childhood facilities. This includes renovating old spaces that may have existing health and safety issues, using more eco-friendly material when building new facilities and creating more natural outdoors play spaces.



Join forces with others

10. Reach out to youth advocates. The environmental movement has been a cause taken up by youth advocates around the world. Community youth groups and middle and high school students can be natural allies in our efforts to raise the visibility of environmental impacts on children.

11. Partner with environmental groups. Early childhood programs, organizations, and networks should include environmental awareness within our advocacy efforts. Partnering with environmental groups in your community, sharing the impacts of climate on children and enlisting the help of larger groups helps build our strength to make change.

12. Stand up for improved policies that are child-friendly, protect the environment and prioritize building the climate resilience of services that young children depend upon most, to reduce the impact of climate change on children and families.

13. Strengthen multi-sectoral dialogue and partnerships. Leverage on existing multi-sectoral dialogues and partnerships to bring to the front line, effects of climate change and young children, especially at national and regional level.

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