

Integrating Children's Rights and Intergenerational Equity into the Global Climate Action Agenda 2025–2030

1. Introduction and Context

Children represent approximately one-third of the global population and half of all people living in extreme poverty, according to UNICEF. They are also the most affected by climate change: they face heightened exposure to pollution, food insecurity, forced displacement, and the destruction of their homes and schools. Yet they remain virtually invisible in the structures and decisions of the global climate regime. This is not merely a symbolic omission: it is a concrete challenge to the effectiveness of adaptation, mitigation, and intergenerational equity and justice efforts.

[Research](#) released by the Alana Institute and LACLIMA during the Bonn Climate Conference in June, 2025, precisely illustrates this gap. Through a detailed mapping of all COP decisions, the study reconstructs the trajectory of inclusion of children within the UNFCCC decision-making process. The analysis reveals that between 1992 and 2010, the term “children” appeared only twice in the decisions of the UNFCCC. From 2018 to 2024, there were 77 mentions. In the same period, references to “youth” rose from 8 to 123. While this growth is significant, it remains insufficient to ensure that children are truly at the center of climate policies.

This study advances an innovative approach in international law: linking the obligations assumed by States under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) — in particular Article 3, which establishes that the best interests of the child must be a **primary consideration** in all actions. The climate commitments set out in the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement are also included. The proposal of the research is clear: promote a more just, coherent, and responsive cross-sectoral governance model that recognizes children's rights not as a parallel agenda, but as an essential transversal component of effective climate action.

Within the UNFCCC institutional framework, certain milestones signal change: the creation of the children and youth constituency (YOUNGO) in 2009; the more recent establishment of the Youth Climate Champion role in COP Presidencies; and, for the first time, the inclusion of children's issues in the official COP agenda, with the Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate Change held in Bonn in 2024. These are important advances, but they still need to be translated into binding decisions. Despite these developments, there is still an important path to be taken to ensure that children are at the center of climate discussions and decisions, both in negotiations and in the action agenda.

2. What should success look like for the GCAA in the next five years, and how can it be measured effectively?

A successful Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA) by 2030 should achieve:

- Formal recognition of children as a priority group in climate action, with explicit references in all strategic documents of the High-Level Champions (HLCs) and the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MPGCA).
- Direct alignment with CRC principles, particularly Article 3, and with General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change.
- Integration of children's rights indicators into the Climate Action Pathways, covering areas such as education, health, transport, land use, and infrastructure.

3. How can the GCAA facilitate direct and impactful engagement between Parties and NPS to support implementation efforts at both national and sectoral levels, in order to advance the full delivery of the GST, NDCs, and NAPs?

The COP Action Agenda, under the leadership of the HLCs and with support from the MPGCA, has sought to catalyze ambitious climate action by non-state actors and strengthen Paris Agreement implementation through transformative, multisectoral, and intergenerational solutions. However, children's rights have not yet been fully incorporated as a cross-cutting axis in the formulation, monitoring, and communication of these actions. Proposals:

- Formal Recognition: Include explicit acknowledgment of children as a vulnerable group and rights-holders in all strategic documents, linked to intergenerational equity and rights-based climate justice.
- Thematic Track on Children:
 - Create a dedicated track in the COP Presidency agenda, coordinated with UNICEF, OHCHR, and local networks.
- Integration in Climate Action Pathways and Resilience Frontiers: Incorporate indicators and targets for child protection and empowerment into all sectoral pathways; embed child rights as a dimension of resilient futures in the Resilience Frontiers initiative.
- Inclusion in Climate Action Outcomes: Ensure political statements from COP Presidencies and HLCs contain concrete commitments to children's rights, including child-focused climate finance, universal climate education, and safeguards in adaptation and mitigation projects.

4. How can the CGAA promote an inclusive and equitable engagement, in particular from underrepresented groups and regions?

The GCAA must prioritize engagement from underrepresented groups, including children, mainly children from Indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, and low-income communities, and children with disabilities. Key strategies should include:

- Guarantee proportional representation in official events, dialogues, and consultations.
- Implement [MiniCOPs](#) to gather perspectives from children in their schools and communities. Mini-COPs are local, autonomous, and open experiences promoted by schools, civil society organizations, councils, collectives, or community groups that want to listen to and amplify the voices of children and adolescents on climate change, the future of the planet, and the right to a dignified, healthy, and fair life for all. Inspired by the Climate Conference model, the Mini-COPs focus on educational, cultural, artistic, and active listening activities, respecting children's and youth languages and the realities and cultures of each territory. To work toward expanding the leading role that children and adolescents can play during key moments of global attention to climate issues (such as during a COP), Mini-COPs can be seen as a global mobilization – the Mutirão – by asking each school or territory to work with children and adolescents to organize a MiniCOP.
- Ensure access to climate-related information in child-friendly formats and multiple languages.

5. What improvements can be made to ensure better transparency, reporting and follow up of the GCAA, including in existing tools such as the Global Climate Action Portal (a.k.a NAZCA) and the Yearbook of Global Climate Action?

To ensure robust accountability:

- Require initiatives on the Global Climate Action Portal (NAZCA) to report on child rights impacts.
- Include a dedicated section on children in the Yearbook of Global Climate Action.
- Develop a monitoring framework linking child rights protection to Paris Agreement implementation and CRC obligations.