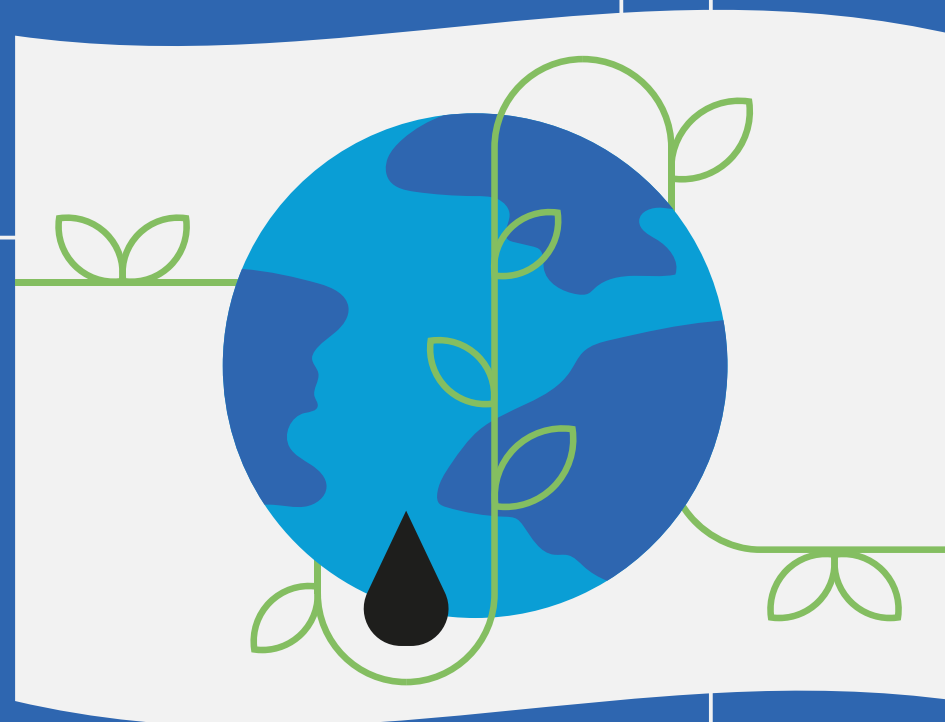


THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE CLIMATE AGENDA

A media coverage guide



Produced by:



Strategic partnerships:



Van Leer



FOUNDATION



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2025

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FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION



The climate crisis is the greatest global challenge of our time, disproportionately affecting those who have contributed least to the problem: children and adolescents. Given this reality, ANDI offers this guide to help broaden the discussion on the intersection between children's rights and climate change, journalists, communicators, content creators, and other interested professionals with resources to address the topic with accuracy and sensitivity.

WHY?

Children and adolescents are among the most vulnerable group to climate change due to their physical and emotional development, which increases their sensitivity to environmental impacts, such as extreme weather, food insecurity, and displacement. Similarly, because of their status they rely

heavily on the existence and effectiveness of public policies and protection systems.

However, notwithstanding their vulnerability, this population segment remains largely overlooked in major global climate negotiations and agreements, and by Brazilian climate policies. Opportunities for children and adolescents to take a lead role in climate policy – not just as victims, but as change agents – are still scarce.

The discussions, targets, and global commitments shaped by the United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COPs) influence policy decisions at national and local levels. Yet, without a dedicated focus on children and adolescents, these efforts risk overlooking their unique vulnerabilities and needs — potentially compounding existing risks.

Other international instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, establish guidelines to ensure that the rights of children and adolescents are respected and now include provisions on climate change. However, the challenges posed by global warming put these rights at risk, requiring that climate policy definitively incorporate the perspective of children.

As the climate crisis deepens, the persistent threats to the rights and safety of children and adolescents highlight the urgent need for focused societal engagement with the youngest population segments. Journalists, communicators, and content creators are pivotal to this effort: shaping narratives that connect the sweeping scope of international agreements with local childhood realities and critically examining policy responses across sectors.

SUPPORTING NEWS COVERAGE OF THE COP

The 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 30) hosted by Brazil represents a unique opportunity to spotlight the issue in global discussions. For the first time, the country will host the primary global decision-making forum on our climate future. It is a moment that serves to amplify the importance of the issue for society and the news media alike, creating a favorable environment for promoting deeper engagement on how climate change puts the rights of children and adolescents at risk – and how environmental policies, global, national, and local, relate to this age group.

This guide was also prepared to support communications professionals in this effort. Given the expectation that for many journalists COP 30 will represent their first international climate negotiation event, the pages below are designed to meet two objectives:

- ▶ Provide a launch point for covering COP 30 with a focus on child and adolescent

rights by offering insight into the structure and processes of the conference and explaining how children and adolescents are—or are not—encompassed under international climate negotiations.

- ▶ Offer contextualized information on the relationship between climate change and childhood, consolidating, in a single source, essential data to address the impacts of the crisis on this age group, including the vulnerabilities involved, rights at risk, and national and local policies, with particular attention to Brazil.

TIPS AND STORY ANGLES

In addition, the guide includes tips for covering the conference, alerts on issues with the potential to yield good stories, and suggestions on key topics for ongoing follow-up. It also features an information database of organizations operating at the intersection of childhood and climate, organizations specialized in international climate negotiations, and organizations of

children and adolescents at the forefront of the struggle for climate justice.

We hope this guide will be used beyond the heady days of COP 30 and serve as a resource for ongoing coverage. Through the pages that follow, ANDI reaffirms its commitment to promote human rights, child and youth rights and socio-environmental rights, as well as to provide journalists with meaningful support on how to address the challenges at the intersection of children's rights and climate change with the appropriate accuracy and sensitivity.

We invite you to explore, learn about the topic, and put into practice the content ideas introduced in the pages below, with a consistent focus on deepening the analysis and raising awareness of the importance of protecting the rights of children and adolescents in the era of climate change.

Miriam Pragita and Ana Potyara
Directors of ANDI



1

DECIPHERING THE EVENT: INFORMATION TO UNDERSTAND A CLIMATE COP

Before exploring the underlying and intrinsic relationship between climate change and the rights of children and adolescents, it is important to understand what a Climate COP is, how it works, Brazil's responsibilities as host in 2025, and the key issues at stake.

This will help journalists, communications professionals, and content creators attending the event gain a solid understanding of key terms, dynamics, and topics shaping international discussions, a crucial foundation for credible coverage of COP 30, especially when focusing on national climate efforts through the lens of children and adolescents.



ESSENTIALS OF THE COPS

The Conferences of the Parties (COPs) are annual meetings held under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which has more recently also come to be referred to as UN Climate, in an effort to draw the organization and the issue closer to the general public.

Composed of representatives from 198 countries, the primary aim of the event is to assess the progress in implementing the 1992 convention. It is the formal framework within which international agreements are negotiated, such as the Kyoto

Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015) that established concrete targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

More than just a diplomatic event, COPs have become broad arenas for discussion, where governments, scientists, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, youth, and the private sector exchange experiences, lay out solutions, and press for accountability. Alongside the formal negotiations between States, the conferences feature a robust program of panels, presentations, and statements on the impacts of the climate crisis and various proposals for addressing those impacts.



HEADS UP

Working group meetings usually take place in the first week. The groups include not only negotiators but also civil society experts. These are highly qualified individuals who can sit for interviews and offer deeper insights into key issues included in working documents, such as climate justice, children's rights, and the rights of vulnerable populations, among others.

■ HOW ARE THE COPS ORGANIZED?

COPs are organized around a complex and detailed structure divided into different sessions and side events that simultaneously provide for official negotiations, technical discussions, civil society activities, and spaces for the private sector to showcase breakthroughs, as well as engage in lobbying and advocacy activities.

For those attending the event for the first time, it is important to understand the essential building blocks of the COP and how these are distributed over the 15 days of the conference.

WEEK 1

+ Opening Plenary: the opening session, in which all parties and participants are formally welcomed and the COP presidency sets the official agenda.

+ Working and Negotiation Groups: divided by specific themes, such as mitigation, adaptation, climate finance, and market mechanisms. The groups are responsible for discussing technical details and proposing negotiating texts

WEEKS 1 AND 2

+ Summit of Heads of State: meeting of heads of state, ministers, and global leaders to discuss crucial political issues and seek consensus on points of disagreement. This usually takes place at the beginning of the second week of the event, but the schedule may vary depending on the presidency.

Each high-level representative of the participating countries (usually heads of state) is given a speaking slot in the plenary to highlight their country's position. This is the busiest time in the event. Added security measures are implemented in host cities, and the media focuses heavily on the presence and utterings of world leaders.

+ Side events: sessions organized by private sector entities, local governments, and civil society to share experiences and promote innovative solutions. Side events take place both in the UN-managed space (**Blue Zone**), in the public space (**Green Zone**), and at various other venues across the host city.

The **Blue Zone** houses two types of side events:

1. Events officially scheduled with the UNFCCC by organizations and listed on the daily agenda.
2. Events held daily in the pavilions area at the booths sponsored by individual countries, groups, researchers, companies, civil society, international organizations.

The latter are scheduled by their respective organizers. It is important to stay alert and visit relevant pavilions directly. A journalist from Thailand, for example, may find very interesting stories at their country's booth. Generally, these events aim to assess, propose, debate, and call for solutions.

WEEK 2

+ Closed-Door Negotiations: in the second week of the COP, the number of side events decreases significantly. This is when country negotiators meet to finalize agreements, allocate funding for their implementation, and work through points of disagreement. The process is slow and hinges on a delicate diplomatic balance, where even word choice can impact the chances of reaching a final consensus.

It is not uncommon for hours (sometimes even days) to go by without significant progress or concrete information on the discussions. The press does not have access to these meetings, but journalists can always rely on the support of observer organizations from their respective countries for updates and insights on the progress of negotiations (see *box: Observers: a necessary counterweight to official voices*).

+ Closing Plenary Session: the objective of the closing COP plenary is to secure final approval of the texts negotiated over the event's two weeks by participating countries. After intense backroom discussions and adjustments, the documents are presented for formal endorsement by all delegations. The setting is formal, but charged with tension, as any country can raise objections and delay conclusion of the session.

Throughout the session, representatives deliver statements, expressing their support, reservations, or objections to the final text. Despite potential disagreements, the goal is to ensure that no country blocks the agreement, given that decisions must be made by consensus. The COP only ends when the COP president gavel in the last document (and there are many—see the *box Important Acronyms* on page XX) hammered out over the two-week proceeding.

INNOVATIVE MODEL

The Brazilian government has introduced a groundbreaking initiative in the history of COPs by deciding to hold the summit of heads of state before the official opening of the event. World leaders will gather in Belém on November 6 and 7.

The decision aims to address two issues. One is the challenge of hosting approximately 50,000 people at once. Second, the presence of heads of state and their delegations requires more hotel rooms and extra security measures, including road closures, potentially causing traffic congestion and hindering mobility.

On another front, the proposal aims to ensure that the focus of the COPs remains on the negotiations. The presence of heads of state requires that the negotiating teams accompany their respective leaders, whose statements tend to dominate the coverage in the event's first week. This could delay the start of important negotiations that deserve more time for discussion.



REPORTING TIP

■ COPS ARE MARATHONS

International climate negotiations are extremely complex because they involve the interests of 198 countries, each with different economic, social, and environmental realities. Even small changes in the wording of agreements can lead to long discussions and delays. As such, it is common for a Climate Conference to extend far beyond its scheduled conclusion. In the 2024 meeting, for example, the closing session stretched into the early morning hours, concluding a full 33 hours after the appointed time.

Political and economic factors also influence the duration of negotiations, as governments change their stance depending on internal factors and the influence and pressure different sectors exert on government positions, such as those related to fossil fuels.

Moreover, the capacity for adaptation varies from country to country, resulting in prolonged debates. The most important issue is climate financing: determining who should pay for the transition to a more sustainable economy generates serious impasses and disagreements.

Disagreements can arise over word choice, as each term can imply different degrees of responsibility and commitment. Some countries prefer milder expressions to avoid legal obligations, while others advocate for stronger and more assertive language to ensure concrete actions are actually implemented. In international “legalese,” the difference between terms like “necessary measures” and “desirable measures” can mean the difference between a country being obligated to implement certain actions or not.

- ▶ *To closely track this diplomatic dance of competing interests, the Climate Observatory created the **Central da COP**, which has been up and running since last year for the purpose of helping explain the complexities of the conference in accessible language: specifically in the vocabulary of football (soccer). It is an essential source for understanding every move on the field.*



■ EVENT VENUES

COP activities take place in three distinct spaces:

- ▶ The **Blue Zone**: an area managed directly by the UN and the COP's main hub. This is where all official negotiations, diplomatic meetings, and most side events occur. It is also where the press has access to a dedicated media room. In addition, the Blue Zone houses pavilions sponsored by individual countries and organization.

The pavilion spaces are purchased for a fee and the proceeds used by host countries to cover event costs.

- ▶ The **Green Zone**: a public space managed by the host country in which civil society organizations, countries, and businesses are invited to participate. For example, at COP 29 in Azerbaijan, a number of Brazilian organizations had exhibition and event spaces in the Green Zone, such as the

Ministry of Tourism and the National Confederation of Industry, in addition to Brazil's official Blue Zone pavilion.

- ▶ **Other venues** across the host cities: venues that often host unofficial side events typically organized by civil society or private entities. In the case of Belém, it will be important to keeping an eye on the Yellow Zones, which aim to diversify climate debate spaces by hosting discussions in peripheral areas.

■ WHO CAN TAKE PART IN COPS?

Entry to the **Blue Zone**, managed by the UNFCCC, is granted to the following:

Delegates (national governments, also referred to as Parties): representatives of the signatory countries to the Climate Convention and the Paris Agreement, including diplomats, politicians, and government officials. They are the only participants authorized to negotiate and make official decisions.

It is worth noting that each country is allocated a varying number of access passes to be used as they wish, known as *party overflow*. The credential allows social actors who are not registered as observers to take part in the discussions.

Observers: observers are non-state entities that participate in climate change negotiations and contribute specialized technical and policy expertise.

This includes intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank, the UN system and its specialized agencies, like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as civil society organizations. The latter represent a wide spectrum of interests and include representatives from business, environmental organizations, agriculture, Indigenous populations, local governments and municipal authorities, research

institutes and academia, labor unions, and women's, gender, and youth groups.

Civil society organizations can apply for observer status via a dedicated page on the [UNFCCC website](#). It is worth noting that the admission process typically takes more than a year.

Press: media professionals must apply for accreditation exclusively through the [UNFCCC secretariat](#). Press credentials grant access to press conferences, open meetings, plenary sessions, and the participation of heads of state.



REPORTING TIP

■ OBSERVERS: A NECESSARY COUNTERWEIGHT TO OFFICIAL VOICES

When covering a COP on-site, as a journalist you will inevitably encounter obstacles:

- ▶ Simultaneous events and debates that preclude the possibility of following all developments in real time;
- ▶ The use of technical and diplomatic terminology in international negotiations, which requires either prior knowledge or specialized support for proper interpretation;
- ▶ And a potential overreliance on the official press releases and briefings organized by governments, which could shape the narrative on progress or setbacks in the negotiations.

A good tip for understanding the complexities of and gaining a non-official perspec-

tive on the negotiations is to turn to the numerous civil society organizations that participate as observers.

Although they do not have decision-making power, observers play an important role by monitoring negotiations, producing reports, organizing side events, and advocating for more ambitious climate policies. Their presence at the COP and other UNFCCC meetings helps influence the global climate change agenda, while assisting non-experts better understand what is happening.

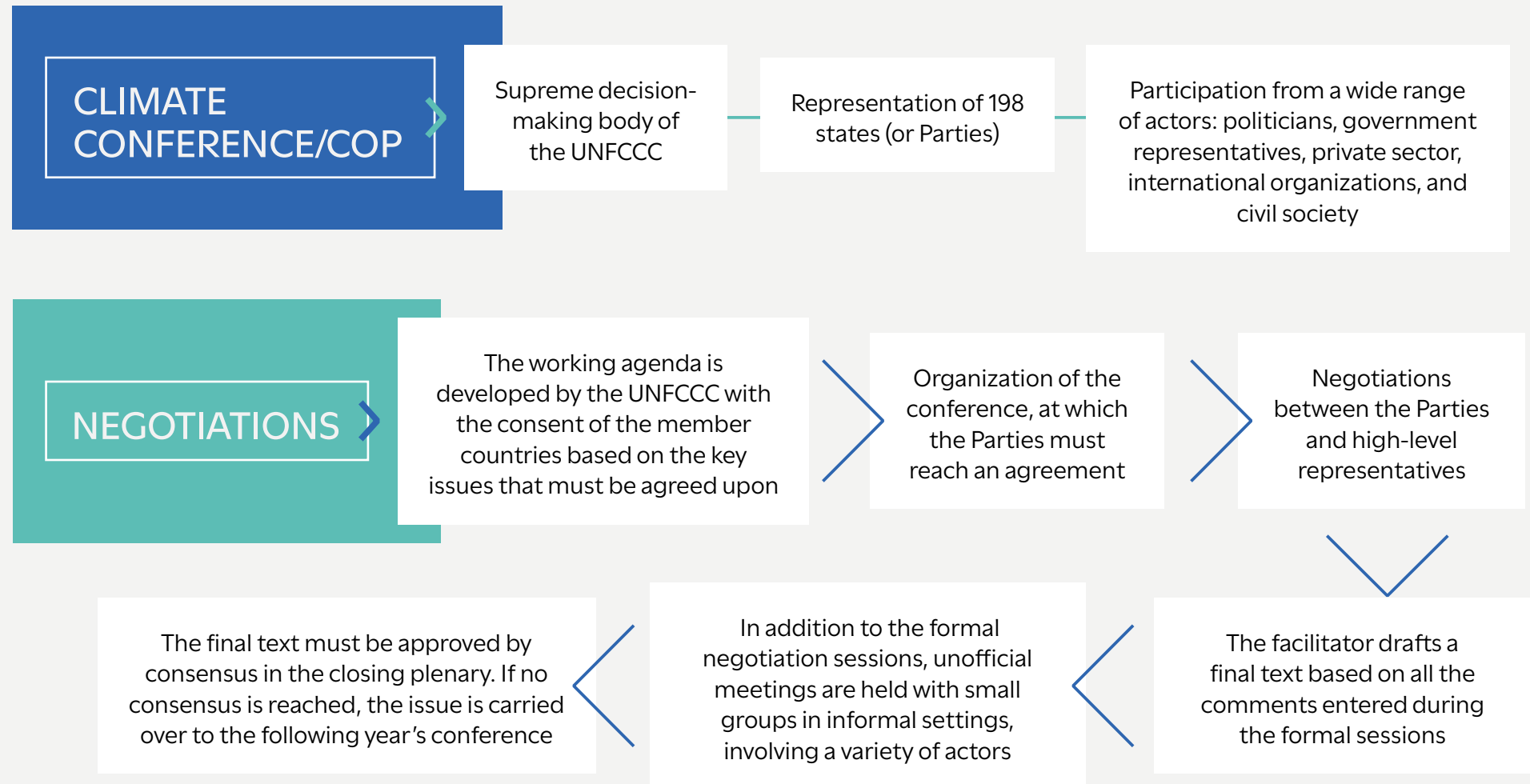
Several organizations maintain a consistent presence at the COP. For instance, the *Climate Action Network* (CAN) distributes a daily briefing summarizing the previous day's negotiations, highlighting key points and the

countries most responsible for obstructing progress. At the end of each day, they award the Fossil of the Day trophy to the country that did the most to block progress.

In Brazil's case, in addition to working tirelessly to push for ambitious decisions, representatives from various organizations still find time to assist journalists understand what is happening and decipher the countless acronyms contained in the documents under discussion. These include *Observatório do Clima*, *Instituto Talanoa*, *Greenpeace*, *LACLIMA*, and others.

Whether you are covering the event in person or remotely, these sources are essential. Through bulletins, websites, and press releases, they will help you track and make sense of the negotiations.

HOW CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS WORK





THE BRAZILIAN COP 30 PRESIDENCY

It was at COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022, that then-president-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva announced the plan to have Belém host a conference. According to the Climate Observatory (Observatório do Clima), the bid carried strong symbolic value in strengthening the country's position as a leader on environmental matters, especially after four years of accelerated deforestation driven by the previous administration's dismantling of environmental protections.

The following year, the UN confirmed the city as the host. However, determining who would lead the coordination effort required additional time. In February 2025, Brazilian diplomat and former chief negotiator to the Climate COPs, André Corrêa do Lago, was officially confirmed as president. Similarly, Ana Toni, Executive Secretary for Climate Change at the Ministry of the Environment, was appointed Executive Secretary of COP 30.

■ THE ROLE OF THE COP PRESIDENCY

The COP presidency is a rotating position held by the host country for one year. Like the conference venue, the presidency rotates among the five regions recognized by the UN: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, and Western Europe.

It is important to highlight that the presidency of a COP plays a critical role in the conference's success. It is responsible for overseeing the negotiations and facilitating consensus among the parties. Additionally, it coordinates the meeting agenda and presides over the plenary sessions.

According to a [publication](#) by the Instituto Talañoa's Política por Inteiro website¹, the COP presidency is responsible for a range of actions:

+ Agenda setting: the presidency sets priorities, defines objectives, and shapes the discussions. At COP 28, in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates sought consensus on the very first day for the creation of the Loss and Damage Fund. At COP 29, in Azerbaijan, the presidency prioritized reaching consensus on carbon

market regulations right out of the gate. What is Brazil's priority for COP 30?

+ Multilateral Dialogue: the presidency is tasked with promoting balanced dialogue to drive the parties in the direction of the Climate Convention final goal: stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at safe levels.

+ Mobilization of Parties: the presidency mobilizes the parties and seeks to create space for non-state actors (including subnational governments, businesses, and organized civil society) to take part.

+ International Showcase: hosting the COP positions a country in the international spotlight, offering a valuable platform to highlight national climate initiatives and policy achievements.

+ Momentum for Climate Action: the presidency drives coalitions and climate action. At COP 26 in Glasgow, the United Kingdom gave strong support to action agendas, with daily announcements of new coalitions and new commitments from countries.

REMOTE COVERAGE

Each day, the official COP website on the UNFCCC platform publishes the schedule and agenda of negotiation meetings, side events in the Blue Zone (except for pavilion events), press conferences, and special events. But there is no need to worry if you miss something. Most of what happens during the day is streamed live and recorded. With the support of observer organizations, the event can even be covered remotely.

KEY ACRONYMS

As if the challenges of diplomatic speak weren't enough, English is the official language of the negotiations and documents agreed upon at the Climate Conference. This is reflected in the acronyms commonly used not only by negotiators but also by experts and civil society organizations to refer to concepts, goals, and documents.

That is why it is important to become familiar with the key acronyms and names you will likely encounter and that appear in this document. This is essential not only for following the conference but also for understanding how these issues relate to children and adolescents, as we will explore further ahead.

GGA (*Global Goal on Adaptation*)

THE GLOBAL GOAL ON ADAPTATION

Established by the 2015 Paris Agreement to increase adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing

to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate response to the projected 1.5°C global temperature rise outlined in the agreement. Unlike mitigation targets, which are quantifiable in terms of greenhouse gas emission reductions, the GGA seeks to provide a **unifying framework** to guide public policies, international cooperation, and climate adaptation financing.

GST (*Global Stocktake*)

GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

A process under the Paris Agreement conducted every five years to assess progress in the fight against climate change, verifying whether global efforts are aligned with the goals of limiting global warming to well below 2°C, with a target of limiting warming to 1.5°C. The first Global Stocktake at COP 28 underscored the insufficiency of current efforts and the urgency of attaining a 43% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It also called for accelerated energy transition, with commitments to triple renewable energy capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030.

NCQG (*New Collective Quantified Goal*)

NEW COLLECTIVE QUANTIFIED GOAL

Refers to the financial target of mobilizing **US\$ 300 billion per year**, a goal imple-

mented in 2024 to substitute the US\$ 100 billion/year commitment made by developed countries in 2009 in support of climate action in developing countries.

NDC (*Nationally Determined Contributions*)

NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS

Represent the greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments of signatory countries to the Paris Agreement. NDCs outline the goals and actions each nation intends to adopt to cut emissions. Countries must review and update their NDCs every five years, broadening the ambition of their climate actions. The targets vary according to each country's economic and social conditions but must align with the global goal of limiting the planet's average temperature increase to below 2°C. It is worth noting that in 2025 countries are expected to present revised targets. In theory, the deadline was February 2025, but many countries have yet to submit their targets.

Learn more about the acronyms and terms used at COP in the following glossaries: [Política por Inteiro](#) and [Climainfo](#)



WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF COP 30

Brazil will chair COP 30, assuming responsibilities that extend beyond the host's traditional role: the country has inherited a series of unfinished tasks from COP 29, in Baku, many of which are expected to become mandatory items on the Belém conference agenda.

Although rules for international carbon credit trading were approved, critical topics like just transition and mitigation were deferred to COP 30. As noted by LACLIMA², COP 29 is remembered as “the COP that didn’t deliver.” The responsibility now falls to Brazil to move forward on these unresolved matters.

While Brazil holds the COP presidency, its role is not to advocate for national positions in the negotiations—that responsibility lies with the designated negotiators. It is also worth noting that the Blue Zone, where negotiations occur, falls under UN jurisdiction during the event. The presidency's core mission is to foster a productive process. Over the 15-day conference, André Corrêa do Lago and Ana Toni will work to help all 198 parties reach meaningful consensus on issues under discussion.

■ OUTSTANDING ISSUES

Finance: climate finance emerged as the glaring shortfall of COP 29 in Baku. While estimates indicate that \$1.3 trillion is required to address climate challenges, only \$300 billion was agreed upon, and grudgingly. Looking ahead, to reach the required target the COP 30 presidency must lead the charge through the “Roadmap from Baku to Belém for the \$1.3 Trillion,” working year-round to build coalitions and secure funding from a broader set of stakeholders beyond developed country governments.

Tensions: intense disagreements over climate finance at COP 29 eroded trust in the multilateral system. Brazil now faces the challenge of rebuilding alliances and reducing tensions to restore a constructive negotiating environment. The task is made even more complex by the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement under President Donald Trump. The question is who will be willing to bear the cost of emissions reductions when a major emitter opts out.

Just transition: at COP 28, a Just Transition Work Programme was approved. At COP 29, the plan was to define a work plan for implementing the program. Just transition addresses the social impacts of climate policies,

including concern for the protection of vulnerable populations and workers during the shift to a low-carbon economy, among other points³. However, due to significant disagreements between developed countries, focused primarily on the economic dimensions of the transition, and developing countries, focused more on social rights, no agreement was reached. Therefore, discussions on a just transition will have to be revisited in Brazil

■ THE COP 30 NEGOTIATING AGENDA

In a series of letters to the international diplomatic community, President André Corrêa do Lago has outlined Brazil’s priorities for the global summit. The Instituto Talanoa’s *Política por Inteiro* initiative has been tracking and analyzing these communications to identify likely areas of agreement and priority issues. As of this publication, three letters have been issued. Based on Instituto Talanoa’s analysis⁴, a summary of the key agenda items follows.

Climate finance: the presidencies of COP 30 and COP 29 will prepare a report based on the Baku–Belém Roadmap on mobilizing US\$ 1.3

trillion annually by 2035 for developing countries. They will also push multilateral banks and financial institutions to expand access to climate finance.

Energy transition: as part of advancing the Global Stocktake agreement reached at COP 28, COP 30 will serve as a platform to define strategies for tripling renewable energy capacity, doubling energy efficiency, and reducing fossil fuel use equitably. The conference will also support the implementation of the Mitigation Work Programme (MWP) and introduce a digital platform to facilitate climate-related investments.

NDCs: COP 30 will deliver an NDC Synthesis Report to assess the quality and alignment of the NDCs with the 1.5°C target. It will aim to persuade countries to submit more ambitious NDCs before the conference and mobilize political support against climate misinformation.

Adaptation: COP 30 will promote cooperation among governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society. The United Arab Emirates–Belém Work Programme will develop indicators aligned with the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and advance the Baku Roadmap.

Technology and capacity building: COP 30 will mark the launch of the Technology Implementation Programme, prioritizing technology transfers to developing countries. A workshop in Bonn will support these nations in preparing their Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs).

Loss and damage: COP 30 will prioritize implementation of the Loss and Damage Fund established at COP 28 but largely stalled at COP 29. Key areas of focus will include improving governance structures and expanding financial resources, with the goal of ensuring accessible funding to support timely responses to climate-related disasters.

Global governance reform: COP 30 will strengthen climate governance through the Circle of Presidencies, bringing together previous COPs to ensure continuity of existing commitments. It will promote integration with the Biodiversity (CBD) and Desertification (UNCCD) conventions and broaden the participation of Indigenous Peoples.

Integrated agendas: COP 30 aims to foster coherence across global frameworks, including the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Biodiversity and Desertification Conventions. The event will also mark the launch of “United for Our Forests,” an initiative designed to catalyze cross-border cooperation and unlock additional financing mechanisms.

Mobilization of non-state actors: COP30 will encourage the engagement of civil society, the private sector, and subnational governments. It will promote partnerships to accelerate climate action and will host sectoral forums. The appointment of automotive industry executive Dan Ioschpe as High-Level Champion signals the government’s intent to strengthen engagement with the private sector. This is because the Climate Champion is responsible for building bridges between the decisions made at the conferences and non-state actors.

The *Loss and Damage Fund* was created to support vulnerable countries address extreme and irreversible climate impacts, such as natural disasters and rising sea levels, by compensating losses from climate-related events and ensuring that affected communities receive adequate support.

It is important to note that the fund is separate from the global climate finance target established at COP 29, which set a goal of mobilizing US\$300 billion annually by 2035 for developing countries to support mitigation, adaptation, and sustainable technology initiatives.

WHO'S WHO AT COP 30

The Instituto Talanoa has published a comprehensive guide on the "*Política por Inteiro*" website, with a who's who of Brazil's COP 30 team, including photographs, and the role each member will perform. The guide covers everyone from the conference president to key advisors on the topics discussed in this section, as well as sectoral envoys, Brazilian diplomats, and their areas of expertise, as well as much more.

An indispensable tool for media and communication professionals reporting on or creating content about the event. [Click here](#) for the PDF in Portuguese. The English version can be found [here](#).

■ THE FOUR PILLARS OF COP 30

Beyond identifying the main negotiating themes, Corrêa do Lago has framed the overall agenda in terms of four foundational pillars:

- 1. Negotiations:** COP 30 will play a central role in operationalizing the Global Stocktake and in driving forward the thematic agenda laid out above.
- 2. Mobilization:** The president of COP 30 has proposed a global joint effort to address climate change. The proposal adopts a concrete approach: establishment of **thematic leadership circles** (such as the circles of Peoples, Finance Ministers, the Global Ethical Stocktake, and former COP Presidents) and the appointment of **30 special envoys** to engage and mobilize strategic sectors and key regions around the world.
- 3. Summit of Leaders:** Corrêa do Lago's decision to decouple the Leaders' Summit from the COP negotiations reflects a strategic effort to elicit actionable commit-

ments from world leaders. The goal is to transition from dialogue to delivery, with anticipated announcements in key areas such as climate finance, energy transition, and strengthening of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

- 4. Action Agenda:** Designed to foster engagement among non-state actors, including municipalities, private enterprises, and academic institutions, the platform aims to advance the implementation of climate solutions consistent with global agreements. It also contributes to the mobilization of financial resources and investment flows to support climate action.

The appointment of automotive industry executive Dan Ioschpe as High-Level Champion signals the government's intent to strengthen engagement with the private sector. As of this guide's publication, the COP 30 Presidency had not yet announced the specific thematic priorities of this year's Action Agenda.



REPORTING TIP

■ MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION MUST GO HAND IN HAND

At the Paris COP 21, in 2015, the focus fell squarely on mitigation, cutting emissions to limit rises in global temperatures. The Paris Agreement set bold targets aimed at maintaining global warming at less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2035, underscoring the urgency of avoiding catastrophic climate impacts.

Fifteen years later, the spotlight at COP 30 in Belém will shift to adaptation: How can we finance and guarantee a just adaptation process for all countries, with an eye to human rights, development levels, and differing economic conditions?

In a statement shared on social media⁵, Ana Toni, Executive Secretary of COP 30, emphasized that adaptation is no longer optional,

nor is it in competition with mitigation efforts. She urged governments, businesses, financial institutions, academic institutions, and civil society to assign adaptation the central role it deserves. Toni made clear that adaptation will be a core topic in Belém: “Climate realism demands that adaptation be at the center of everything we do. A major reflection on adaptation at COP 30 will be a gateway to aligning our multilateral process with people’s everyday realities.”

The international community’s growing emphasis on adaptation reflects the urgent need to strengthen societal resilience alongside emissions reductions. As 2024 came in as the hottest year on record and the 1.5°C threshold inches closer to becoming a permanent state, the impacts

of climate change are accelerating even faster than anticipated.

Internationally renowned climatologist Carlos Nobre has expressed serious concern regarding the pace of global warming. In an interview published by O Estado de S. Paulo in September 2024, he stated, “I’m terrified. No one expected this; it’s happening too fast.”

Nobre has reiterated his message in numerous presentations, stressing that the 1.5°C warming threshold, once projected to occur between 2033 and 2035, has already been reached. He cautions that if this level is sustained, the timeline for emissions reductions under the Paris Agreement will need to be accelerated by at least a decade.

2

BRAZILIAN CLIMATE POLICY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

While climate negotiations and international agreements reached at COPs may appear distant from Brazil's day-to-day realities, they are closely linked. Global commitments inform national climate policies, which in turn guide state and municipal actions. All policy spheres, international, national, and

subnational, should include children and adolescents in their planning and implementation efforts.

For journalists reporting on the intersection of childhood, adolescence, and climate, a basic understanding of Brazil's climate policy landscape is essential. These

policies cut across multiple sectors, from health and transportation to agriculture and industry, and rely heavily on state and local implementation. However, inter-sectoral coordination remains a key challenge. This section provides a brief overview to support more informed and impactful reporting.



THE NATIONAL POLICY ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The National Policy on Climate Change (PNMC) is Brazil's main legal framework for implementing the Climate Convention and the Paris Agreement in the country. Established by Law No. 12,187 of December 29, 2009, the PNMC sets out guidelines and instruments to promote sustainable development, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and strengthen the removal of these gases through sinks. Among its objectives are also the implementation of climate change adaptation measures and the conservation and restoration of natural resources.

The PNMC's instruments include sectoral plans for mitigation and adaptation, support for reforestation, and deforestation control

programs across various biomes. However, the effectiveness of these measures depends on proper regulation and enforcement, as well as the engagement of the productive sector and the commitment and capacity of state and local governments (see pages 25 and 26 for PNMC instruments according to the Brazilian government).

In addition to these tools, the policy also includes fiscal and tax measures, credit and financing lines, and incentives for research and technological development. According to the Brazilian government, these mechanisms are applied in an integrated way to promote mitigation and adaptation actions, as well as the development of economic instruments such as the Brazilian Market for Emission Reductions.

■ PLAN 3.0

It is worth noting that most of the existing climate policy instruments are currently undergoing revision. The National Climate Change Plan (*Plano Clima*), the main operational instrument of the National Policy on Climate Change (*Política Nacional sobre Mudança do Clima – PNMC*), is currently being revised for the 2024–2035 period. The goal is to align the instruments with the objectives of the PNMC through 2035.

The plan will be structured around two main pillars: mitigation and adaptation. It will include two overarching national strategies, one for each pillar and corresponding sectoral plans. There are seven sectoral pillars under the mitigation plan:

- ▷ Agriculture and livestock
- ▷ Land use and forests
- ▷ Cities, including urban mobility
- ▷ Energy (electricity and fuels)
- ▷ Industry
- ▷ Waste
- ▷ Transport

The adaptation pillar will consist of 16 sectoral plans and themes, all in the public comment phase at the time of publication.

- ▷ Agriculture and livestock
- ▷ Family farming
- ▷ Biodiversity

- ▷ Cities and urban mobility
- ▷ Risk and disaster management
- ▷ Industry
- ▷ Energy
- ▷ Transport
- ▷ Racial equality and combating racism
- ▷ Traditional peoples and communities
- ▷ Indigenous Peoples
- ▷ Water resources
- ▷ Health
- ▷ Food and nutritional security
- ▷ Ocean and coastal zone
- ▷ Tourism

GOVERNANCE

The governance of the PNMC is led by the Interministerial Committee on Climate Change (*Comitê Interministerial sobre Mudança do Clima – CIM*), composed in the government sphere by representatives from 23 federal ministries, having the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change acting as Executive Secretariat.

Outside the governmental sphere, the PNMC governance structure also includes the Brazilian Forum on Climate Change (*Fórum Brasileiro de Mudança do Clima – FBMC*) and the Brazilian

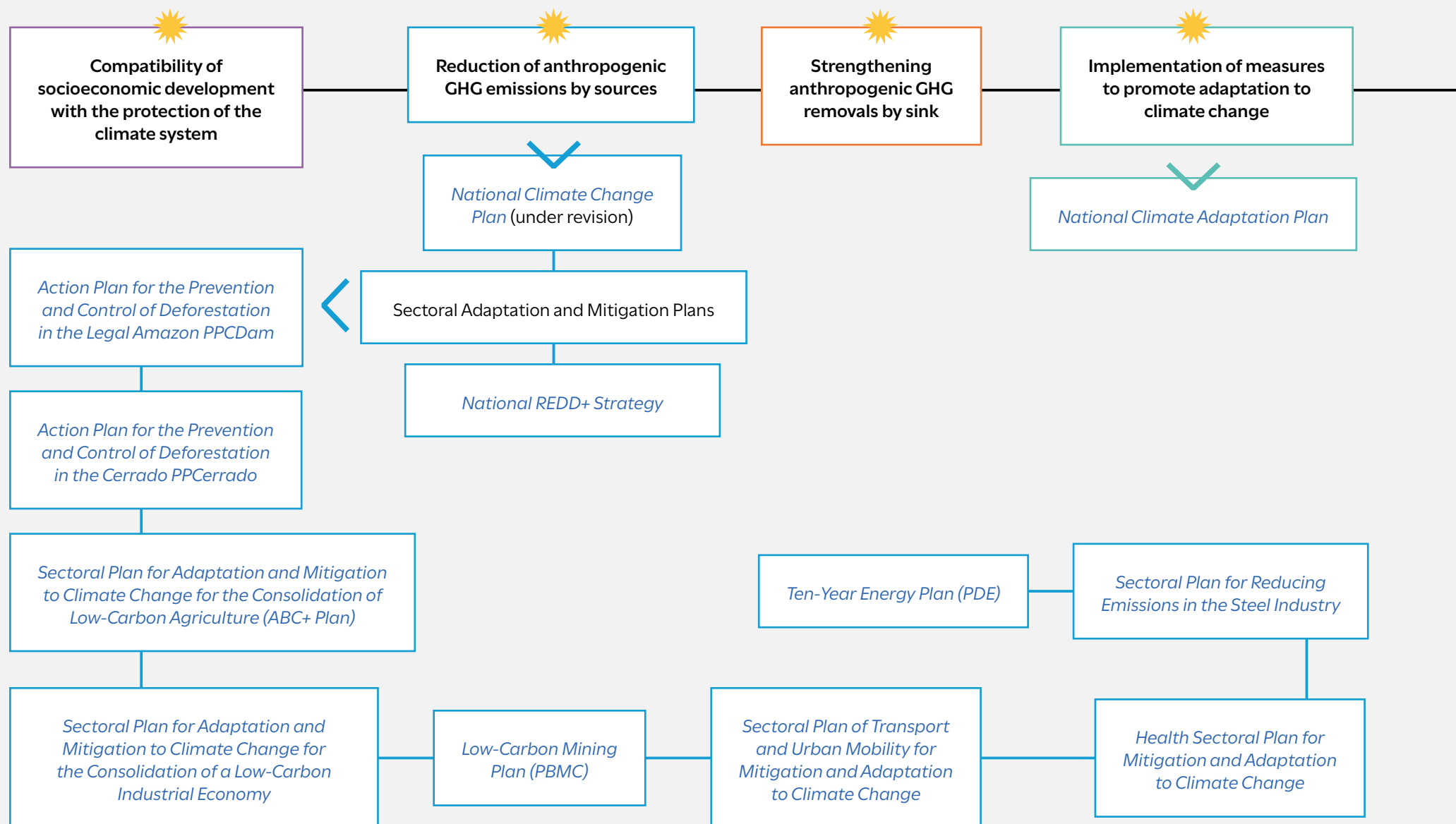
Network for Global Climate Change Research (*Rede Brasileira de Pesquisas sobre Mudanças Climáticas Globais – Rede CLIMA*), which operate as key advisory bodies and collaboration channels in the implementation of climate policy.

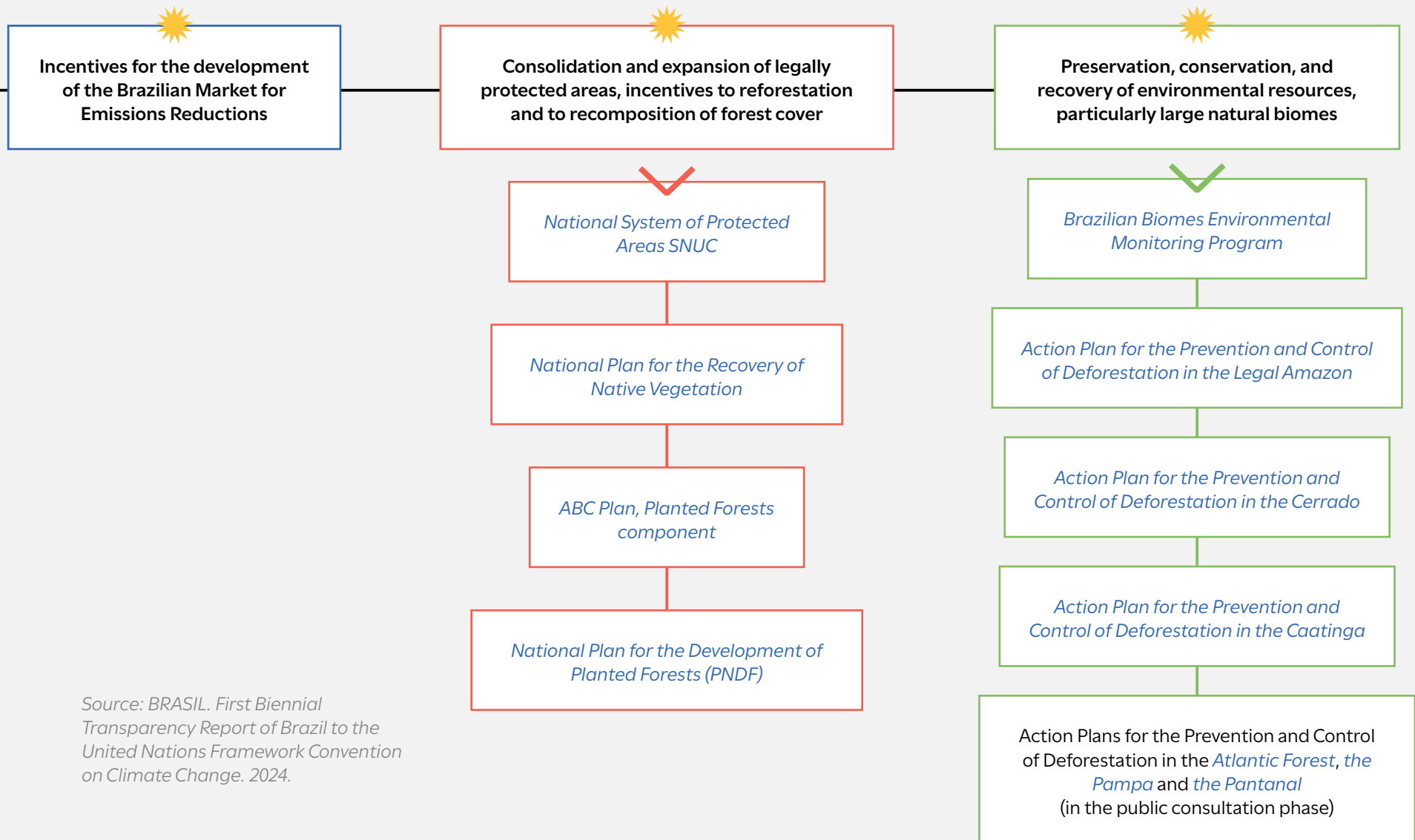
The FBMC is an official space for civil society engagement that fosters dialogue among government, the private sector, academia, and social organizations around climate-related policies. Rede CLIMA, in turn, is a national scientific network dedicated to producing knowledge and technical data on climate change and its impacts in Brazil, contributing to evidence-based policymaking.

In summary:

- ▷ **CIM** → highest-level political body for decision-making and coordination under the PNMC.
- ▷ **Climate Plan** (*Plano Clima*) → operationalizes the PNMC's guidelines, under CIM's supervision.
- ▷ **FBMC and Rede CLIMA** → serve as technical, scientific, and participatory support mechanisms, without formal decision-making authority within CIM.

EXPLORE HOW THE PROGRAMS AND PLANS UNDER THE NATIONAL POLICY ON CLIMATE CHANGE ARE STRUCTURED.







THE CRITICAL ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES

International documents and fully renewed national guidelines are of little use if they do not resonate at the subnational level (state and especially municipal). Combating climate change will not be effective without the involvement of cities, as they are the epicenter of both emissions and impacts.

According to the ICLEI Cities Declaration, urban environments concentrate a large share of greenhouse gas emissions and simultaneously house populations that face the direct effects of global warming, such as heatwaves, floods, and droughts. Without well-structured local policies, the targets set at the international and national levels do not translate into effective actions in the daily lives of communities.

Available evidence indicates that the implementation of local climate adaptation plans in Brazil remains limited. A May 2024 investigation by *Agência Pública*⁶ revealed that only 11 out of the 27 Brazilian state capitals had formal Municipal Climate Change Adaptation Plans. While no equivalent data exist for smaller municipalities, the situation in state capitals suggests that a large majority of cities across the country likely lack such frameworks.

Experts attribute this gap to multiple interrelated factors. Foremost among them is the limited availability of financial, technical, and institutional resources to support the planning and execution of adaptation strategies at the municipal level. Additionally, in many municipalities,

environmental governance is concentrated in a single department, and a lack of cross-sectoral coordination, particularly health, infrastructure, and education, hinders the localization of national adaptation guidelines. These challenges are further exacerbated by insufficient funding mechanisms and the stop-start nature of policy implementation caused by frequent political and administrative turn-over.

■ CLIMATE AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Urban areas face growing challenges related to the impacts of climate change, particularly due to high population density and insufficient infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events. Floods, droughts, heatwaves, and storms not only cause physical destruction



REPORTING TIP



SOURCE OF DATA, SOURCE OF STORIES

The *Sistema Adapta Brasil* is an integrated platform that gathers data and insights on the exposure of Brazilian municipalities to different climate change risks, along with their adaptive capacity and resilience. It provides indicators, reports, and vulnerability maps, enabling journalists and other stakeholders to track adaptation policies, investments, and results in real time across the country's 5,570 municipalities.

but also lead to deep social and economic disruptions. These vulnerabilities are especially pronounced in cities across developing countries, where urban planning and basic service provision remain inadequate⁷.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that around 40% of global urban expansion occurs in informal settlements, where access to clean water, sanitation, and healthcare is often limited. In Brazil, 87.4% of the population lives in urban areas.

Despite their status as major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, urban centers also hold great potential for mitigation. Through smart urban planning, like expanded and efficient public transit options, modern energy systems, and integrated nature-based solutions, cities can play a central role in reducing emissions and building climate resilience.

■ INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

The difficulties of aligning and coordinating climate-related policies across different sectors become especially pronounced in the context of natural disaster management. In its most recent Biennial Transparency Report to the UNFCCC, the federal government acknowledged persistent

challenges in coordinating across government levels. Beyond improving institutional integration, there is a pressing need to secure adequate funding for disaster prevention and response and to invest in technical training for local officials.

For context, nearly 3,200 municipalities in Brazil were identified as having limited political and institutional capacity to govern risks and implement measures to reduce and respond to disasters such as floods, flash floods, and inundations. The data come from the *Sistema Adapta Brasil*⁸, a platform operated by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MCTI).

According to a UNICEF [study](#)⁹, regions with higher levels of poverty, vulnerability, and population density tend to have a lower capacity to respond to disasters—resulting in greater impacts and more severe losses.

It is estimated that, disaster vulnerability in Brazil is highest among single-parent households headed by Afro-Brazilian women with dependent children.

Moreover, estimates indicate that 8.3 million Brazilians, of whom **2.1 million are children and adolescents under the age of 14**, reside in areas classified as high-risk. The study notes that young children under the age of five in the North region represent over 13% of the at-risk population.



REPORTING TIP

■ ASSIGNING ACCOUNTABILITY IS KEY

The Brazilian news media has stepped up its focus on the climate emergency. Extreme weather events, especially floods and heatwaves, are receiving the attention they warrant. But are the root causes and responsible actors behind climate change being adequately covered?

Experts interviewed by ANDI during the preparation of this guide believe not. In their view, the climate crisis is portrayed in the media as an isolated phenomenon. It appears to exist on its own, resulting from a set of economic policies centered on fossil fuels, deforestation, aggressive agricultural practices, among other drivers. There seems to be a disconnect between “natural forces” and “human action.”

The *last media analysis by ANDI* about climate change was conducted in 2010, when the world was just beginning to address the climate crisis, viewed at the time as an undesirable future scenario. Yet even back then the survey captured the fundamental disconnect highlighted by experts. Little more than a third of articles at the time attributed a cause to climate change.

It is worth noting that in Brazil 75% of emissions are linked to land use, including deforestation and agriculture, a feature that distinguishes Brazil from the global trend, where fossil fuel use is the dominant source of emissions.

From a journalistic perspective, establishing the connection between extreme climate events and their underlying causes is crucial. Society needs to be reminded, for example, that floods killing hundreds or thousands of children are directly tied to activities like oil extraction, deforestation, or agribusiness.

This way, the “climate crisis” stops being seen as an isolated event, and its origins gain clear names, addresses, and accountability. By shedding light on overlooked or misunderstood causes, journalism can act as a powerful catalyst for social change, influencing public policies and mobilizing resources for solutions that address the issues identified.

3

CLIMATE CHANGE, CHILDREN, AND ADOLESCENTS: WHAT IS THE CONNECTION?

It is indisputable that climate change has impacted different aspects of the global climate system, affecting human life in many ways and jeopardizing the well-being, development, and very survival of people around the world.

Against the troubling backdrop of global warming, children are not responsible for climate change, yet they are the ones who will face, and are now facing, the most serious effects of the world's failure to act on greenhouse gas emissions.







In this section, you will learn more about these impacts, understand that they are closely tied to conditions of income, gender, race, and inequality, and explore, one by one, which are the main rights of children and adolescents that are under threat.



DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS

Given their unique metabolisms, physiology, and developmental needs, children and adolescents suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate change. The most severe impacts from changes in temperature, air and water quality, and access to adequate nutrition directly influence their development, well-being, and health.

This heightened vulnerability and disproportionate impact are backed by science. The report [A Threat to Progress](#) compiled data and research from around the world to identify the specific factors affecting boys and girls. It concluded that there is strong evidence of the impact of climate change on child and adolescent health and that these effects will only intensify over time.

PRINCIPAL THREATS TO CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH	
 Extreme heat: Younger children face a higher risk of dehydration and heatstroke. Heat exposure during pregnancy can lead to premature birth and low birth weight. Heatwaves increase hospitalizations and impair learning.	 Floods and storms: Children are more vulnerable to drowning and waterborne diseases. Floods destroy essential infrastructure. Forced displacement endangers food security and causes trauma, affecting children's mental health.
 Droughts: Impact food production and affect food security, worsening child malnutrition and healthy development. Water scarcity increases the incidence of infectious diseases. Prolonged droughts can lead to forced displacement, causing economic hardship and psychological distress.	 Air pollution: Contributes to serious respiratory illnesses. Pollutants impair children's neurological development. Exposure during pregnancy is linked to premature birth and delayed growth.
 Fires: Smoke harms children's respiratory health. Exposure during pregnancy increases the risk of birth complications. Children may develop psychological disorders as a result of fires.	 Changes in ecosystems: Increased spread of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue. Higher temperatures expand the reach of infections. Water and food contamination worsens child malnutrition.

■ EARLY CHILDHOOD

If children and adolescents are already disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the 0 to 6 age group experiences the attendant effects most acutely.

Consider a single data point: according to the World Health Organization, children under the age of five account for **88% of all diseases associated with climate change**. Given their ongoing neurological and immune development, young children are prime targets of the illnesses and hazardous situations that extreme weather events have exacerbated. Compounding these challenges is the total dependence of young children on caregivers, who themselves are affected in multiple ways by the climate crisis.

Vulnerabilities vary throughout a child's life cycle, and the impacts of climate change do not affect all age groups equally. Yet, the effects on child health and development are long-lasting.

A closer examination of these vulnerabilities reveals that the developmental stage of greatest risk is **early childhood**, in light of this segment's **high exposure to environmental hazards**, including those affecting pregnant women, **physiological immaturity**, and **total dependence on caregivers** (*see table below/ adjacent table*).

According to the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), any interruption in the care of children aged 0 to 6, including health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, learning, or protection, can seriously affect early childhood development.

In terms of **health**, young children are more vulnerable to diseases and climate-driven environmental risks, such as extreme temperatures, which increase the risk of illness and mortality. With respect to **nutrition**, food scarcity affects children more than adults, as

they have higher nutrient needs relative to their body size. Climate change compromises the availability, quality, and access to food.

Responsive caregiving is impaired when caregivers face climate-related stress, which also increases the risk of child neglect and trauma. Similarly, **learning** is affected, as extreme weather events can lead to closure of schools and educational spaces, while pollution undermines cognitive performance and school attendance.

The **safety and protection** of young children are threatened by food insecurity, water shortages, and forced displacement. Caregiver stress may lead to aggressive or violent behavior. In addition, displaced children are at greater risk of abuse and neglect. Finally, adverse childhood experiences can have long-term health effects and increase future risks, such as substance abuse and violence.

TABLE 1: VULNERABILITIES ACROSS CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

	Pregnancy	Early childhood and childhood	Adolescence
Physiological Factors	<p>Weak immune system; Low lung capacity; Hormonal changes; Greater food and liquid intake by pregnant Woman due to fetal development and increased metabolism; Greater susceptibility of pregnant Woman to heat; Intrauterine exposure to physical, biological, and Chemical agents.</p>	<p>Rapidly developing immune system and organs; Rapid brain development with windows of vulnerability in early childhood; Compromised heat regulation in infants; Greater air intake per unit of weight; Greater food and liquid intake per unit of weight; Delicate and highly absorbent skin.</p>	<p>Ongoing physical and hormonal changes, including puberty; Greater food and liquid intake due to higher metabolism; Development of brain structure and function (e.g.: impulse control, emotional regulation, decision-making); Mental stress due to social, academic, and peer pressures.</p>
Behavioral	<p>Potential restrictions on physical activity.</p>	<p>Greater propensity to mouth objects; More time spent at ground level; More time spent outdoors; Limited ability to communicate needs or understand directions.</p>	<p>More time spent outdoors; Greater propensity toward risk-taking.</p>
Dependency	<p>May require support accessing healthy food, clean water, and other physical and mental needs</p>	<p>Dependency on caregivers for survival; Exposure to risks based on lifestyle of caregivers; Vulnerability when the child is separated from caregivers (e.g., in the event of disasters).</p>	<p>Reliance on peer and community networks; Partial dependence on caregivers for needs and direction.</p>

Source: UNICEF, 2024



REPORTING TIP

■ DEPICTING CHILDREN AS CENTRAL FIGURES IN CLIMATE NARRATIVES

Sometimes, the story of a child directly impacted by the climate crisis can serve as a powerful illustration of the issue and help overcome the lack of visibility in the data or policy.

In other cases, the child's story can help illustrate or exemplify statistical data, such as outreach materials promoting research studies – something expected to occur frequently in Brazil in the lead up to COP 30.

In both scenarios, it is essential that a respectful approach is adopted, in alignment with the rights of children. Always remember:

- ▶ **Do not reduce the child** to a mere caricature of the problem or to a statistic. Where possible, aim to integrate their

story into your narrative, balancing the individual with the broader context.

- ▶ **Avoid sensationalism** and emotional exploitation. This weakens the story and contributes to the stigmatization of children and adolescents.
- ▶ **Follow-up to stories.** Track the outcomes of your reporting. Follow-ups or feature series are a valuable tool to help the public understand the results generated by the news. They are also a way to hold the relevant authorities accountable.
- ▶ **Give voice to children and adolescents.** Where possible, allow them to express their own opinions and perspectives, especially in stories about rights. It is es-

sential to recognize them as rights holders and protagonists in their own stories.

- ▶ **Choose language carefully.** Avoid pejorative terms, such as “minor,” or expressions that reinforce gender, racial, or social stereotypes. Using respectful and inclusive language is essential to prevent discrimination and social exclusion.
- ▶ **Respect the right to image and identity.** The Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) guarantees the inviolability of the physical, psychological, and moral integrity of children and adolescents, including the preservation of their image and identity. Make sure that in disclosing their identity you do not place the child or adolescent at risk.





It is important to underscore that there are situations in which identification may be in the interest of the child or adolescent and is encouraged, such as when they reach out to a reporter to exercise their freedom of expression and their right to be heard or are protagonists in activist and social mobilization efforts and wish to be identified.

- ▶ **Obtain authorization.** Before interviewing or photographing a child or adolescent, make sure to secure the permission of the father, mother, or legal guardian.
- ▶ **Be attentive to content and approach.** In addition to what is said in the story, assess how the information is presented. Ensure that the approach respects the dignity and rights of children and adolescents without reinforcing stigmas or victimhood narratives.

■ INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

When interviewing children and adolescents, remember to:

- ▶ **Adjust your position.** Whenever possible, adjust yourself to the child's or adolescent's eye level. This helps avoid an unequal power dynamic and creates a more welcoming and respectful environment for dialogue.
- ▶ **Tell them about the interview.** Explain to them in clear and accessible terms the topic of your piece, how the interview will be used, and in what context their image will be shown. This ensures transparency and allows the child or adolescent to make an informed decision about participating.
- ▶ **Respect silence.** If the child or adolescent does not wish to speak or appear in

images, their right to privacy must be respected. No pressure should be applied to obtain a statement.

- ▶ **Avoid leading questions.** Allow the child or adolescent to express themselves freely, without suggesting answers or putting words in their mouth. This ensures their views and feelings are genuine and respected.
- ▶ **Explain the editing process.** Let them know that only a portion of the interview may be used in the report and avoid promising that a specific statement will be included, maintaining full transparency about the editorial process.





A MATTER OF INEQUALITY

The study *A Threat to Progress*, cited above, demonstrated that the harmful effects of climate events can cause or worsen existing rights violations, including water scarcity and contamination, food insecurity, destruction of infrastructure, service interruptions, and displacement. Therefore, while all children and adolescents are disproportionately affected by climate change, those already experiencing these challenges are even more vulnerable to its impacts.

And who are the affected children? Those living in low-income areas (countries, cities, neighborhoods). Because the effects of climate change compromise not only a child's physical and mental development and health, but also the services, policies, and institutions that support their needs and those of their families. Climate change calls into question very the structures meant to protect and uphold the rights of children and adolescents (*see the section Endangered rights on page 42*).

For example, environmental disasters may:

- ▶ force families to move
- ▶ force interruptions in the child's education
 - ▶ lead to job or income loss by the parents
 - ▶ expose the child to underage work or even commercial sexual exploitation out of financial need

It represents the perpetuation of a cycle of poverty, inequality, and rights violations that becomes ever more difficult to break.

Indeed, climate change poses a risk to the reduction of poverty and inequality over the long term. According to the World Bank¹⁰, approximately 1 in 5 people globally is likely to experience an extreme climate event in their lifetime from which they will struggle to recover financially. Furthermore, climate change threatens to increase global inequality, as poorer countries and populations tend to suffer more from its negative consequences.

■ HEIGHTENED RISK

As with other serious threats to the rights of children and adolescents, climate change mirrors existing patterns of inequality: across the world, households with less access to income and public safety nets are disproportionately affected, and the impacts are likely to jeopardize their future.

The 2021 *Children's Climate Risk Index* leaves no doubt that the disproportionate effects of climate change on children and adolescents

are closely tied to the lack of infrastructure and public services necessary for the full exercise of childhood and adolescent rights. Combined with the increase in extreme climate events, this reality disproportionately exposes girls and boys to adverse environmental changes.

According to the index, more than 2 billion children and adolescents around the world are already exposed to more than one climate

or environmental risk, shock, or stressor. In Brazil, over 40 million children and adolescents face exposure to more than one of the risks outlined in the study, representing nearly 60% of this population segment.

- ▶ More than 8.6 million Brazilian girls and boys are exposed to the risk of water scarcity.
- ▶ More than 7.3 million are exposed to risks associated with river flooding.

THE MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF VULNERABILITY

The degree of vulnerability to climate change goes beyond financial deprivation, as highlighted in the index. In fact, the child may be vulnerable even in cases where the household income is above the poverty line if, for example, they lack access to clean drinking water or attend a substandard school.

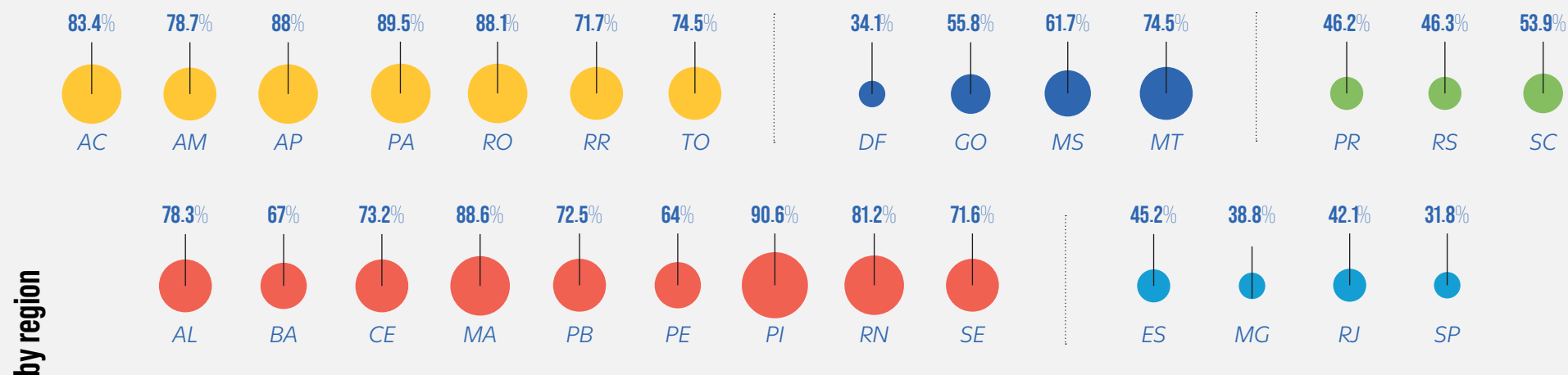
As such, it is important to understand the concept of multidimensional poverty to fully to grasp the actual vulnerability of children and adolescents to climate change. The concept captures the denial of fundamental aspects of well-being, such as education, health, housing, sanitation, food, and access to information.

According to the [most recent data](#) published on the topic, in 2025, a total of 55.8% of all Brazilian children and adolescents (28.8 million) are denied full

exercise to at least one fundamental right – i.e. they experience multidimensional poverty,

Multidimensional poverty among Afro-Brazilian children and adolescents remains consistently higher compared to white children, highlighting significant racial disparities in living conditions and access to essential resources. While multidimensional poverty affects 45.2% of white boys and girls, the percentage rises to 63.6% among Afro-Brazilian children.

SNAPSHOTS OF INEQUALITY: PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN 2023



● North
 ● Central-West
 ● South
 ● Northeast
 ● Southeast

Source: UNICEF. Multiple Dimensions of Child Poverty in Brazil: 2019-2023.

■ GENDER, RACE, AND AGE: COMPOUNDING INEQUALITY

The impacts of the climate crisis are falling disproportionately on the children and adolescents of African descent and those from Indigenous, *Quilombola*, and other traditional populations, in addition to migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, and girls, leaving these groups at even higher risk.¹¹

A [study](#) conducted by Plan International identified an additional contributing factor: the climate crisis exacerbates gender inequality. Simply put, climate change results in increased domestic responsibilities, less study time, increasing financial hardship, higher risk of violence, and a rise in child, early, and forced marriages and unions, as well as fewer economic opportunities for girls.

The cumulative effect of these factors renders girls of African descent exponentially more vulnerable. A [study](#) by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) underscores the intersection between gender and race, revealing that the overlap of gender and racial inequality with climate change dramatically increases its impacts, exposing women and girls of African descent to compounding risks.¹²

In addition, factors related to marginalization (such as inadequate housing, transportation constraints, and lower levels of preparedness) and other persistent issues (such as lack of long-term assistance or sustained investment in the community) can make certain communities more vulnerable.

Research shows that the impact of diseases driven by climate change is a clear illustration of how these risks overlap:

- ▶ Malaria, dengue, and the Zika virus, for instance, have an adverse impact on pregnancy;
- ▶ An analysis conducted in Brazil showed that Afro-Brazilian women were more affected by the Zika virus outbreak due to unequal exposure, due to structural racism and multiple forms of discrimination;
- ▶ As a result, they were more likely to have a child with congenital Zika syndrome than white women;
- ▶ This has a direct impact on the right of Afro-Brazilian children and adolescents to healthcare (see “Endangered rights” on page 42).



REPORTING TIP

■ WHERE TO FIND DATA

In international documents, Brazilian policy, and even environmental studies, data or initiatives that consider gender, race, and age are scarce. However, this does not mean the news coverage should replicate this oversight. The news media can help raise awareness and draw attention to the relationship between these three factors and the vulnerability to climate change by citing, for instance, the issue in stories, thereby ensuring the affected groups are represented.

Moreover, despite the challenges, some databases in Brazil provide disaggregated data by gender, race, and age, even if these do not specifically refer to climate change. Examples include:

IBGE

BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY AND STATISTICS

- ▶ **Demographic Census:** Provides detailed population information, including breakdowns by race, gender, and age.

- ▶ **PNAD Contínua (National Continuous Household Sample Survey):** Offers data on employment, education, and social inequalities with the similar breakdowns.

IPEA

INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED ECONOMIC RESEARCH

- ▶ Publishes studies and social indicators encompassing gender, racial, and age inequalities.

DATASUS

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

- ▶ Provides disaggregated data on public health, morbidity, and mortality by sex, age, and race/ethnicity.

Atlas da Violência

IPEA AND THE BRAZILIAN FORUM ON PUBLIC SAFETY

- ▶ Analyses of homicides and violence through an intersectional lens, highlighting the vulnerabilities of different groups.

■ ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND CLIMATE JUSTICE: KEY CONCEPTS

Organizations working at the intersection of climate change and human rights often use two important concepts to describe and combat the cycle of inequalities perpetuated by the climate crisis: environmental racism *and* climate justice.

The term environmental racism refers to institutionalized discrimination contained in environmental policies, practices, or regulations that disproportionately and negatively impact certain racial groups. This unequal distribution of risks stems from historical policies and practices that have forced these populations into areas of greater environmental degradation and limited access to essential resources.

Example:

A synopsis by DataFolha¹³ on the impacts stemming from the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, in June 2024, provides a real-life illustration of environmental racism and the disproportionate impacts of the phenomenon on underrepresented and underserved communities: Losses were most severe among Afro-Brazilians, burdened with lower income and educational levels.

In the municipalities affected by the flooding, nearly half (47%) of households earning up to

two monthly minimum salaries reported losing their home, furniture, appliances, or livelihoods. Among higher-income groups, only 13% suffered any type of loss. Since race and socioeconomic status have historically been linked in Brazil, it comes as little surprise that more than half (52%) of Afro-Brazilians and 40% of mixed-race individuals reported losses. By contrast, only 26% of the white population incurred losses.

This example highlights how the economic, physical, and emotional toll of extreme climate events on people, including children, results from the combined effect of global warming and pre-existing inequality.

Structural inequality lies at the heart of climate justice, a concept consistently highlighted in international accords and national strategies. Climate justice reveals that the impacts of climate change go well beyond environmental degradation. It is a social, economic, and political challenge, whose effects disproportionately impact different populations. Implementing climate justice means acknowledging humanity's collective responsibility for the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions, which fall mainly on the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

The concept of climate justice emphasizes structural transformation and social equity as essential elements for tackling climate change at its roots. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), prioritizing equity, climate justice, social justice, inclusion, and just energy transition processes can enable adaptation, ambitious mitigation actions, and climate-resilient development.



HEADS UP

In its submission to the UNFCCC outlining Brazil's new emissions reduction target (NDC), the Brazilian government announces to the international community a 2035 vision rooted in **climate justice**. The inclusion of such an ambitious goal within an international commitment can be useful to journalists when scrutinizing government data or actions that contradict this pledge or, conversely, when reporting on positive steps taken toward achieving this vision.



ENDANGERED RIGHTS

*“The climate crisis is a crisis of children’s rights”.*¹⁴ Indeed, climate change introduces a new challenge to protecting the rights of children and adolescents, adding yet another layer onto the litany of existing structural issues such as poverty, inequality, and racism that undermine those rights.

Global warming and its impacts, for example, gained prominence and relevance and amassed supporting evidence following implementation of key legal frameworks to safeguard the rights of children, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Brazil’s Child and Adolescent Statute (1990). However, this in no way suggests that legal protections for children and adolescents are absent in the face of this new challenge.

By way of acknowledging that climate change requires countries to adopt new strategies for addressing children’s rights, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published *General Comment No. 26*

on Children’s Rights and the Environment, with a Special Focus on Climate Change.

Among the issues set out in the document is the recognition that environmental degradation, including the climate crisis, constitutes **a type of structural violence against the rights of children and adolescents**. It also declares that States are responsible not only for protecting boys and girls from immediate harm but also for foreseeable violations of their rights in the future deriving either from State action or omission.

■ WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

As communications professionals, it is important to know the principal child and adolescent rights that are impacted by climate change, how the respective impacts manifest, and how governments should respond.

This can help you understand how the concerns of current and future generations in-

WHAT IS A GENERAL COMMENT?

According to the Alana Institute, General Comments are documents that play a key role in expanding on the concepts and interpretation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the Institute’s view, the General Comment on the Environment and Climate Change is a relevant and essential contribution to the treaty’s practical application across government and civil society.¹⁵

tersect with climate-related matters. Additionally, it can serve as a tool to monitor and demand government action at both the national and local levels, as well as to scrutinize international climate negotiating documents, thereby supporting communicators carry out one of their most critical roles: holding public and private entities accountable for the responsibilities they assume and upholding the rights of citizens.

In the sections¹⁶ below, we briefly highlight some of the principal child and adolescent rights recognized under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and, based on philosophical affinity, prescribed in Brazil’s Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), that relate to climate change and how governments should respond to this evolving landscape, according to General Comment No. 26.

■ ABSOLUTE PRIORITY/BEST INTEREST

Brazilian Federal Constitution: article 227 | Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA): article 4 |
Convention on the Rights of the Child (Convention): article 3

💡 *ON PAPER*

Guided by the principles of absolute priority of children under the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) and the best interests of the child under the Convention, governments should include the youngest generations in all climate-related actions through policies that respond to the needs of this age group.

Furthermore, any environmental initiative, whether a public policy, program, or project, with a significant effect on children and adolescents should engage them as active participants. In other words, childhood and ado-

lescence should be considered **transversally** across all mitigation and adaptation efforts to address climate change, including in international documents (see *section* Children and adolescents in the COP).

International organizations in fact advocate for, promote, and support countries in implementing child- and adolescent-responsive climate policies. In general, four key criteria are essential for a climate policy to be responsive to this segment of the population:

- ▶ Clearly reference children and adolescents;
- ▶ Center on rights, recognizing children and adolescents as rights-holders;
- ▶ Reflect the needs of children and adolescents across critical domains such as schooling, public health, nutrition, and climate-related emergencies.
- ▶ Identify children, adolescents, and youth as key stakeholders and ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes.

IN PRACTICE

Climate initiatives still rarely incorporate age-based perspectives, even on paper, and children have yet to be prioritized. Proponents emerging from UN climate talks (COPs). The Paris Agreement first acknowledged children and adolescents in 2021, noting in its preamble that they, alongside other groups, are especially vulnerable to climate change. (*for more, see the section Children in COPs*).

Similarly, Brazilian climate documents, policies, and strategies rarely mention

children and adolescents or their specific needs either.

A recent exception was the new Brazilian NDC (*see note on page XX*), discussed above. The document submitted to the UNFCCC outlining the country's emission reduction targets lays out a forward-looking vision to guide actions toward achieving those targets. These include "consideration of the rights of children and future generations," cited in the Interbranch Pact for Ecological Transformation.

Instituted by Decree 12,223 of October 14, 2024, the Pact is a formal agreement among the Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary branches to act in unison and mutual cooperation to realize a set of 10 commitments encompassing 26 priority actions by 2035. Goals include achieving ecological sustainability; sustainable economic development; social, environmental, and climate justice; **recognition of the rights of children and future generations**; and resilience to extreme climate events.



REPORTING TIP

■ MAINSTREAMING CHILDHOOD IN CLIMATE COVERAGE

Stories on climate change do not always have to focus primarily on children's rights to include discussion of this population segment. When covering climate issues, it is always worth asking:

- ▶ Does the law, regulation, policy, standard, guideline, plan, project, strategy, or budget I am investigating or reporting on include any mention of or focus on children and adolescents?

- ▶ Does it assess the impact on this group? Does it address their specific needs?

If the answer is no, a single paragraph can suffice to highlight the omission of a wider framework for protecting children's rights in the initiative and the need for a response from the pertinent decision-makers. This can empower the news media to fulfill its "watchdog" role naturally.



HEADS UP

The NDCs Brazil issued in November 2024 at COP 29 set phased climate targets, an innovation designed to enable flexible implementation of the respective targets. The country has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from 48.4% to 53% by 2030, based on 2005 levels, and achieving climate neutrality between 2050 and 2060. According to the government, the approach seeks to reconcile ambition with realism by giving Brazil leeway to adjust its strategies in line with technological advances, international support, and domestic socioeconomic conditions.

However, the phased target approach has drawn criticism from experts and civil society organizations. The primary

concern is that flexible implementation could weaken climate goals and erode the country's accountability, given the absence of a definitive target level to track or mandate. Some analysts argue that while it may be more transparent in terms of outlining possible scenarios, the phased approach might dull the momentum necessary to confront the climate crisis as swiftly as scientific evidence demands.

Because the targets mention the protection of children and adolescents, news reporting on progress or backsliding in meeting the respective commitments could also help draw connections between the fulfillment of climate goals and the safeguarding the rights of Brazilian girls and boys.



HEADS UP

THE PRIVATE SECTOR BEARS RESPONSIBILITY AS WELL

The Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration of “all institutions of society.” In the context of climate, the private sector warrants special attention.

General Comment No. 26 provides that businesses are required to respect the rights of children in all their activities and value chains, including through the prevention and mitigation of environmental impacts that may adversely affect those rights. In other words: they must reduce emissions, assess risks, and remedy any harm caused.

ENVIRONMENTAL LICENSING

The comment requires that businesses conduct environmental and human rights impact assessments specifically focused on children, taking into account their vulnerabilities and structural inequalities,

especially in areas disproportionately affected by climate disasters or environmental degradation.

In addition, they must proactively engage in the transition to a low-carbon and sustainable economy, ensuring that their business models are aligned with international climate justice commitments and the principle of the best interests of the child.

This means not only reducing emissions but also ensuring that their operations do not compromise children’s access to clean water, fresh air, safe housing, nutritious food, and schooling, all fundamental rights that are directly undermined by the climate crisis.

In Brazil, it is vital that bills aimed at reducing or restricting environmental licensing are monitored and featured. After all, if the country were to backslide on its commitments to sustainable development, not only could this endanger the progress on climate policy but the protection of children’s rights as well.

■ RIGHT TO LIFE, SURVIVAL, AND DEVELOPMENT

ECA: articles 3 and 4 | Convention: article 6

💡 ON PAPER

General Comment No. 26 states that environmental degradation, including climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, can prevent realization of the fundamental right to birth and to development. It demands that States take measures to protect children and adolescents from avoidable premature or unnatural deaths. Among these are deaths resulting from the impacts of extreme climate events, including those linked to the rise in conflicts triggered by severe droughts and exposure to pollutants (exacerbated by climate change). Also comprised are deaths caused by diseases related to the climate crisis.

States must acknowledge the significance of every stage of childhood to later matu-

ration and development, along with the distinct needs children have at each stage of life. Special attention should be given to early childhood in relation to the impacts of pollution exposure.

⚙️ IN PRACTICE

For example, the World Health Organization forecasts an **additional 250,000 deaths per year** between 2030 and 2050 due to malaria, malnutrition, diarrhea, and heat-related stress from climate change. According to the World Bank, reducing fossil fuel use could prevent **1.2 million deaths/year** caused by exposure to particulate matter pollution from fossil fuels.

WORTH ASKING



Brazil has an established framework to direct risk and disaster planning and management focused on children and adolescents. The [*National Joint Protocol for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescent, Elderly, and Persons with Disabilities*](#) establishes clear guidelines on how to ensure the rights of children and adolescents in the event of environmental disasters. It lays out strategies across the Health, Social Assistance, Education, and Public Security sectors.

We would prefer not to offer this suggestion, but as we have seen earlier the planet cannot escape the increasing frequency of climate-related natural disasters. So, when covering these types of shocks, it is worth asking and describing how, and whether, the protocol is being fulfilled.

Therefore, the actions and measures needed to ensure the right to life, survival, and development involve all those responsible for safeguarding the additional rights detailed later in this section.

These include **policies** to prevent child deaths from malnutrition, preventable

diseases, violence stemming from conflicts and environmental disasters, along with the development of effective public policies to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all children. In addition, they encompass the creation of regulations and laws to compel private-sector compliance with environmental standards.

Disaster-related policie: an important domain for safeguarding lives threatened by climate change is risk management, a topic addressed in section 2. However, even when aligned with international frameworks for disaster risk reduction, Brazilian public policies have been driven more by experience and the need to respond to catastrophes than by risk prevention.¹⁷

A PLAN FOR THE COUNTRY

In 2022, more than 500 civil society organizations gathered under Agenda 227 to create a document called *Plano País (Country Plan)*, setting out 137 detailed proposals designed to insert children and adolescents at the center of Brazilian public policies. The document was delivered to the presidential candidates

that year. Among the topics addressed was the need for structural actions to combat climate change that address the challenge not only from an environmental perspective but as a fundamental ethical commitment to future generations.

To that end, the document proposed measures such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, combating deforestation, encouraging sustainable agriculture, and protecting biomes. It also emphasized the

value of climate education in cultivating more engaged citizens and advocated for policies aimed at protecting vulnerable populations, especially children and adolescents in Indigenous, Quilombola, and underserved communities.

The document establishes a baseline intended to serve as a reference for developing public policies and through which the press can hold governments accountable at the different levels of decision-making.

■ RIGHT TO HEALTH

ECA: articles 3 and 4 | Convention: article 24

💡 *ON PAPER*

The physical and psychological integrity of children must not be compromised by climate change, environmental pollution, ecosystem degradation, or biodiversity loss. To this end, States must adopt concrete measures to mitigate environmental effects that impact children's health, ensuring access to clean air, safe drinking water, and adequate food.

Moreover, strengthening health systems is essential to address illnesses exacerbated by the climate crisis, such as respiratory infections and malnutrition, while prioritizing vulnerable children. Boys and girls must also have full access to adequate medical care and the necessary psychosocial support.

States must further ensure that public health facilities are safe and operational in cases of extreme weather events and natural disas-

ters. This requires the necessary adaptations based on the specific vulnerability and disaster risk scenarios involved and on long-term changes in temperature, rainfall patterns, droughts, etc. Physical infrastructure must also be resilient to extreme events caused by climate change.

MENTAL HEALTH

Psychosocial and mental health status of children amid the climate crisis. General Comment No. 26 recognizes the clear link between environmental harm and the mental health of children, such as depression and eco-anxiety, also referred to as climate anxiety, and calls on public health and education authorities alike to give urgent attention to the matter through effective response and prevention programs alike.

FOOD SECURITY AND ACCESS TO POTABLE WATER

The right to food security and access to water is guaranteed by various articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantee and appears as a fundamental right in the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), with direct implications for children's health and development.

To mitigate the impact of climate change on food security, and, consequently, on child nutrition, States must, among other measures, strengthen response plans to climate events by ensuring access to food and water.

They must also ensure the provision of essential nutrition services, including the detection and treatment of malnutrition, with emergency support when necessary. Furthermore, policies and programs must be adapted to make food systems more resilient.

IN PRACTICE

Independent of climate-related impacts, children's access to healthcare in Brazil is neither universal nor uniform. Data from the *Observatory on the Early Childhood Legal Framework Observatory* (Observatório do Marco Legal da Primeira Infância – Observa) reveals that 25% of Brazilian households do not have access to primary healthcare. Currently, 3.5% of children up to five years of age in Brazil are underweight, an indicator of malnutrition, and

climate change could further aggravate the problem.

In addition, the mounting frequency of extreme weather events will lead to reduced food production in Brazil because the agricultural production and distribution systems that serve the most vulnerable population segments (80% of food is supplied by small farmers) are themselves fragile. Consequently, the risk of localized food insecurity

crises is growing, due not only to rising food prices but to reduced supply as well.

Limited access to clean water and basic sanitation constitutes an additional risk factor for Brazilian children. Around 2.4 million boys and girls lack access to water, and 19.6 million live without adequate sanitation. In urban areas, 28% of children lack access, while in rural areas, the figure climbs to 92%.



REPORTING TIP

HANDLING DATA WITH CARE

With respect to statistical figures, often used by the news media for factual support, it is worth noting that data on child (or adult) deaths caused by climate-related factors is relatively sparse. And often, the data varies according to the source and methodology used.

The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges quantifying deaths attributable to the impacts of climate change remains a challenge. And that makes sense. There are no official certificates that list, for instance, “heat,” “cold,” or “malnutrition” as the cause of death. Rather, climate impacts create the conditions that lead to death.

When reporting these figures, usually received through press releases distributed by the responsible organizations, journalists should make sure to include the sampling and scope of the respective studies, so as not to mislead the public.

■ RIGHT TO EDUCATION

ECA: articles 4 and 53 | Convention: articles 28 and 29

💡 *ON PAPER*

When it comes to climate change, education is both a highly threatened right and part of the solution. On the one hand, climate change and the resulting weather events directly impact education on multiple fronts, including: material losses, infrastructure damage, interruption of school activities, adverse learning outcomes, and school dropout. On the other hand, education serves as a powerful vehicle to raise awareness and prepare children and youth to confront climate-related challenges and shape future solutions.

In this light, government action should focus on two primary fronts:

Infrastructure: ensure school infrastructure is safe, healthy, and resilient, providing adequate transportation, locations in areas removed from environmental risks, and facilities with drinking water, sanitation, and proper climate control to prevent class inter-

ruptions and to provide heat-adapted and learning-conducive environments. During extreme climate events, uninterrupted access to education must be ensured, particularly in vulnerable communities. Moreover, schools should not be used as temporary shelters for people displaced by extreme climate events.

Education: promote transformative, inclusive, and child-centered environmental education. Curricula should reflect the social, economic, and cultural contexts of children, providing up-to-date scientific information and encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, and environmental responsibility.

Further, teacher training should include environmental values, applying innovative methods and practical experiences, such as outdoor learning, to better prepare children for environmental challenges and sustainable jobs. General Comment No. 26 emphasizes

that girls should receive special attention in connection to this right, as they are more likely to drop out of school to take on additional domestic and economic responsibilities in households impacted by environmental shocks and stressors.

⚙️ *IN PRACTICE*

The impact of climate change on education may be the most visible link between climate and the rights of children and adolescents. Thanks to the work of news media outlets, the public is largely aware that schools and educational systems are, for the most part, poorly equipped to accommodate and protect students from the impacts of climate-related events.

In 2024, 250 million children and adolescents experienced educational interruptions caused



HEADS UP

In February 2025, the *National Pact for Learning Restoration* was promulgated, a policy initiative developed by the Ministry of Education to mitigate the impacts of climate-driven emergencies and disasters, and other factors, on the delivery of basic education. The initiative provides for technical and financial support from the Ministry to actions aimed at strengthening learning outcomes.

by climate events. A full 74% resided in low- and lower-middle-income countries. With respect to Brazil, 1.17 million boys and girls were affected by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, which disrupted operations in 2,000 schools, and by a severe drought in the Amazon region that impacted 1,700 educational institutions.

Beyond the lack of disaster preparedness, another issue has, and should continue to, receive greater attention: namely, the heat waves of early 2025, which revealed that many schools either lack climate-controlled spaces or operate classrooms without functioning

cooling and ventilation units as a result of inadequate maintenance.

A survey conducted by the Center for Innovations in Public Policy Excellence based on data from the 2023 School Census found that most classrooms in Brazil are not air-conditioned and that the problem is not restricted to public schools. While only 33.99% of public-school classrooms have air conditioning units, at 47.05% private schools fare only slightly better.¹⁸

A *study*¹⁹ conducted by MapBiomass and the Alana Institute revealed that 64% of schools in Brazil's state capitals are located in "urban heat islands," zones in which temperatures are at least 1°C higher than the average for surrounding areas.

The impact on learning outcomes is significant. As an example, a World Bank *report*²⁰ estimates that students exposed to high temperatures in in Brazil's hottest municipalities could lose up to 1.5 years of learning over the course of their lives.

As noted at the beginning of this section, depriving children of their right to education due to these impacts can trigger a domino effect, leading to other rights violations.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

With regard to environmental education, Brazil has a National Environmental Education Policy, which was updated in November 2024 to include the development of tools and methodologies designed to ensure the implementation of effective educational actions to prevent, mitigate, and adapt to climate change and socio-environmental disasters.

Moreover, a framework for environmental education, namely the National Curriculum Guidelines for Environmental Education, has been in place since 2012. In practice, however, experts point out that environmental education continues to fail to draw the connection between students and climate change and biodiversity preservation, nor does it systematically embed climate-related topics across all educational stages.

Across Brazil, a growing movement is taking shape to strengthen the connection of children to nature, with schools playing a fundamental role (see *the box*: Nature as part of the solution). Of note, 2025 marks the first time the National Adaptation Plan will feature dedicated strategies targeting the education sector.

■ RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE

ECA: article 5 | Convention: article 19

💡 *ON PAPER*

Governments have a responsibility to adopt effective measures to ensure that children and adolescents are protected from all forms of violence, especially in the context of climate-related crises. This includes implementing public policies to address the causes and consequences of climate change, ensuring that vulnerable children do not become the victims of abuse, exploitation, or neglect.

Bear in mind that temporary disaster shelters can pose a particular risk if prevention and protection measures are not incorporated in the emergency response, a frequent challenge in the immediate aftermath of severe events.

States must also strengthen social protection systems and ensure access to essential health,

education, and justice services, in addition to creating safe and resilient environments where children are shielded from the impacts of heightened violence stemming from environmental crises. This requires building out an integrated approach to engage communities and children themselves in violence prevention and recognizes climate change as a direct threat to their rights.

⚙️ *IN PRACTICE*

Climate change has increased the risk of violence against children, to the extent natural disasters, forced migration, and resource scarcity can lead to increased physical and psychological abuse and exploitation. Accord-

ing to UNICEF, children are more vulnerable to trafficking, sexual abuse, and child labor in climate-driven crises, especially in situations of forced displacement or food insecurity.

For example, the convergence of environmental and economic pressures, combined with the presence of organized crime, heightens the risk of commercial sexual exploitation, particularly of girls and women, in areas of the Amazon where public services are scarce²¹.

In addition, climate change worsens living conditions, contributing to an increase in child abuse. Events such as natural disasters, socioeconomic instability, and mounting strain on families may foster environments where neglect and domestic violence become more likely.

■ THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN

Convention: article 30

💡 **ON PAPER**

Heightened vulnerability to climate change may force children to migrate due to natural disasters, environmental degradation, or humanitarian crises. General Comment No. 26 emphasizes that States must ensure protection for these children, irrespective of their migrant status, guaranteeing them the right to health, education, housing, and safety. It also underscores the need for poli-

cies to prevent discrimination and promote social inclusion, with a view to shielding children from exploitation, violence, and arbitrary detention.

In addition, the document recommends that States take into account the impacts of climate change on migration and adopt adaptation strategies to protect children from

forced displacement. This includes adequate humanitarian assistance, safe housing solutions, and access to resilient education systems capable of ensuring continuous learning even in crisis situations. Moreover, governments must promote the active participation of migrant children in policy-making processes that affect their lives, ensuring that their voices are heard and respected.

IN PRACTICE

Displacement can exacerbate the vulnerability of children and their families to the impacts of climate change. After a disaster, for instance, boys and girls may be separated from their parents or caregivers, increasing the risk of exploitation, child trafficking, and abuse. Forced migration can also disrupt access to education and healthcare, exposing children to malnutrition, disease, and inadequate immunization.

The report *Children displaced in a changing climate: Preparing for a future already underway* concludes that between 2016 and 2021 a total of 43.1 million children were internally displaced by climate-related disasters, equivalent to approximately 20,000 child displacements **per day**.

The study looked at forced migrations driven by four types of extreme climate events:

floods, storms, wildfires, and droughts. In the 2017-2021 period, Brazil figured among the ten countries with the largest number of child displacements linked to drought events, alongside Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Madagascar, Somalia, and South Sudan.

With the increase in climate-induced stressors, forced migrations in Brazil are expected to become more frequent, especially in areas where environmental dependency heightens the population's vulnerability to climate change, such as forests, semi-arid regions experiencing desertification, and riverfront areas.

The World Bank estimates 143 million people will be internally displaced by 2050 in the hardest-hit regions of the planet, including Latin America, Asia, and Africa.



HEADS UP

The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies is currently considering bill 1,594/2024 on establishing the *National Policy on Environmental and Climate Displaced Persons (PNDAC)*. The proposed legislation's provisions include investment in prevention, school and community environmental education, and respect for differences in origin, race, social class, age, nationality, and religion, with special attention to persons with disabilities or comorbidities and single-parent households.

■ RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

ECA: articles 3 and 4 | Convention: article 30

💡 **ON PAPER**

General Comment No. 26 stresses that States must consider the environmental impacts on the lands and traditional cultures of indigenous peoples, ensuring indigenous children the right to life, survival, and full development. It also recommends that indigenous children and their families engage directly in responding to environmental harm through application of their knowledge and cultural practices in mitigation and adaptation strategies. When traditional knowledge is valued and supported, indigenous communities can contribute to reducing local impacts and strengthening resilience.

Environmental policies must adopt a tailored approach to indigenous children, ensuring they are not excluded or discriminated against. This includes guaranteeing that their voices are heard in policymaking processes and that their cultural and environmental rights are protected from threats such as deforestation and environmental degradation.

⚙️ **IN PRACTICE**

Indigenous peoples rely on natural resources for their survival and inhabit diverse, yet fragile, ecosystems. The climate crisis undermines the adaptive capacity and resilience of these communities, negatively impacting their livelihoods, threatening land rights, and worsening food insecurity.

In 2023, 670 out of 1,040 deaths of Indigenous children under the age of five were attributed to preventable causes, specifically to diseases that could have been controlled through basic health care measures, according to the Indigenous Missionary Council (Conselho Missionário Indígena – Cimi)²², based on data of the Mortality Information System (Sistema de Informação sobre Mortalidade – SIM) and the Indigenous Health Secretariat (Saúde Indígena – Sesai).

Of particular concern, 286 of these deaths were linked to food insecurity and respiratory issues, highlighting the vulnerability of

these communities to environmental degradation. In this context, Cimi notes the widespread lack of educational infrastructure in villages across the country, as well as inadequate health care facilities, personnel, and transportation in indigenous communities. Additionally, the absence of basic sanitation and access to clean water has been exacerbated by the climate crisis, unleashing floods across the country and a severe drought in the Amazon region, while deepening the vulnerability of many communities.

Indigenous communities have been endeavoring for a larger role in the environmental policymaking process, pressing for the protection of their fundamental rights. The active inclusion of indigenous women and youth in decision-making spaces is seen as essential for building mitigation and adaptation strategies that respect their cultures and promote environmental justice.



REPORTING TIP

■ THE IMPORTANCE OF SOLUTIONS

Although climate change currently poses real threats to the rights of boys and girls, exploring and offering alternatives and solutions to the problems addressed in your story is equally important. Do not limit yourself to merely denouncing the impact of the climate crisis on this segment. While disseminating the problem is important to draw the attention of the public and policymakers to a given issue, it is up to the journalist to take the extra step of putting forward solutions.

Some of the suggestions below may serve as examples:

- ▶ When addressing school closures due to extreme heatwaves, try to tell the story of a single school or school system that has successfully addressed an air conditioning challenge.
- ▶ When covering a climate disaster and its consequences in a municipality, investigate whether a city with similar characteristics has effectively prioritized the protection of children and adolescents in its disaster management strategy.

- ▶ When reporting on the rise in respiratory illnesses among young children due to air pollution from climate change, be sure to showcase projects and initiatives that have transformed the local environment or urban landscape to address the issue.
- ▶ When reporting on the omission of children's rights in Brazilian climate policies, showcase a country that has successfully integrated children's rights into its climate policies. What has changed in the lives of children and adolescents in that country?

It is important to point out that beyond highlighting contrasts and challenges solutions do not always need to be framed around a critical exposé. A news piece focused solely on positive aspects (a project, a public policy, or an initiative that produced positive results) can be equally impactful.

In presenting proposals and solutions, journalism contributes to advancing the public debate and demonstrating that there are indeed initiatives capable of mitigating or addressing challenges relating to children and climate, and that replicating or expanding on these is possible.



■ NATURE AS PART OF THE SOLUTION

Significant challenges remain to ensure all children have access to healthy natural environments. Accelerated urbanization, a lack of green spaces, and the need for investment in environmental education programs are barriers that must be overcome. In this context, it is worth exploring and incorporating two sets of solutions to harness nature's potential to help mitigate climate risks.

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS (NBS)

NBS are sustainable approaches that employ natural processes and ecosystems to address urban and environmental challenges. They are intended to promote ecological resilience and improve quality of life, while tackling issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and natural resource management.

In the Brazilian context, they have been applied mainly in urban areas to promote sustainable water management, flood control, biodiversity restoration, and air

quality improvements, among other objectives. The UNFCCC recognizes the importance of these solutions and has underscored their potential in climate change adaptation.

Examples of NBS in Brazil:

- ▶ Rain gardens: designed to collect and filter rainwater by using vegetation to absorb runoff and prevent flooding.
- ▶ Urban green areas: parks and gardens, for example, that enhance local biodiversity, help regulate the climate, and provide recreational spaces for the public.
- ▶ Revegetation of degraded areas: use of native vegetation to restore ecosystems that have been damaged by human activity, such as areas affected by mining or deforestation.

With respect to children, NBS have a dual role: in addition to naturally reducing the impact of climate change, they create envi-

ronments to support healthy development and serve as educational tools.

NATURE-BASED EDUCATION

Contact with the natural environment from the earliest years of life has significant benefits on children's physical, emotional, and cognitive health. Research shows that interacting with nature stimulates curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills, while also reducing stress and anxiety levels. Contact with nature also strengthens ecological awareness and a sense of belonging, both important for shaping an environmentally conscious citizenry.

Schools play a vital role in binding children to nature, while also helping to design solutions. Given the urgency of making educational spaces more resilient to climate change and, at the same time, fostering contact with nature, the Nature-Based Education (NBE) approach represents a compelling solution. The proposal involves adapting school environments and





pedagogical practices in a manner that reconnect children, adolescents, and young people to nature, promoting a dynamic curriculum grounded in local realities.

Key objectives include the physical adaptation of schools to withstand extreme weather events through Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), strengthening the connection between school communities and the environment, and fostering knowledge, skills, and student leadership to address the climate crisis.

By incorporating, for example, outdoor activities, school garden projects, park visits, and environmental education workshops, schools transform their classrooms into true learning laboratories.

Thus, investigating and disseminating best practices in Nature-Based Education, even when implemented on a small scale, interviewing educators who apply these solutions, and describing how they positively impact the lives of children and school communities are key steps to broaden the reach and impact of the respective initiatives.

Putting a spotlight on these solutions does more than just inform. It actively fosters transformation. The initiatives can inspire public officials, educators, and civil society to replicate these ideas on a broader scale. In addition, they help shape more informed public opinion on the importance of ensuring the right of children to engage with nature, to climate education, and to healthier, safer, and resilient school environments that are better equipped to meet the challenges of the future.



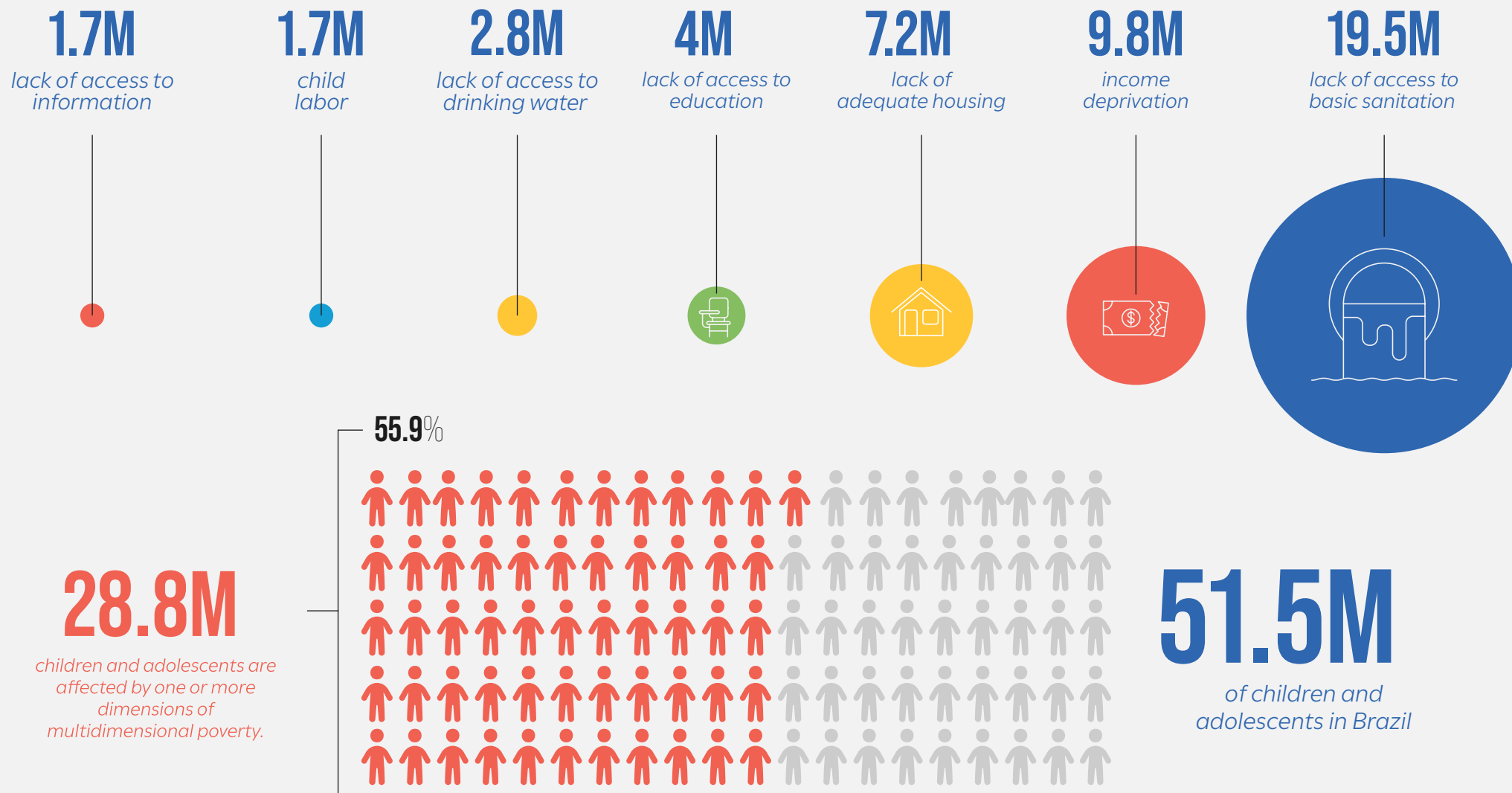
HEADS UP

The right to a healthy environment is a bedrock constitutional principle in Brazil. The Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) established the importance of a balanced environment to the full development of boys and girls. The proposed **Legal Framework for Children and Nature** (Marco Legal Criança e Natureza) – *Bill PL2225/2024* – seeks to institutionalize the access to nature as a fundamental right for the youngest generations.

The Legal Framework for Children and Nature proposes integrating nature in the school environment to strengthen the connection between children and the environment and develop skills to face the climate crisis. The proposal, inspired on the Nature-Based Education approach, promotes an inclusive educational ecosystem that blends environmental, anti-racist, climate-conscious, holistic, and nature-based education.

The bill provides for the inclusion of actions and projects in school curricula, the Political-Pedagogical Project (Projeto Político Pedagógico – PPP), and the formation of school communities to facilitate learning and outdoor play. It also proposes adapting school infrastructure to bolster climate resilience through measures drawn from the Nature-Based Solutions approach, such as the design of green schoolyards, the use of toys crafted from natural materials, and tree planting on school grounds.

VIOLATIONS OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT RIGHTS IN BRAZIL, 2023



UNICEF. Multiple Dimensions of Child Poverty in Brazil: 2019-2023.

4

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE COPS

Safeguarding the rights of children and adolescents from the worsening effects of the climate crisis requires their meaningful inclusion in climate-related decision-making, with direct consequences for national and regional policy.

The guarantees established in the Convention on the Rights of the

Child and General Comment No. 26 must be reflected in the decisions, agreements, and pathways adopted in each international climate conference.

To support the work of journalists on this front, the section below addresses the inclusion of children and adolescents in COPs in two contexts:

the pertinent international documents and negotiations and participatory spaces.

It also offers tips on the key points and moments of the COP when you can highlight the issue of child and adolescent rights across your coverage as well as key issues to monitor.



IMPORTANCE OF INCLUDING CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS

Building on the earlier discussion of the link between children's rights and climate change under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we now examine the importance of explicitly including children in climate negotiation outcomes to ensure that their rights are reflected in tangible global policy commitments and actions.

First and foremost, the importance stems from the UNFCCC's pivotal role in shaping the global climate agenda and steering public policy, climate financing, and implementation mechanisms in signatory countries. If children's rights are not explicitly incorporated into the Convention's documents, they run the risk of receiving little or no consideration in the development and rollout of national climate policies and actions.

In addition, the climate agreements established at the COPs strongly influence both national and international policies. Signatory countries are obligated to comply with the Paris Agreement

and to report on progress made in the commitments assumed under other climate conference agreements.

Another significant factor is resource allocation. The UNFCCC coordinates various climate financing mechanisms. Without the explicit inclusion of the youngest population segments, the population segments requiring the highest priority will not receive adequate funding.

To illustrate this point, **only 2.4% of the resources from the multi-lateral funds** coordinated by the UNFCCC are allocated to projects related to children and adolescents, despite global evidence that investing in individuals in this age group generates human capital and their communities, with corresponding benefits for their communities and countries as well.

Therefore, including a children's rights perspective in international instruments serves to reinforce the responsibility of States to ensure that climate mitigation and adaptation policies treat children as a priority.



HEADS UP

COP activities span the entire year and are not limited to the formal 15-day event. In the months leading up to the Conference, various technical and diplomatic meetings are held to craft the final decisions. These can serve as hooks for stories highlighting how the climate debate includes or overlooks child and adolescent rights perspective.

The Inter-Sessional Meeting of Subsidiary Bodies held annually in Bonn every June is a critical step in shaping the technical and political agenda for the COP. Delegates from various countries, as well as observer organizations, come together to discuss the topics on that year's conference agenda.

Beyond the Bonn meeting, several other key events mark the COP cycle. Events like UN Climate Week, held across different regions throughout the year, add further substance to the discussions on adaptation, resilience, and energy transition. Also influencing the process are Global Economic Forums, such as the G20 and the World Economic Forum, during which the leading major economies discuss climate financing and decarbonization commitments. These meetings can provide opportunities to craft pieces that consider the climate debate through the lens of child and adolescent rights.



CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE AGREEMENTS

The inclusion of child and adolescent rights in international climate documents is a relatively recent phenomenon — just over 10 years. Historically, children's roles in climate decision-making were often unclear and subsumed under the broader category of "youth." Gradually, however, boys and girls are carving out their own space.

A landmark in elevating the rights of children and adolescents within global climate discussions was reached during COP 21 in Paris, in 2015, as part of the Paris Agreement. In its preamble, the document recognizes that: "... Parties should adopt measures that respect human rights, the right to health, the rights of Indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children and adolescents, persons with disabilities and

those in vulnerable situations, ensuring the right to development, gender equality, the empowerment of women, and intergenerational equity."

Another milestone was the "cover decision" adopted at COP 27 in Egypt in 2022, known as the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan. It highlights the essential role of children as agents of change in addressing climate challenges and **urges governments to actively involve them in the design and execution of climate policies.**

Intergenerational equity is also underscored in the decision, with recognition that the legacy of emissions and policy choices will have long-term repercussions—both costs and benefits—for children and those yet to be born. Nevertheless, a targeted

commitment to protect children and adolescents remains absent.

■ DIALOGUE FOR CHANGE

In June 2023, ahead of COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the High-Level Expert Dialogue took place during the mid-year sessions of the Convention's implementation bodies (commonly referred to as the Bonn meetings).

In sum, the Dialogue produced the following conclusions and recommendations²³:

- ▶ The political marginalization of children, the priority attached to economic interests, and the lack of consistency among ministries hamper efforts to incorporate child and adolescent rights in climate policies. A proposal was put forth to deliver capacity building to negotiators, include more young delegates, and develop



■ HOW TO INSERT A CHILD RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE IN THE COVERAGE OF COP 30

The informal dialogue summary released by the UNFCCC regarding the convention's processes may offer useful insights for journalists seeking to elevate the topic of children and adolescents within the COP30 agenda.

For example, the Dialogue detected insufficient consideration of child and adolescent perspectives in existing financing mechanisms, such as the Loss and Damage Fund, and the need to create dedicated funding streams for children and adolescents.

Discussions on the **Loss and Damage Fund** did not move forward as they should have in Baku and were carried over to Brazil. The question worth asking and reporting on: are the rights of children and adolescents—those who stand to be most affected by the crisis—being taken into account in Fund-related discussions?

A goal of COP 30 is to define the **common indicators** that countries should develop and achieve under the Global Goal on Adaptation. The Expert Dialogue identified the need for disaggregated indicators by age, gender, and race, and the trajectory set at the preceding COP appears to address this need. A good approach would be to monitor the outcome of the discussions, confirm inclusion of these indicators, and disseminate the findings to enable ongoing monitoring by the public.

Another question worth raising is what the UNFCCC intends to do with the **results of the Expert Dialogue**. Will they be released as an official document? Will they be inserted in other documents? Or will they be relegated to a side event organized simply to placate concerned organizations and countries?

methodologies to include children's rights in national climate plans (mitigation and adaptation).

- ▶ There is a lack of data on climate impacts on children, such as health, displacement, and just transition, among others. Required steps include integrating data on the youngest age group in NDCs and National Adaptation Plans, supporting child-centered research by the IPCC, and strengthening the available body of evidence to support climate-related decision-making.
- ▶ Children and adolescents should be considered in the Loss and Damage Fund, in UNFCCC indicators, and in climate financing. Participatory processes should be strengthened, funding guaranteed, and safeguards established to protect and expand the participation of children in climate negotiations.

Although part of the official UNFCCC agenda, the conclusions of the Expert Dialogue have yet to be formally released as an official document. Child rights organizations are actively advocating for their inclusion and recognition at COP30 in Brazil.



THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEBATE

Children and adolescents remain underrepresented not only in climate policy documents but also in the very forums where their voices, perspectives, and proposed solutions could be meaningfully heard and considered.

It is worth emphasizing that both the right to participation and the right to be heard are enshrined in the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In recent years, children and adolescents have taken on a more prominent role at COP events, supported by the continued advocacy of international institutions, youth groups, and civil society. However, experts report that the discussions on children and adolescents remain largely on the sidelines and their actual influence remains limited.

■ PARTICIPATORY SPACES AT THE COPS

YOUNGO, the Climate Convention's representative youth constituency group, is the official space for children, adolescents, and youth within the UNFCCC. YOUNGO consists of a network of young people from civil society organizations across the world engaged in climate discussions and actions within the framework of the Convention.

YOUNGO's is composed of various working groups focused on different aspects of the negotiations (including financing, targets, and adaptation). Its objective is to insert the perspective of children, adolescents, and youth in international documents. Through-

out the year, YOUNGO organizes assemblies, meetings, and votes on an advocacy agenda.

YOUNGO periodically prepares the Global Youth Statement, capturing the shared priorities of children, adolescents, and youth based on inclusive discussions held throughout the year. deliberated throughout the year. The 2024 edition was the result of over 75,000 hours of volunteer work and laid out the full range of youth demands discussed throughout the year.

In the lead up to the COP, YOUNGO organizes the Conference of Youth (COY) in partnership with local organizations in the host country. Keep an eye out for updates on the event.

■ ADDITIONAL SPACES

Since COP 27 (Egypt), in 2023, the conference has designated a pavilion in the Blue Zone to children and adolescents: the Children and Youth Pavilion. Throughout the COP, the pavilion hosts events and debates in which participating youth from around the world have the chance to raise and discuss critical issues and demands with high-level institutional representatives.

Other thematic pavilions also address issues related to childhood, adolescence, and

youth. A YOUNGO survey of 148 pavilions at COP 29 found that 61% included at least one discussion addressing issues affecting children and adolescents.

In addition, civil society demonstration held during the COPs are important spaces for public engagement that merit coverage.

■ YOUTH PRESIDENCY

A clear indication of the growing influence of younger generations in climate diplomacy was the launch of the Youth Climate Champion (PYCC) role at COP 28, in 2023.

The role was established to ensure that the global climate agenda include the voices and perspectives of youth, children, and adolescents. The Champion serves as a bridge between official proceedings of the COP presidency and the demands of young people, with a view to facilitating dialogue, articulating concerns, and promoting qualified participation in climate negotiations and events.

Appointing the Youth Climate Champion falls under the remit of each COP presidency. Here again, Brazil innovated by opening the selection process to public applications from young activists.

WHAT IS A UNFCCC CONSTITUENCY GROUP?

The UNFCCC constituency groups are organized networks representing different sectors of society that act as observer parties to the international climate process. They represent a range of interests, including environmental organizations (Engo), the business sector (Bingo), academic institutions (Ringo), trade unions (Tungo), youth (Youngo), Indigenous peoples (IPO), and local governments (LGMA).

While they are not part of official country delegations and lack decision-making power, these groups are formally recognized within the UNFCCC. As such, they enjoy access to meetings and can make statements, organize side events, and interact directly with negotiators. In some cases, they may even be invited to speak in open sessions, although final decisions are the sole purview of national governments.

Out of a pool of 154 young applicants, Marcelle Oliveira, 26, from Realengo (Rio de Janeiro), was selected. She is the director of Perifalab, a network of independent collectives promoting cultural and social initiatives in informal urban areas and underserved communities, with an emphasis on urban transformation and environmental justice.

Marcele's priorities for COP 30 include coordinating the Global Youth Climate Drive and conducting consultations with youth across Brazil's five regions. In her first month of meetings, she has sought to spotlight the intersection of climate issues and children and adolescents, separately from the broader youth agenda. Her proposed actions include...

Follow the Young Climate Champion on [Instagram](#) and learn more about her efforts

■ CHALLENGES TO MEANINGFUL IMPACT

Spaces spotlighting issues of concern to children and adolescents are essential. The more individuals and organizations advocating for this within the COPs, the better. Still, it is vital to consider whether this visibility is resulting in real policy impact.

Instituto Alana²⁴ points out a number of factors that dilute the focus on the best interest of the child standard in Climate Convention processes:

- ▶ Despite progress in recognizing children and adolescents as a specific category in international documents, many instruments and venues still use the term youth to refer to children and young people as a single group, obscuring the specific needs of children, especially young children, whose priorities differ from those

of youth — a category encompassing, by the UNFCCC's own criteria, people up to 35 years of age.

- ▶ The same problem applies to frameworks created to address the topic. YOUNGO was designed with a focus on organized youth, which, as we have mentioned before, has different demands from those of childhood. This structure also limits the participation of younger children.
- ▶ The Youth Climate Champion itself was created with youth in mind. As the youth presidency rotates annually and depends on the COP host's agenda, the inclusion of specific child and adolescent issues, as well as advocacy efforts, can become dependent on the political will of each presidency.

■ LISTENING VS. EFFECTIVENESS

Beyond the restricted participation space, assessing how far these discussions resonate is equally important.

In an interview with ANDI at COP 29, YOUNGO representatives acknowledged limitations in attracting negotiators and decision-makers to their events and panels — the events were in fact part of the official event agenda of the COP presidency (Azerbaijan designated youth issues as a key action agenda).

The negotiating agenda is expansive, and the respective cross-cutting themes wide-ranging. However, decision-makers at the international level apparently have other priorities. Moreover, the clash of agendas at COPs, including media coverage, is a very real issue (see *the box* Centering children's issues amid COP's fast-paced agenda).

A strategy advocated by organizations to overcome this challenge is to ensure that children and adolescents have a seat at the nego-

tiating table. In fact, numerous international organizations argue that country delegations should include children and adolescents as negotiators. Though the road ahead remains long, children are beginning to secure a spot at the "adult" table.

The COP 28 Expert Dialogue debate panel, for example, included Colombia's Francisco Veras, a 15-year-old teenager who first took part in the COP at the age of 11 and has contributed to the development of recommendations. Last year, several high-level gatherings explored the links between climate change and childhood, drawing senior officials and ministers to hear directly from children and adolescents.

Another important angle for the media to highlight at COP30 and beyond is whether this engagement will lead to concrete action, specifically the meaningful inclusion of the concerns raised by girls and boys in international agreements.



HEADS UP

When covering the participation of children at COP 30, as well as events dedicated to this group, journalists should pay attention to whether the children are not "preaching to the choir": that is, if the audience mostly consists of like-minded peers and organizations.

Assessing and highlighting the effectiveness—or lack thereof—of this participation can help raise awareness among decision-makers and push for fulfillment of this right.



REPORTING TIP

■ THE APPROACH OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

From a rights-based perspective, how children and adolescents participate during COP30 and in the lead-up to the event, and throughout future conferences, should be tracked.

Framing boys and girls in this manner repositions them away from the role of passive victims of climate change and helps shape our understanding of them as individuals capable of driving change and offering meaningful solutions.

Beyond reinforcing their image as vulnerable populations, this approach rightfully highlights children and adolescents as active agents, bringing forward their voices,

dreams, and initiatives as part of the rights-based response to climate change.

Moreover, by tracking the participation of children and adolescents in the COPs journalists uncover powerful stories, creative solutions, and compelling narratives to enhance their reporting and draw in public interest.

WHERE TO START?

Actions supported by the Alana Institute at both the national and international levels are a good starting point. For example, since 2023, the institute has campaigned to designate COP 30 the “Children’s COP.” The Institute even delivered a petition letter to

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Monitoring the participation of Alana’s children and youth delegates at climate summits could prove particularly useful.

As part of the effort to emphasize children and adolescents as agents of change consulting the organizations listed in the Source Guide at the end of this publication could prove helpful.

Beyond the COPs, schools are important spaces for identifying protagonists and participatory activities. Any participatory initiative on climate change sparked by or aligned with COP 30 marks meaningful progress in amplifying children’s voices on climate matters.





■ IDEAS FOR INTEGRATING CHILDREN'S ISSUES AMID COP'S BREAKNECK SCHEDULE

In covering the COP, there is no doubt that the child and adolescent rights agenda will face competition from other equally important topics that may exercise more visibility within the international climate debate. To be sure, the issue will compete with hundreds of events, launches, meetings, and negotiations happening simultaneously. And all of this within a context in which the key information sources on the issue will inevitably be scurrying from one meeting to another to advocate on behalf of children's rights, limiting the time available for media engagement.

Against this backdrop, journalists, whether experienced or inexperienced in covering COPs, are not expected (nor would it be fair to expect them) to devote all their energy

over the event's two weeks to covering children's rights. However, concrete and practicable opportunities will arise for journalists to meaningfully integrate children and adolescents into their reporting.

The **first week** is a key window for raising the questions presented in the **box on page 65**. The questions relate to the COP 30's negotiating themes and, as such, fall very much within the event's official scope. This strategy represents the fastest way to integrate children's rights in the news coverage and perhaps the most effective way to spotlight overlooked issues and to press decision-makers for answers.

Additionally, in between events or while waiting for news or press briefings, stop-

ping by the Children and Youth pavilion or attending an event focused on the topic could yield story ideas or leads for subsequent pieces produced either during the Conference or afterward.

In the **second week**, the number of side events typically drops, and, as mentioned earlier, silence often takes hold in the hallways while negotiators meet behind closed doors.

This might be an excellent opportunity to enrich the news coverage with original content: interviews with youth, stories on the vulnerability of children, initiatives led by children and adolescents in Brazil and globally, and reflections on their engagement in the climate agenda.





IN SITU RIGHTS

Selection of Belém to host COP 30 carries with it considerable symbolic appeal, alongside a range of complex challenges, including with respect to protecting the rights of children and adolescents at the local level. On the one hand, the event will give Brazil the opportunity to showcase the Amazon and demonstrate to the world the benefits of preserving the rainforest. On the other, the need for infrastructure and adaptations to accommodate the nearly 50,000 participants converging on the city at once, the majority foreigners, could strain local capacity to safeguard children's rights in the metropolitan and surrounding areas.

To be sure, only the World Cup compares to COPs in the realm of international negotiations, as noted by the Climate Observatory. The audience and goals differ, and COPs are not intended to be, nor should they be, a celebratory event.

Given the dearth of studies on the impact of Climate Conferences on the protection of children's, we chosen to borrow from analyses on

how other types of mass events have affected children and youth. The findings are summarized in the guide *Major Sporting Events and the Rights of Children and Adolescents*, published by ANDI.

The publication finds that much of the risk to children and adolescents at large events stems from socioeconomic and ethnocultural inequalities, a legacy tracing to Brazil's formation, despite progress made in the past two decades through social policies and poverty reduction efforts.

Often, risks are obscured by existing vulnerabilities and may go unnoticed during a large-scale event. Two noteworthy cases are sexual exploitation and child labor. Frequently associated to poverty and limited access to basic rights, the associated dangers can be exacerbated by increased inflows of people into a concentrated space within a short timeframe.

...



...

In addition, population displacements resulting from urban revitalization projects undertaken to accommodate visitors can also contribute to exacerbating the potential hazards. In developing countries, the homeless and street vendors are particularly vulnerable to removal from areas where they typically reside or work, as measures are taken to make participants feel safer. These actions often have the effect of dismantling the traditional support and income systems for households, aggravating the risk to children.

Smaller-scale or temporary disruptions can also pose a threat to children's rights. In Belém, local organizations that work with children and adolescents have expressed concern over planned school closures in the state capital of Pará during the two-week COP 30. The primary issue revolves around what arrangements will be made for children over this time. Will parents stop working, potentially impacting the economic well-being of households? Or will childcare spaces be pro-

vided to ensure that children are not left alone or on the streets and that family incomes are not jeopardized?

The suspension of classes could drive children and adolescents to informal vending activities on busy streets and at stop lights, in addition to other locations. An added concern is the increased number of children and adolescents at risk of commercial sexual exploitation by virtue of the temporary shutdowns. Moreover, there is apprehension about the impact of academic interruptions on learning.

In a landscape of heightened risk to boys and girls, the news media can play a vital role. Coverage that takes into account the social context, infrastructure upgrades, and the safeguarding of child and adolescent rights in the COP 30 host city – both prior to and during the event – can play a key role in raising awareness and catalyzing solutions to local challenges through its capacity to mobilize public opinion at both the national and international levels.



SOURCE GUIDE

This guide lists three types of organizations separately:

- ▶ organizations that address and work on various aspects of climate change at both the national and international levels, including in international negotiations;
- ▶ organizations that draw the connection between childhood, adolescence, and climate change; and
- ▶ organizations composed of children, adolescents, and youth leaders engaged in the fight for effective action and climate justice.

Note that this is not an exhaustive list. Fortunately, there are innumerable organization doing serious work on the issue in Brazil. However, this guide can serve as a roadmap for your coverage.

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END NOTES

- **1** POLÍTICA POR INTEIRO, 2025
- 2** LACLIMA, 2024
- 3** PATIÑO; MELLO; MINOLA, 2025
- 4** POLÍTICA POR INTEIRO. 2025a, 2025b, 2025c
- 5** TONI, 2025
- 6** BIEBER, 2024
- 7** ANDRADE, 2024
- 8** BRASIL, 2020
- 9** UNICEF, 2022.
- 10** WORLD BANK GROUP, 2024
- 11** UNICEF, 2022
- 12** UNFPA, 2022
- 13** OLIVEIRA, 2024.
- 14** UNICEF, 2021.
- 15** ALANA, 2023.
- 16** Developed from General Comment 26, the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute, and the report Children, Adolescents, and Climate Change published by UNICEF in 2022.
- 17** UNICEF, 2022
- 18** JEDUCA, 2025
- 19** ALANA, 2024
- 20** WORLD BANK GROUP, 2024.
- 21** Unicef, 2022
- 22** CONSELHO INDIGENISTA MISSIONÁRIO, 2024.
- 23** UNFCCC, 2024
- 24** ALANA, 2025



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