



How to Interview Children and Adolescents on Climate Issues

A guide for journalists, press officers, content creators and debate moderators¹

The climate crisis is one of the world's greatest challenges today, and it harms most severely those who contributed the least and who will live the longest with the consequences of the decisions we make now: children and adolescents. Despite this, in official climate actions, they are not heard in discussions or decision-making processes. In official documents and events, they are not taken into account², creating invisibility that becomes even more pronounced in the face of inequalities related to gender, class, race, ethnicity, territory, and disability.

1. This material is based on the publication "Children's and adolescents' rights on the climate agenda – a guide for journalistic coverage", produced by ANDI – Comunicação e Direitos, in strategic partnership with Act For Early Years and the Van Leer Foundation. Access it (in portuguese) at: bit.ly/guia-pauta-climatica

2. The policy paper "Children and the UN Climate COPs: a primary consideration for their future in the present", by Instituto Alana and LACLIMA, analyzes the history of mentions of terms such as "children" and "future generations" in decisions made at UN climate change conferences. "Children," for example, was mentioned only twice between 1992 and 2010. Access it here: bit.ly/policy-paper-en

Children's and Adolescents' Participation in the Climate Agenda: A Guaranteed Right

Children and adolescents are rights-holders and agents of change, with their own languages, cultures, and perspectives. Some frameworks ensure their right to participate in the climate agenda:

- **United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child and its General Comment n.º 26** — the best interests of the child must guide all debates and decisions on climate policies and agreements. To achieve this, children must participate effectively and meaningfully.
- **Federal Constitution (Article 227)** — it is the duty of the family, society, and the State to ensure the rights of children and adolescents with absolute priority in all areas.
- **Statute of the Child and Adolescent (Article 15)** — children and adolescents have the right to express themselves, share their opinions, and participate in community and political life..

♦ **Communication professionals play a crucial role in amplifying the demands, opinions, proposed solutions, and little-known realities of children and adolescents. That is why, in this guide, you will find recommendations on how to interview this audience about the climate agenda at events such as COP30.**



Before the interview



1. REQUEST AUTHORIZATION AND CONSENT

- ♦ Ask for authorization from legal guardians for the interview and use of image, as well as the child's or adolescent's own consent. This can be obtained through a signature or recorded in audio or video.
- ♦ If the legal guardians are not present, consult the organization the child or adolescent is representing.
- ♦ For general coverage of public activities, such as protests and panel discussions, authorization is not required.

2. ARRANGE HOW THE INTERVIEW WILL TAKE PLACE

- ♦ Ask the child or adolescent for their name and the pronoun they would like to be identified with.
- ♦ Clearly explain the topics that will be covered in the conversation and inform them that the material will reach a wide audience. Also, specify where it will be published.
- ♦ Inform that the interview will be edited and only a portion of it will be used. Do not promise that a specific statement or image will be included in the final version.

3. DO NOT PUT INTERVIEWEES AT RISK

- ♦ Ensure the privacy of interviewees in accordance with the General Data Protection Law (LGPD).
- ♦ Do not disclose details that could put the child's or adolescent's physical, emotional, or digital safety at risk. If necessary, protect their identity by using only their first name or first name + the initial of their last name and their age.
- ♦ The child or adolescent may want to share their activism. Check with the interviewee and their guardian whether they want their real name and social media accounts to be published.

During the interview



1. ACKNOWLEDGE VOICE AND EXPRESSION

- ◆ Value the perceptions, cultures, feelings, and opinions of the interviewees.
- ◆ Highlight children who are human rights defenders — Indigenous, Black, from marginalized communities, with disabilities, migrants, climate refugees, and girls — as central voices, not as “supporting characters.”
- ◆ Strive to tell the interviewees’ stories, balancing personal aspects with those of the community they belong to.
- ◆ Recognize and celebrate the many ways children and adolescents participate and express themselves.



2. ENCOURAGE CONTRIBUTIONS

- ◆ Children and adolescents may choose to stop participating, have doubts, or change their minds during the interview.
- ◆ Create opportunities for them to bring new ideas, questions, and directions for the interview.
- ◆ Give them time to think and respond to your questions.
- ◆ Do not suggest answers, allow them to express themselves freely to capture genuine opinions and feelings.
- ◆ Respect the child’s interest in answering only some of the questions.

3. RESPECT THEIR FEELINGS

- ◆ For children and adolescents who have experienced or are experiencing the impacts of climate events, avoid making them relive traumatic situations*. Do not ask for a detailed account of what happened or questions like “how did you feel?” as this may cause them to relive difficult emotions or memories and lead to emotional discomfort.
- ◆ Ask how they are currently doing and seek their opinions on what should be done to prevent the problem. But give them the freedom to talk about the past if they wish.
- ◆ Pay attention to signs of distress: long silence, rapid breathing, or crying. If this occurs, pause the interview, offer support, and seek the care of their guardians. Only continue if the child or adolescent wants to.
- ◆ Do not explore psychological or intimate aspects to avoid causing discomfort or feelings of violation. For example, if an interviewee is photographed crying, explain that the photo will not be published.
- ◆ Occasionally ask if they want to stop the interview or change something they have said.
- ◆ Do not use sensationalism or exploit emotions, as this reinforces stereotypes.



4. TAKE THE CONVERSATION SERIOUSLY

- ◆ Do not infantilize or romanticize what they say. Children and adolescents are holders of legitimate political rights. Do not use expressions like “mascots,” “junior activists,” “little climate heroes,” or “spokespersons of the future,” as these undermine their legitimacy as political actors.
- ◆ Whenever possible, be at the same eye level as the interviewees. This helps them feel acknowledged rather than intimidated.

* To learn more strategies for trauma-sensitive interviewing, visit the “Toolkit: Trauma-Informed Journalism” page by the Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice (CTIPP): bit.ly/trauma-informed-journalism-toolkit



After the interview

1. EXPLAIN WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

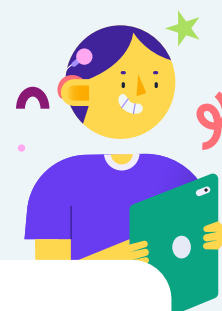
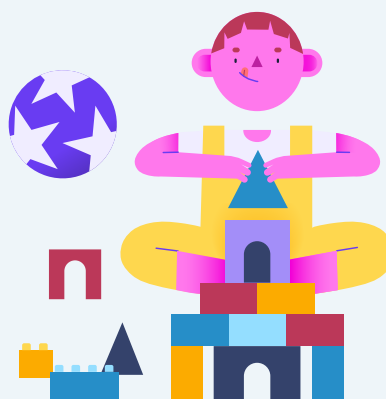
- ◆ Clarify when the material will be published, how to review statements, and how to get in touch.
- ◆ Do not “disappear.” Send the complete material to the guardian or organization the child or adolescent represents. Share feedback on how people received the interview.

2. AVOID UNINTENDED IMPACTS

- ◆ Consider how the information will be edited: the headline, the chosen focus, and the selected images. Do not reinforce narratives of victimhood or fragility.
- ◆ Choose your language carefully during the interview and when publishing the content. Do not use the term “minor” to refer to children and adolescents, or expressions that reinforce gender, racial, or social stereotypes. Respectful and inclusive language is essential to prevent discrimination.
- ◆ Respect the context of their statements; do not exploit their words for clicks or audience. This can have long-term psychological impacts on the interviewees.
- ◆ Highlight the many ways children and adolescents express themselves and create. Showcase group meetings, panels, or workshops.
- ◆ Avoid publishing images of child and adolescent activists speaking alongside adults. They are not there because of adult support; they are political actors.

3. HIGHLIGHT SOLUTIONS

- ◆ Play and creative experiences can inspire innovative solutions. Do not infantilize these activities, but acknowledge the potential of play, imagination, and the multiple forms of expression of children and adolescents.
- ◆ Show participation initiatives outside the event (in schools, for example), where the leadership of children and adolescents can be broader and more continuous.
- ◆ The solutions they propose do not need to be tied to a complaint. A report focusing on a project or public policy that has produced positive results is equally impactful.



Access the digital version of this guide using the link below or the QR CODE: bit.ly/interview-children-adolescents-climate

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