

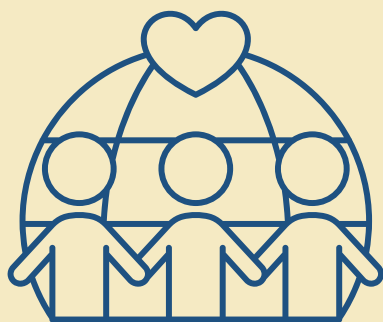


4th CYCLE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF CAMBODIA 2024 THEMATIC FACTSHEET 2 OF 4

CLIMATE CHANGE & CHILD PARTICIPATION

TOPIC #2.c

3RD CYCLE RECOMMENDATIONS



During the previous UPR cycle, Cambodia received and accepted a recommendation from Fiji (110.68) which included effectively addressing children's special vulnerabilities, views and needs when implementing national strategic plans on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change.

This recommendation has been partially implemented and primarily in respect of establishing structures and processes that recognized children's heightened vulnerability to climate change. However, vulnerabilities, needs and perspectives of children with different identities and backgrounds have not yet been adequately considered. Children's capacity to contribute to the development and implementation of such policies has been neglected so far.

In their 2022 review of Cambodia's children's rights progress, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child made a very similar recommendation to the one that Cambodia received from Fiji in the 3rd UPR cycle.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Despite continued and significant efforts of the Government of Cambodia to improve and decentralize its coordination and surge capacity in relation to disasters, there are persisting gaps in capacity (financial, technical, and human), especially at local level. Most of national action plans and strategies related to climate change end soon and should be updated. (2020 KAP3)

CHALLENGES

Limited recognition of children's rights, needs and vulnerabilities in respect of climate change, but also their potentials to contribute to development and implementation of climate change policies and programs.



Weaknesses in provision of essential services especially in rural and remote areas, for example education and health, increases children's vulnerabilities to climate change. Children with disabilities, indigenous and ethnic minorities children as well as girls are at heightened risk.

IMPACT

Children in Cambodia are at a high risk of exposure and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. According to UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index (2021) Cambodia is in the top third (46 out of 163 countries).

Children in Cambodia are highly exposed to water scarcity, riverine flooding, and vector-borne disease. Despite the growing awareness about the negative impact of climate change on children on one hand, and increasing recognition of children's human right to a safe, healthy and sustainable environment at the UN and ASEAN level on the other, this right has not yet been explicitly recognized in Cambodia. (UNICEF 2020:11)

Beside other issues related to children's right to education (see CRC-Cambodia [Factsheet](#) on Education), there is growing awareness that schools in Cambodia lack in readiness for extreme weather conditions. Recent research in 2 primary schools in the capital reveals an adverse impact of heat stress on students' attention levels, including issues like headaches (21.12%), dizziness (5.43%), and exhaustion (32.65%). (Morn et al. 2023:204).

“It is so hot, and it makes us sweat. I don't feel I am concentrating on my study because there is no fresh air.”

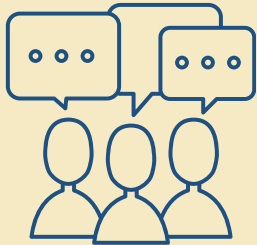
(Bopha, 16 years old, 2023 Plan International)

In addition, many children in rural and urban poor areas, where access to education is generally limited, experience disruptions because heavy rains and storms obstruct, damage and destroy roads and/or school infrastructure.

Moreover, loss of livelihoods (though worsening harvests for example) and increased costs of living as an indirect impact of climate change are deepening deprivation for many children, especially where social protection is lacking. (2023 STTO and 2023 Plan International).

CLIMATE CHANGE & CHILD PARTICIPATION

Lack of disaggregated data is recognized as an issue in disaster risks management according to the 2020 updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC, 2020:43)



Children with different identities and backgrounds are not adequately supported and remain excluded from action and decision-making processes related to environment and climate change especially at national level.

Effects of climate change policies and programs on children are unclear. Data collection and monitoring focusing on children remain anecdotal. Girls and boys, including those from areas and communities most affected by climate change are seldom asked for feedback. Despite the existence of Guidelines for Child Participation developed by the Cambodia National Council for Children in 2014, children's experiences and views are rarely sought and considered in policy and program development, implementation and review (in general and in respect to environment and climate change). Opportunities for consultation with duty bearers at all levels remain reliant upon the initiative and facilitation of CSOs.

“I don't feel I am prepared enough for the extreme weather changes as I lack knowledge about this issue.”

(Leakhena, 16 years old, 2023 Plan International)

Increasing children's understanding and developing their skills to enable their contribution to (direct climate) action is included in key objectives of national policies and steps in implementation made (see for example 2023 UNICEF). CSOs are supporting this work and partially covering gaps in implementation according to their capacities and space provided (see for example 2021 Chen et al.).

Empowerment, including in respect of own environmental rights, is recognized as an objective only in the 2020 Nationally Determined Contribution but only in respect of youth (NDC, 2020:44).

“The government doesn't provide the space to listen to children, and they don't take any action after we do try to share. They should listen to children in future, about topics like school hours needing to change due to extreme heat, for example”

(Adolescent boy FGD respondent, Phnom Penh, June 2023)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Specifically **recognize in law children's right to a safe, healthy and sustainable environment** in line with the CRC Committee's General Comment No. 26 on Children's Rights and the Environment with a Special Focus on Climate Change. Take steps to address gaps, especially in the **procedural elements of this right**, including access to information, the right to participate in decision-making, and access to justice and effective remedies, including the secure exercise of these rights free from reprisals and retaliation.
- 2 Mainstream Safe School Guidelines adopted in 2023 (October) by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in the pre- and in-service training of teachers and provide coordinated, thorough, and nationwide support to teachers and school management in their application. **Allocate adequate resources for the implementation of the Safe School Guidelines**, including for participatory monitoring and data collection with children with different identities and backgrounds.
- 3 Building on the CESCR's 2023 concluding observations (para. 13(a)), ensure that all future action plans, policies and initiatives related to DRR, climate change and a safe, healthy and sustainable environment **explicitly recognize children as a diverse, intersectional group of rights holders and as agents of change**.
- 4 As per the CRC's 2022 concluding observations (para. 18(b) and 39(a)), **facilitate the meaningful participation of children** with diverse backgrounds and vulnerabilities in the review, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of any forthcoming climate change policy.

SOURCES

International and regional policy framework: 2021 ASEAN Principles and Policy Guidelines on Children's Rights to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in the ASEAN Region; 2023 UN CRC General Comment 26 on Children's Rights and Environment, with special focus on climate change;
Concluding Observations: 2022 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) & 2023 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR);
National policy frame: 2014 Cambodia National Council for Children Guide for Implementing Child Participation; 2020 Nationally Determined Contribution (2020 NDC); 2020 A Third Study on Understanding, Public Perception of Climate Change (KAP3); 2023 Safe School Guidelines (Child Friendly School Program);
Studies, Reports, Briefs: 2022 UNICEF: Children's Right to a Healthy Environment in East Asia and the Pacific; 2021 UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index; 2021 Chen et al.: Safe school programs and disaster risk reduction in hazard-prone primary schools in Cambodia; 2023 UNICEF Schools as platforms for climate action; 2023 Morn et al.: Descriptive results of the preliminary design approach of the survey on heat stress among primary school students in Cambodia. 2023 STTO Environmental Issues and urban poor communities: A Comparative Study of Awareness, Perceptions and Solutions; 2023 CRC-Cambodia UPR Joint Submission for the 4th UPR of Cambodia & Education Fact-sheet.



SUBMITTED BY: CHILD RIGHTS COALITION CAMBODIA (60 NGO MEMBERS) & 3 CYL NETWORKS

AEA, BSDA, CFS, CCDO, CAD, KNGO, COLT, CCPCR, CHC, CIAI, CKIMHRDA, CLA, COCD, CPCDO, CRF, CTOD, CVCD, CWDA, ERIKS, GNC, Hagar, Happy Tree, Homeland, ICS-SP, KHEMARA, KKKHRDA, KNK, KrT, KYA, CIFA, LAC, Mith Samlanh, OEC, PE & D, UWS, Plan, PSOD, RAO, SC, SCI, SCADP, SFODA, KPY, SSO, SOS, SVC, TdH-G, TdH-NL, TLC, VCAO, WVI, WP, WOMEN, NTFP, ICC, WMC, BTS, MRO, PPS, CADDP, and **3 Child and Youth-Led Networks: CAN, AYRG & CCYMCR.**