

Climate Change, Air Pollution and Children's Rights (child-friendly version)

A report by KidsRights, November 2021

The climate change treat

Almost half of all children on Planet Earth are at extremely high risk of suffering from climate change. Climate change has bad consequences, such as:

- intense droughts
- flooding
- not enough water
- less and less biodiversity
- severe fires
- and more!

More than ever, human's activities warm the atmosphere, ocean, and land. But we need to keep the environment clean for the survival of humans! It is about time to do something!

Air pollution

Air pollution happens when the air becomes unclean because of things, such as smoke, dust, or gases. How does it happen?



Motor vehicles



Industrial facilities



Household combustion devices



Forest fires

Examples of the most common sources of air pollution

Air pollution, climate change, and people

When the air is polluted and unclean, it is bad for the planet because it causes climate change. One of the main causes of climate change is when a type of gas, called 'greenhouse gas', goes in the air. An example of greenhouse gas is CO₂ (carbon dioxide). Air pollution is also bad for humans. It is the biggest environmental threat to human health!

Did you know?



Air pollution is one of the causes of climate change. It is very bad for the environment, and for human's health.

How does air pollution affect children in different parts of the world?

1. Air pollution around the world

a. World

Every year, 7 million people die earlier than they would have, because of air pollution

99% of people in the world live in a place where the air is unsafe according to international experts (WHO)

600,000 children died because of air pollution in one year

For example from pneumonia, bronchiolitis, influenza, etc.

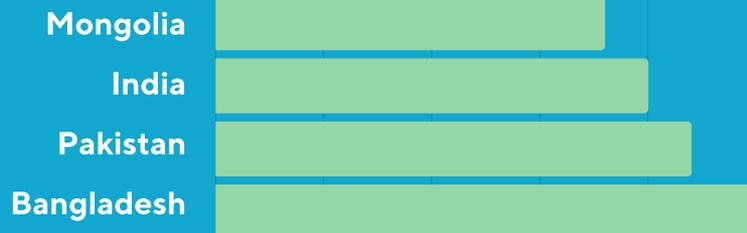
b. Asia



1/3

of premature deaths (2.2 million) due to air pollution worldwide happened in Asia Pacific

What were the countries with the most polluted air in 2020?



c. India

In some countries, children are even more affected by air pollution. For example, in 2020, India was the 3d most polluted country in the world. Also, some Indian cities are the most polluted cities on Earth. For example: New Delhi (the capital of India) is the world's most polluted capital since 2018.

Did you know?



Air pollution affects the health of children so badly, that it can put their lives in danger.

What are the consequences of air pollution and climate change on children's rights?

2. Children's rights affected by air pollution and climate change

All children have human rights: these are children's rights. They are written in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

This document is the agreement between countries that lists the different rights that children have. All States, except the USA, are Parties to the CRC, so must respect it. Let's have a look at some children's rights that are being affected because of air pollution and climate change:

Right to life (Article 6 CRC)

- 26% death of children under 5-year-old could have been avoided by reducing environmental risks (2012).
- Air pollution killed 600,000 children under 15 years old in 2016.



Right to health (Article 24 CRC)

- 1/4 of the children under 5 with health problems is caused by environmental risks.



Right to education (Articles 28 and 29 CRC)

- In 2019, 24.9 million people had to move from the place they used to live in because of natural disasters and extreme weather events. Because of that, a lot of children may not have access to education anymore.
- Between 2005 and 2019, climate change damaged or destroyed more than 3,200 schools each year.



Right to non-discrimination (Article 2 CRC)

Some children are at more risk of environment harm. Who? Girls, indigenous children, children with disabilities, and children from lower income families, for example.



Right to play (Article 31 CRC)

- 93% of children under 15-year-old breath polluted air that puts their health or/and development at risk. It means that they are at risk when they play outside, so they cannot fully enjoy their right to play.



Air pollution harms many children's rights. In reaction, young people are taking action!

Did you know?



What are young people doing to help create a better future for all?

3. Children in action to tackle climate change and air pollution!

a. Pre-COP 26

In September 2021, **hundreds of young climate leaders** participated in the Youth4Climate event. **They shared their ideas and solutions** about some of the most urgent issues of climate change. After putting all ideas and solutions together, they presented them to Ministers of many countries during the Pre-COP26 event (it is an event where Ministers discuss what they want to happen during the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26)). [Click here to read young people's demands!](#)

b. Holding governments accountable

Chiara, Catarina, Iris, Raina, Ridhima, David, Ranton, Litokne, Deborah, Carlos, Ayakha, Greta, Ellen-Anne, Raslen, Carl, and Alexandra



16 children from 12 countries complained to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the body that checks whether States respect the CRC.

Why? They argued that some countries were not respecting their rights by not taking action to prevent the consequences of climate change.



Results



The Committee agrees that greenhouse gas made by a State makes climate change worse.

Climate change caused by a State affects negatively the right of children everywhere in the world.

Any violation of the CRC? We do not know. The children have to bring the case to the courts of their own countries first.



Is the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment a human right?

4. Air pollution and human rights

The Human Rights Council is part of the UN. It has the role to promote and protect human rights around the world. In October 2021, it clearly stated for the 1st time that the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is a Human Right! That also includes the right to breathe clean air!

But, the right to a healthy environment is not yet in any of the main human rights treaties...

5. Call to action

It is time to make big changes, and you can help too! Come on, let's get started!



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