

## P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

### **CLIMATE CRISES FORCE RISING NUMBERS OF CHILDREN FROM THEIR HOMES EVERY YEAR WITH NO WAY BACK**

**LONDON, 29 October** – Surging temperatures, rising water levels and land degradation drove an estimated record 10 million children from their homes last year with the increase in climate migration coming with a new risk – they may never return.

A new report from Save the Children<sup>1</sup>, released on the eve of the COP26 summit, highlighted that climate change-induced migration is here and set to get a lot worse, with 30 million people<sup>2</sup> – about one-third children - forced from their homes in 2020 due to climate-related disasters – three times as many as displaced by conflict and violence. This compared to 19 million people displaced internally by such disasters five years ago.

But research also emphasized a rapidly emerging trend with twice as many people impacted by slow-onset droughts than sudden storms in 2020 and migration prompted by extreme temperatures, rising sea levels, and salinization of agricultural land far more likely to be permanent. Much of this permanent migration, however, is to areas equally or even more at risk from climatic factors – out of the frying pan into the fire.

The study was based on the findings of more than 420 research reports exploring climate change and child displacement, 125 experts, and interviews with 239 children living in high-risk climate settings in five countries in five continents - Fiji, Iraq, Mali, Mozambique, and Peru - some of whom had relocated due to climate change.

Children from all five continents said the climate crisis was having a devastating impact on their lives right now and that they and/or their friends were having to move, increasingly from rural to urban areas and sometimes travelling alone.

Some mentioned that climate risks were increasing their poverty levels, leaving them “trapped” in high risk locations. Some children were skipping meals, not attending school, engaging in child labour, child marriage, street begging, or sexually exploited.

*“Last year and in 2018, a lot of houses collapsed due to heavy rains. If it rains too much, our fields will be flooded so the harvest will not be good, in which case people will be forced to find [other] solutions to feed their families. But that is not possible all the time so the [only] solution is to leave this very hostile area,”* said Ousmane\*, 14, from Mali.

Globally, more than 1 billion children<sup>3</sup> live in areas at high risk of flooding, severe drought, or other climate threats that pose a serious risk to lives and livelihoods.

*“Copra farming is one of the most important things in our life. It is our source of income ... but due to climate change, there can be loss of income ... I decided to move for a better education and a better life,”* said Matila\*, 15, from Fiji.

Children are already set to face the brunt of climate change, with a Save the Children report<sup>44</sup> in September showing that children born in 2020 were poised to experience 6.8 times more heatwaves, 2.8 times as many river floods, and 2.6 times as many droughts as their grandparents under the original Paris Agreement emission reduction pledge.

But the urgency of the situation was emphasised by the latest report that showed climate change is not just increasing the likelihood of displacement but directly driving people from their homes through more intense, extreme weather events that disrupt services, damage infrastructure and destroy livelihoods.

The report, “Walking into the eye of the Storm: How the Climate Crisis is driving Child Migration and Displacement”, stressed that children were more likely to be physically affected by climate-related events than adults, being more sensitive to malnutrition and infections, but also face threats to their mental health and a greater risk of violence including recruitment to armed militias.

Steve Morgan, Director of Save the Children’s Migration and Displacement Initiative, said:

*“The scale of the crisis is huge, and growing fast. It is a perfect storm that we must stop in its path – before it is too late.*

*“Before, climate change often led to short term displacements and families would go back after the cyclone or flood was over. Now because of the frequency of natural disasters and slow onset degradation, we’re seeing more and more permanent migration, with many children unable or unwilling to return. They can never go home again.*

*“Children and their families often move to areas that are equally high-risk, and get little support to build their resilience and integrate in their destinations. It is clear that many current responses to climate-related migration and displacement are not sustainable or fit for purpose.”*

Save the Children said currently most national policies on displacement did not consider climate-related events to be a trigger for displacement and that needed to change. The organisation called on the humanitarian sector and governments to:

- Incorporate climate expertise and associated risks into child migration and displacement programming
- Prioritise the rights and needs of children affected by climate-related migration and displacement by ensuring that legislation, policies, strategies, and plans holistically address climate change’s impact on children.

- Prepare for proactive, planned and child responsive movement (e.g. timely relocation of communities downstream of glacial lakes) within national responses to climate-related migration and displacement, not just reactive support for unplanned displacement.
- Build on predictive analytics and forecasting expertise to carry out long-term scenario planning for child migration and displacement in high-risk climate settings alongside responses for improved early or anticipatory action.
- Establish partnerships with migration and displacement specialists and national government to advance the collection and sharing of disaggregated data on climate-related child migration and displacement.
- Establish forums for children to share their experiences of climate-related displacement, support each other, and contribute to decision-making and planning processes.

\*Names have been changed to protect the identities of the children involved.

<sup>1</sup> [Walking into the Eye of the Storm: How the climate crisis is driving child migration and displacement | Resource Centre \(savethechildren.net\)](https://www.savethechildren.net/resources/press-releases/2021/06/23/walking-into-the-eye-of-the-storm-how-the-climate-crisis-is-driving-child-migration-and-displacement)

<sup>2</sup> [IDMC | GRID 2021 | 2021 Global Report on Internal Displacement \(internal-displacement.org\)](https://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/grid-2021)

<sup>3</sup> [Born into the Climate Crisis: Why we must act now to secure children's rights | Resource Centre \(savethechildren.net\)](https://www.savethechildren.net/resources/press-releases/2021/06/23/born-into-the-climate-crisis-why-we-must-act-now-to-secure-childrens-rights)

<sup>4</sup> [The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis | UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/climate-change)

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#### **Über Save the Children**

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.