

NEPAL

Child-Centered

Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Report on Children and Environment

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Submitted by:

Yuwalaya



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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This submission has been prepared by YUWALAYA working for advocating the rights of youth and children. It aims to highlight the issues of children in the climate crisis and call upon actions and recommendations to Nepal government to implement urgently for upholding climate justice as the “climate crisis is a child rights crisis.”

II. METHODOLOGY

2. The report is based on mixed approach. It has reviewed the UPR 3rd cycle report 2021 and related documents. Also, it is based on primary data collected from 1 national consultation, 1 validation workshop, 7 FGDs at province level and 6 KII.

III. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF UPR 3rd CYCLE (2021) RECOMMENDATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE PREVIOUS REVIEW

3. During the 3rd cycle there was only 1 recommendation from Fiji on 159.50 on climate change and children. This recommendation is partially implemented by the Nepal government.¹

IV. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

A. Scope of International Obligations

4. The issue of climate change is included in SDG 13 which Nepal government has declared to have achieved.² But, these achievements are far from ideal standard of climate action and new challenges like air pollution, multi climate hazard are emerging.

5. Recommendations:

- a) The state shall allocate adequate budget and revise school curriculum to comprehend understanding on climate change, child rights, adaptation measures from young age among students to achieve SDG target 13.3 by 2030.

B. Constitutional and Legislative Framework

6. The *Constitution of Nepal* 2015, guarantees the rights of children in Article 39. In addition, there are various laws which provides guidance for protection of child rights during climate crisis.³

C. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI), Infrastructures and Policy Measures

7. NHRC has developed the 6th Strategic Plan (2021-2026) including children in climate change issue. *The Act Relating to Children*, 2018, provides for the establishment of the National Child Rights Council (NCRC), Provincial Child Rights Committees, Local Child Rights Committees and child welfare authorities at the local level. Climate change is led by the Climate Change Management Division of the Ministry of Forests and Environment. Likewise, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is undertaken by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA). Nepal government has developed the *National Climate Change Policy* 2019, the *National Adaptation Plan* (NAP) 2021-2050, The *National Determined Contribution* III (NDC) 2025. There is also the *Local Adaptation Plan of Actions* (LAPA), where all local governments shall develop and implement adaptation plans. However, there is a significant gap in implementing these national policies.

8. Recommendations

- a) The government shall review, revise and unify the existing legislations and policies such as LAPA, NAP and NDC and align with Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion

¹ NIWF, Universal Periodic Report mid-term report, 2023, p.2.

² Subhangi Shrestha, Navigating the road to 2030, Nepal Economic Forum, available at: <https://nepaleconomicforum.org/navigating-the-road-to-2030>

³ See, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, 2016, the Local Government Operations Act 2017, the Environment Protection Act, 2019.

Strategic Action Plan and Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) policy while implementing 16th five-year plan to prioritize the rights of children as vulnerable groups during climate change and its associated risks.

- b) The Ministry of Home Affair (MOHA) shall design the Disaster Risk Reduction and adaptation measures and strategies in alignment with Sendai Framework with multiple stakeholder collaboration to meet the priority of children from marginalized, indigenous and vulnerable communities and promote joint implementation, monitoring, and knowledge-sharing.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

9. Right to education: In September 2024 in Kathmandu, severe floods and landslides killed at least 244 people⁴, including 35 children, and damaged hundreds of schools. According to a study of UNICEF, 2021 there were 18% of students experiencing difficulties to travel to school due to climate-induced disasters and associated risks⁵. The teacher in KII had shared in the situation of emergency during the disaster, the school and campus buildings are repurposed as emergency temporary shelters by the local government where teachers are engaged in providing services to displaced population within the limited means. In some cases, the students shared during FGD, the disaster has also caused damaged to school compound, including classrooms, buildings, playground. In such situation there is crisis of clean water, low standard of sanitation and hygiene. The students also expressed they are experiencing extreme temperatures in general very hot in summer and freezing cold in winter, making difficult for them to concentrate to study. But the schools lack basic infrastructure in classrooms like proper ventilation or heating and are temporarily closed for some days to week during those time.

10. SDG target 13.3 requires that “approximately 90% of schools will be providing climate change education” by the end of 2030. However, during national consultation it was raised there are still high percentage of children who do not go to school and who are drop out. These are excluded in SDG implementation.

11. Recommendations

- a) Develop a guideline for climate-resilient educational infrastructures – including the buildings to be earthquake resistant, location to be less affected by multi hazards, with proper air circulation in classrooms, WASH facilities to be accessible by all children, including girls and children with disabilities and maintaining natural environment.
- b) Develop emergency Standard of Procedures (SOP) for education to continue learning even when schools are closed or used as temporary shelters during disaster response.
- c) Local level shall invest in building infrastructures for providing safe shelters to displaced communities during disaster, including temporary and long-term shelters.
- d) Develop curricula on climate change, provide program to retention of children in school and encourage all children have access to free education as guaranteed under Constitution.

12. Right to protection against violence, abuse and exploitation: A teacher in KII emphasized during the time of climate crisis or emergency due disaster particularly girls, *Dalit* children, indigenous communities’ children, and children with disabilities face high risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation. There are various study reports revealing that post-disaster, girls living

⁴ The Kathmandu Post, Death toll from recent floods and landslides reaches 244, 6 October 2024, Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2024/10/06/death-toll-from-recent-floods-and-landslides-reaches-244>

⁵ Lopez Rello, R. & Ackers, J. (2021). Rising to the Challenge: Youth Perspectives on Climate Change and Education in Nepal. <<https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/16961/file/Rising%20to%20the%20Challenge%20-%20Nepal.pdf>>

in temporary shelters are vulnerable to sexual abuse, rape, and trafficking⁶. In addition, children in FGD said the children in general are at risk of emotional and psychological trauma following displacement, as the protection services and psychosocial support are unavailable. However, due to the loss and damage to the house, land and other property, the family adopt negative coping strategy by encouraging the girls to get married early or due to poverty the children drop out from school and start working as daily wage laborer or child labor. Yet, the relief and recovery programs of the government often fail to consider the specific needs of children, who require safe shelter, menstrual hygiene products, protection services, psychosocial support, and access to education, sports materials and such. The children are also not aware about relief programs. Also, the children lack the identity documents or the family lose the vital event registration certificate during disaster, displacement or migration which creates more difficulties to ask for relief.

13. Recommendations

- a) Amend and implement the *National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act* to include child-specific protection standards, consistent with the Sendai Framework.
- b) Allocate targeted budget for child protection in Disaster Response and Recovery at the federal, provincial, and local levels.
- c) Local government shall collect and maintain statistics of disaggregated data (by age, sex, caste, disability, geographic location, migration status, religion) among affected population during climate-induced disaster. Also, it shall conduct vulnerability risk and assessment on child protection risks during the time of climate crisis and disasters.
- d) Incorporate the programs on prevention and response to the cases of child marriage, child labor, abuse and exploitation of children during the time of climate crisis and disaster into National and local Adaptation Plans and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) policies.
- e) Establish safe spaces and child-friendly zones in all temporary shelters, ensuring access to education, sports, psychosocial support to children, and a confidential reporting case management system for violence, abuse and exploitation against children and shall be monitored by independent structures like National Child Right Council.
- f) Develop guidelines and mechanisms with allocation of budget for protection of children from exploitation, abuse and violence in emergency situations and implement it.
- g) Distribution relief packages shall meet the specific needs of children, including nutritious food, menstrual hygiene products, WASH kits, education and sports materials.
- h) Ensure that girls, children with disabilities, indigenous communities and *Dalits* are included in post-disaster response and social protection programs, though they cannot submit their identity documents. Meanwhile, the local government shall conduct program on vital registration among the climate induced displaced communities.

14. Right to health and clean environment: Children are at greater risk from air, food, and water pollution because of their relatively low body weights⁷. In 2021, more than 4,000 children under the age of five died in Nepal due to pollution-related causes.⁸ The children in FGD stressed the increasing air pollution is increasing health implications such as dry red eyes, breathing difficulties, cough, headache, fever, dizziness among students which is leading to

⁶ Plan Nepal, Impact of climate change in children in Nepal, 2012, available at: https://www.preventionweb.net/files/28247_28247impactofclimatechangeonchildre.pdf

⁷ UNICEF, The heat is on towards a climate resilient education system in Nepal, 2022, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/17646/file/The%20Heat%20is%20On%20-%20Nepal.pdf>

⁸ The Annapurna express, Children face growing threats from climate crisis, 12 June 2025, available at: <https://theannapurnaexpress.com/story/55131/>

absence in schools. Overall, the children have now weaker immunity compared to previous generation, making them more vulnerable to diseases.

15. During FGDs the students shared that there is extreme pollution in water resources such as rivers, ponds, springs, and wells in Nepal. Though the Nepal government and some municipalities are running the cleaning campaigns and the children are also participating in such program there is little improvement. There is lack of proper solid waste disposal and the sewages are directly mixed to water sources without treatment. The students also reported there also increase in disaster due to human intervention. The illegal extraction of sand from river and stones from hills has caused flood and landslide. In FGD the students have reported many students are missing attendance in school due to spread of diarrhea, malaria, dengue in the community and neighborhood. The students further reported there is the practice of excessive use of pesticides to increase production in agriculture by farmers which is often unregulated and unsafe.
16. Climate change also affected the mental health and emotional well-being of children. A KII with school teacher suggested that children often experience trauma after any natural disaster including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness, insomnia, resulting in low physiological development even after reaching adulthood, affecting their future life.

17. Recommendations:

- a) Develop a climate-health surveillance system to monitor emerging epidemic diseases, malnutrition in children, the impact on mental health of children, and exposure to toxins or pesticides in agricultural farms.
- b) Regulate and monitor air pollution for industrial emissions, vehicular pollution and control solid waste management, monitoring use of pesticides, open burning and strictly implement policies on polluters pay principle.
- c) Extensively conduct the program with adequate budget on cleaning the water sources, policies on sewage and drainage system and treatment of water shall be strictly implemented.
- d) Ensure the availability of safe drinking water and maintenance of hygiene and proper sanitation systems in disaster-affected areas, prioritizing the areas of residence of marginalized people, schools and child care centers.
- e) Local government shall not compromise development activities or earning revenues with environment protection - the illegal extraction of sands and stones from river and hills and promote afforestation in the banks of the river.
- f) The educational institution shall arrange and provide mental health services to children in their schools providing trained nurses and psycho social counsellors.

18. **Right to development:** In climate-vulnerable regions of Nepal, especially among rural, indigenous, and poor families, children's holistic development - physical, cognitive, emotional, and social - is impeded by deteriorating household economies, food insecurity, and environmental degradation⁹. In FGD the students have recognized, due to extreme weather events and disasters, many households of marginalized groups such as Dalits living in the banks of river are forced to relocate, or there is forced displacement or climate induced migration, disrupting children's education, health care, and community ties, compounding the barriers to development. Likewise, due to erratic rainfall, mainly in rain-fed agriculture, there

⁹ UNICEF, The heat is on towards a climate resilient education system in Nepal, 2022, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/17646/file/The%20Heat%20is%20On%20-%20Nepal.pdf>

is a high occurrence of crop failure leading to food insecurity in the marginalized population. On the other hand, floods, landslides destroy the crops and displace the households, resulting in food scarcity. So, in the lack of availability of nutritious food, many children are suffering from malnutrition, and there is an increase in stunting and wasting rates. Meanwhile, the students stressed in FGD that disasters destroy the playgrounds, roads, and increase the frequency of extreme weather, either hot or cold, erratic rainfall is limiting outdoor activity, play time and development of children. Also, there is increase in workload for women and children. Due to the decreasing availability of natural resources, such as forest-based resources and water, girls, children and women are also required to spend more time and travel longer distances to collect fuelwood, fodder and water¹⁰.

19. Recommendations:

- a) The government shall promote climate-resilient agriculture, subsidy to farmers, make irrigation available, provide insurance to crop and farmers in case of crop failure to increase food production.
- b) The relief distribution and social protection measures, such as cash distribution, food distribution, and cash-for-work, shall prioritize children's nutrition and health post climate-induced disaster and extreme weather events.
- c) Local level shall develop and invest in climate-resilient infrastructures, including child-friendly public spaces, playgrounds and recreational facilities.
- d) Local level shall maintain the disaggregated statistics on monitoring the impact of climate change on child development indicators, such as school retention, health, nutrition, migration and displacement.
- e) The government shall relocate the marginalized households like *Dalits* living in the bank of river to safe places with their free, prior and informed consent.

20. **Right to participation and consideration of views of children:** Nepal has developed National Framework on Child-Friendly Local Governance 2011. Recently, Nepal government hosted Sagarmatha dialogue where the children and youth also participated in policy discussion.¹¹ In FGD, the participants in provincial consultations have shared that the children and youth in Nepal have consistently demanded meaningful roles in environment protection, afforestation, creating awareness in the community through child clubs, eco clubs, use of social media or digital platform, participate as local scouts or participate in the program of local and national NGOs, INGOs, yet they are not informed about disaster risk reduction planning, climate policy, and curriculum development for awareness in climate change by their teachers or leaders in the community. The children in FGD stressed that there are not adequate laws and policies for institutionalizing participation of children in climate justice, they do not have access to all 4 pillars of Early Warning System during disaster and very limited platforms for children to raise their voices in climate justice at the local, provincial, and national levels. Moreover, community-level organizations lack adequate funding. The participants at national consultation raised the children are involved in digital space and innovative project for climate actions.

21. Recommendations:

¹⁰ UNICEF, Listen to Future, Nepal's Children and Young People Call for Climate Action, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/23566/file/UNICEF%20Listen%20to%20the%20Future%20.pdf>

¹¹ UNICEF, UNICEF supports the powerful call from Nepal's children and youth for actions for a sustainable future, 13 May 2025, Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/press-releases/unicef-supports-powerful-call-nepals-children-and-youth-actions-sustainable-future>

- a) Institutionalize the children in consultation mechanisms under National Adaptation Plans, LAPA, NDC and DRR strategies, requiring the mandatory participation of representatives from children and youth as an active agent for change. Also, revise the Child-Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) structure with indicators in climate change and children's participation in local government adaptation plans.
- b) Local government shall support financing to the child-led organization, such as eco-clubs, child clubs and build their capacity to work and lead the community-led climate initiatives and promote climate education.
- c) The capacity of children and youth to use social media responsively and strategically shall be promoted for rapid dissemination of environmental information, mass-level campaigning, and global reach, making it a useful tool for raising awareness about climate change, disaster preparedness, and children's rights.
- d) Provide and institutionalize child-centered media programming by developing dedicated platforms or segments within mainstream media for child rights and environmental education.
- e) The government shall leverage technology and innovation, like use of data systems, Artificial Intelligence (AI), mobile applications, and early warning systems for child protection and preparedness. Also, promote digital tools for better outreach, monitoring, and community feedback.