

We Must Do More for Children NOW

Letter from CEO Diane Whitehead on Committing to Climate Action for Children

On Monday, August 9th, the United Nations issued their most recent climate change report. UN Secretary General António Guterres called the report a “code red for humanity,” noting that “global heating is affecting every nation on earth.” The impact on the lives and futures of children are undeniably at serious risk, as is indeed the future of humanity itself.

For me, reading the report became an exercise in regret as feelings of frustration, helplessness, and anger surfaced. I asked myself: How did we allow things to get so bad? Why aren’t leaders taking this more seriously? What could I have done differently?

However, if we let ourselves get stuck in this moment, we will not be able to summon the courage and energy to take action. There is still time to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. These actions must be fueled by a desire to protect our children, a familiar concern that I know I share with most people worldwide, although the need this time is accompanied by a sense of dire urgency. We must make individual sacrifices and we must be bold and persistent in demanding that our leaders place a priority on mitigating climate change, and thereby securing the future for our children. Most importantly, we must do this *now* and we must do it *together*.

The report itself is a triumph and a testament to the power of collective action, representing years of research compiled by over 200 authors relying on more than 14,000 studies. Yet the crisis is not one that only academics and scientists can understand. As climate science professor Corinne Le Quéré from University of East Anglia reminds us, “You don’t have to have a PhD. You don’t need to be a climate scientist. You just need to be a person who simply looks out the window.” Previously, calls to action have centered around what needs to happen to avoid future consequences, tragically ignoring the severe consequences that already surround us.

Currently,

- Around 450 million children live in areas of high or extremely high water vulnerability¹
- Over 50 million children have already been forced from their homes due to climate-related events, and 23.9 million people were involuntarily displaced in 2019 alone²
- Around 160 million children live in areas experiencing high levels of drought³
- Approximately 300 million children are breathing toxic air – 17 million of them are under 1-year-old.³

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/stories/water-and-climate-change-10-things-you-should-know>

² <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/climate-mobility-and-children>

³ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/fact-sheet-climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis>



The negative effects of climate change on children's lives long have been an important topic for advocacy at CE International; we have been sharing our concern and information on this issue since 2009. Nevertheless, this new report has made it clear that we and all other stakeholders, including governments, organizations, and individuals, have no choice but to enhance our efforts to address the crisis. CE International's first step is to create a webpage dedicated to providing resources and news related to the climate crisis and how we can collectively act to mitigate the most serious effects. On this page, we link to resources and external organizations and campaigns that allow anyone who is interested to demonstrate their support. As many organizations are working hard to provide such avenues to action, this list will evolve and be updated as initiatives develop.

This is just a start though. Moving forward, our team at CE International will consider and implement strategies to both grow the knowledge base surrounding climate action strategies and improve our own actions as an organization. We will reflect on where we stand and dedicate ourselves to improving and taking action to address this significant human challenge. We must do this for children worldwide, as the children are in no way responsible for the actions affecting our climate but are the ones being forced to face the long-term consequences.

Diane Whitehead

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