



Most Vulnerable to Most Valuable

Early Childhood Development (ECD) at COP28

A package of ECD-Climate resources for world leaders and advocates

Photo source: Karma Gayleg, Bhutan

About ARNEC

Established in February 2008, the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) builds strong partnerships across sectors and different disciplines, organisations, and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region to advance the agenda on and investment in early childhood. ARNEC provides a common platform for ECD professionals from diverse sectors promoting holistic and inclusive early childhood development (ECD) and advocating for responsive caregiving and playful parenting; multisectoral approaches to ECD; ECD and climate resilience; and the ECD workforce.

ARNEC draws its strength from its partners and members. It works closely with its core team (Plan International, Save the Children, and ChildFund Alliance) and strategic regional partners, including UNICEF and UNESCO. Currently, ARNEC has 26 institutional members and more than 3,000 individual members.

ECD and Climate Change

Nearly 90% of the global health burden related to climate change is borne by children under five. Young children in climate-vulnerable Asia-Pacific face an unequal burden from the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation across all nurturing care components – health, nutrition, early learning, responsive caregiving, and security and safety.

Since 2019, ARNEC has been working with partners across sectors and at multiple levels on the intersection of ECD, climate change and environmental degradation - including the Ha Noi Call to Action adopted at the ARNEC

Conference in Vietnam; a joint scoping study, 'Most Vulnerable to Most Valuable'; an advocacy brief on 'Air Pollution in Early Childhood' as part of an ECD-Climate-Environment Resource Kit; and numerous webinars and strategic events such as the ASEAN Policy Dialogue on ECCE. We will continue to join forces with partners to elevate Nurturing Care in ECD as a cost-effective investment to achieve climate resilience and sustainable development in Asia-Pacific.

List of Key Resources

For COP28, we are sharing this package of key ECD-Climate resources jointly developed by ARNEC and its partners.

1. ECD Climate COP28 Brief (See following 2 pages)
2. Download [ECD Climate Framework for Action](#) (2 pages)
3. Download our advocacy brief: [Air Pollution in Early Childhood](#) (10 pages) [Call to Action only](#) (2 pages)
4. Download ECD Climate Micro Research Reports:
 - [Bhutan: Perception survey of children, parents, early childhood educators](#) (4 pages)
 - [India: Smokeless kitchens with cleaner cooking fuels](#) (4 pages)
 - [Pakistan: Perception in flood-affected communities](#) (5 pages)
 - [Philippines: Implications to ECCD program delivery in typhoon-affected communities](#) (5 pages)

3 Reasons Why Climate Actions Need to Include Early Childhood

Young children from conception to pre-primary school age are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. But they are also our most valuable group in the fight against these impacts. Supporting nurturing care policies and programs is a smart investment to help us win this fight.



“ ECD is one of the most cost-effective, comprehensive, immediate, and enduring paths to boosting human development, achieving climate resilience and sustainable development.

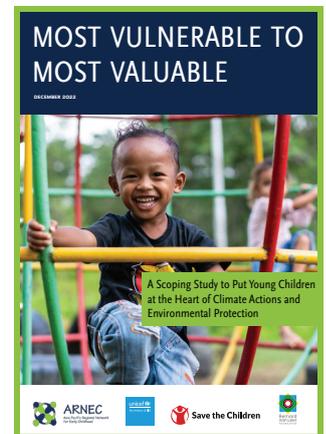
- Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, 2023.

1 Achieve human development, climate resilience, and sustainable development in the most cost-effective way. ECD investment yields the highest returns of up to US \$17 per dollar invested, especially for the most disadvantaged. Climate and environmental risks underscore the positive multiplier effect of ECD policies and programs to: (1) build foundations of social infrastructure in human development across dimensions of **nurturing care in ECD** (health, nutrition, safety and security, early learning, and responsive caregiving), (2) increase community climate resilience and adaptive capacity, and (3) boost achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.



2 Break the cycle of climate injustice and inequity. Climate change is a child rights crisis with 90% of the global health burden related to climate change borne by children under five. Climate change-induced **loss and damage** exacerbates vulnerabilities of Asia-Pacific’s young children, even if they are contributing the least to climate emissions. Climate disasters in the region affected more than 50 million people in Asia in 2021 alone and today account for 80% of the world’s new disaster-linked displacements with a total damage of US\$ 36 billion from mostly flood and storm events. In South Asia, US\$ 518 billion of projected losses in economic and humanitarian impacts are expected by 2050. This vicious cycle of inequity can be broken with early investments, especially in the first 1,000 days of life, proven as the most cost-effective equalizer with high returns.

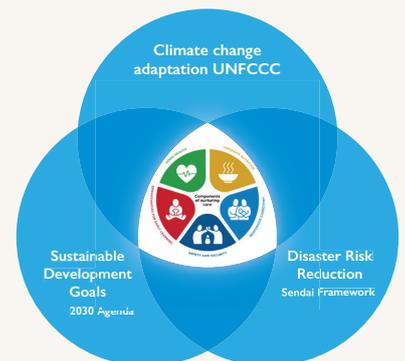
90% of brain develops by age 5. Early childhood adversity and toxic stress during the first 1,000 days of life can derail healthy development.



3 Transform the trajectory of risks into fulfillment of children's rights. Overlapping climate and environmental hazards exacerbate existing vulnerabilities of young children. Collectively, communities will have reduced capacities to deal with these compounding social, environmental, and economic challenges. International frameworks are our **valuable tools** to build climate resilience and adaptive capacity of young children – UNFCCC COP negotiations and NDCs, the Sendai Framework for DRR, Sustainable Development Goals, and the UNCRC General Comment 26 to ensure that children live in a clean, healthy, and sustainable world.

Well financed and timely delivery of essential resilient-building ECD services for young children and families is critical given sensitive periods in human development. Currently, only 2.4% of multilateral climate funds support projects incorporating child responsive activities. Only 34% of the NDCs are child sensitive with very little reference to young children. Only 5% of NDCs specifically mentioned air pollution despite clear linkages between air quality and health, and overall child development impacts on young children.

Reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience

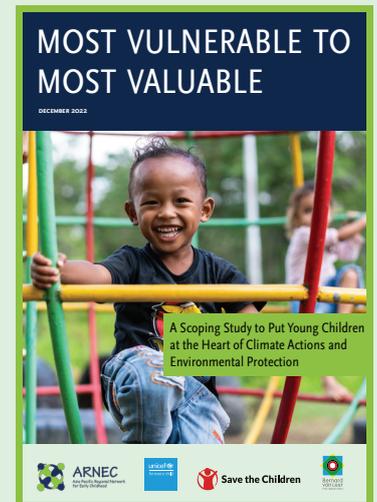


Our Key Asks at COP28

We call on the COP28 Presidency and All Parties to the UNFCCC to **elevate Nurturing Care in ECD as a cost-effective investment to achieve climate resilience and sustainable development across climate-vulnerable Asia-Pacific**. We also call on other international financing bodies (such as the World Bank, the Green Climate Fund, and the Global Environment Facility) to reconceptualize mechanisms for the funding of loss and damage, as well as climate mitigation and adaptation efforts to include the financing of programs focused on young children and families. We need urgent actions to minimize climate disasters as the climate crisis is a child rights crisis.

Our Key Recommendations from ARNEC's Joint Scoping Study

- 1 Include **Nurturing Care components** (Health, Nutrition, Safety and Security, Early Learning, and Responsive Caregiving) in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), national action plans and programs as a path to climate resilience, incorporating the distinctive needs, rights, and perspectives of young child.
- 2 Make visible **young children's needs and voices** in climate change discourse, including national climate resilience and adaptation plans.
- 3 **Act at multiple levels** to ensure that the nurturing care needs of young children and their rights are fulfilled within families, in ECD settings, and in communities through inclusive and resilient child-centered programs and services.
- 4 Promote **locally led research and evidence generation, and knowledge sharing efforts** on the lifelong impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on young children in Asia-Pacific to inform climate policies and investment decisions, including negotiations at the UNFCCC.
- 5 Foster **strategic alliances with national and sub-national governments** across key Ministries of Health, Education, Social Welfare, Environment, and Finance through targeted communication and awareness building on the nurturing care needs of young children given overlapping climate and environmental shocks in Asia-Pacific.
- 6 **Finance and build local capacity** of champions - ECD stakeholders, parent groups, the early childhood workforce, youth groups - to increase knowledge sharing and advocacy efforts on the early childhood and climate change linkages in order to more effectively advocate for the needs of young children and their families.
- 7 Strengthen strategic **multistakeholder partnerships among climate, environmental, and ECD sectors** with researchers, educators, practitioners, and policymakers at all levels in order to communicate ECD as a key element of climate resilience and sustainable development at all climate change policy arenas.



Asia-Pacific Regional Early Childhood-Climate Resource Kit

ARNEC and Vital Strategies are co-developing thematic educational and advocacy materials on leading climate and environment hazards in Asia-Pacific, starting with air pollution and flooding as they affect young children. The goal is to increase knowledge and capacity to deal with these hazards, as well as advocate for high-level policy changes focused on sustained climate mitigation and adaptation efforts to reduce vulnerability and increase climate resilience of young children - our most vulnerable and most valuable populations.

Acknowledgement

Author: Peck Gee Chua (ARNEC)

Designer: Seagrafik Studio

Reviewers: Sheldon Shaeffer (ARNEC), Evelyn Santiago (ARNEC), Lynn Tang (Vital Strategies), Srihari Govind (CCC Action Lab, LHSTM), Loss and Damage Youth Coalition (LDYC), Joshua L. DeVincenzo (Columbia Climate School)