



A Real Mosaic of Solutions to Respond to Loss and Damage from Climate Change

Education

Acknowledgements

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This brief has been prepared by the Loss and Damage Collaboration (L&DC) led by Teo Ormond-Skeaping who wishes to thank the following for their valuable contributions: Erin Roberts (L&DC).

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The development of this paper has been supported by the [Scottish Government](#) and [Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung New York Office](#) with support from the BMZ.

Introduction

This publication is part of a [series of briefs](#) unpacking the pieces of a fit for purpose “mosaic of solutions” to respond to loss and damage from climate change. This series expands on our earlier work which presented a [five-year vision for Loss and Damage under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#) to look beyond the international climate regime at catalysing a wider mosaic of solutions.

In the [flagship paper](#) of the series, we unpack the pieces of the mosaic. In these thematic briefs we dive deeper into existing solutions and how they can be strengthened. We also consider any reforms needed and explore emerging solutions.

This brief unpacks responses to loss and damage to education. It provides a short introduction to how climate change is impacting education, highlights a number of the challenges that developing countries face in implementing responses, and how these challenges can be addressed.

What is the problem?

Education is a critical driver of development. It does so by boosting economic growth, reducing poverty, and empowering individuals. Every 1 USD spent on education potentially generates up to 15 USD in economic growth.¹

However, climate change is severely disrupting education globally, impacting millions of children each year.^{2,3} Across the world, schools face damaged infrastructure, closure, or use as emergency shelters, while intense heat reduces concentration and learning ability. This is causing significant long-term learning losses and increased dropouts.⁴

In 2024 alone, loss and damage events impacted over 242 million students in 85 countries or territories⁵ –74 percent of whom were in low- and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs).⁶ This risks long-term societal and economic crises, increasing loss and damage due to reduced lifetime earnings, increased inequality, and diminished national productivity.⁷ For example, when households adopt erosive coping strategies⁸ such as pulling children –particularly girls– out of school, and forcing girls into early marriage.⁹

In 2021, less than 1.5 percent of climate finance went to education.¹⁰ As a result of [Official Development Assistance \(ODA\)](#) cuts, education funding now faces a 3.2 billion USD decline in 2026.¹¹ This will further compound the existing financial, institutional capacity, and technical challenges¹² that developing countries face when responding to loss and damage associated with education.

What are the existing solutions?

The global response to climate change impacts on education aims to transform education systems to be climate-resilient, sustainable, and capable of empowering students with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to understand and address climate change.¹³

This response is informed by Article 28 (the right of the child to education) of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and Goal 4 (quality education) of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child aims to ensure that primary education is compulsory and available free to all and that higher education is accessible to all, amongst other things.¹⁴ Similarly, Goal 4 of the SDGs aims to ensure complete free, equitable and quality education for all by 2030.¹⁵ It also aims to build and upgrade education facilities and ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.¹⁶ Global efforts to achieve Goal 4 SDG are led by the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#).

The global response to climate impacts on climate change are primarily structured around a number of key frameworks. This includes UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework¹⁷, under which the [Greening Education Partnership \(GEP\)](#) supports countries to tackle climate change by harnessing the critical role of education.¹⁸ The [Comprehensive School Safety Framework \(CSSF\)](#)¹⁹ provides guidelines for disaster risk reduction in schools that promote safety, encouraging adaptability, and building resilience against risks and hazards within the education sector.²⁰

These frameworks are implemented by national governments, often supported by UN Agencies, including the [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), local and international non governmental organisations (NGOs) (e.g. [Save the Children](#)) and development partners, such as the [World Bank](#). Dedicated funds including Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the [Global Partnership for Education Fund \(GPEF\)](#), and the [International Finance Facility for Education \(IFFE\)](#) also support this work.

Under the UNFCCC and its [Paris Agreement](#), the [Action for Climate Empowerment \(ACE\)](#) agenda calls on governments to educate, empower and engage all stakeholders and major groups on policies and actions relating to climate change.²¹ The official children and youth constituency of the UNFCCC ([YOUNGO](#)) aims to empower children and youth to take action and works to enhance their skills and capacity to drive ambitious climate actions and policies at all levels towards a livable, climate just future.²² Other UNFCCC initiatives have included the [Baku Guiding Principles](#), which were launched at [COP 29](#) with the aim of better integrating education into [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#).

What do we need to see?

Finance and support must be scaled up by developed countries, including by exceeding the [Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) target of 0.7 percent of gross national income \(GNI\)](#), to enable developing countries to enhance the resilience of their education system and its infrastructure. This includes effectively implementing the CSSF. UN Agencies, NGO actors, and education finance facilities must have the funding they need to protect children from loss and damage to education and address impacts that could not be avoided.

Support must also be scaled up to ensure that education systems in developing countries can empower young people to drive loss and damage responses. Including through the implementation of UNESCO's ESD framework and the UNFCCC's ACE agenda. Table 1 highlights how existing solutions to loss and damage to education can be strengthened.

Table 1: How to strengthen existing solutions to loss and damage to education.

CURRENT SOLUTIONS	HOW DOES IT WORK?	WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?	WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	UNESCO's ESD programme and its GEP empowers learners with knowledge, skills, and values to address global challenges like climate change, fostering responsible action for a sustainable future.	Funding for education is decreasing at a time when 272 million children and young people are out of school. ²³ Global education systems are failing to address the climate crisis, with roughly 50 per cent of national curricula mentioning climate change. ²⁴	Support must be scaled up in developing countries to ensure that education systems can empower young people to drive loss and damage responses.
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	UNICEF works to protect children from the impacts of climate change by strengthening essential services (water, health, and education) against disasters, promoting child-centered climate policies and empowering young people as advocates.	UNICEF is facing severe funding shortages, with a projected 20 percent reduction in resources driven by cuts from major contributors like the US. ²⁵	Developed countries must mobilise innovative sources to meet and exceed the ODA target of 0.7 percent of gross national income to increase financial support to UNICEF.
Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)	The ACE agenda calls on governments to educate, empower, and engage all stakeholders and major groups on policies and actions relating to climate change.	ACE suffers from low prioritisation in national agendas, resulting in insufficient funding, limited stakeholder involvement, and weak implementation. ²⁶	Developed countries must increase finance and support so that developing countries can increase the implementation of ACE.
Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF)	The CSSF is a global, all-hazards approach designed to protect children, educators, and staff from risks like natural disasters, climate change, violence, and health pandemics.	CSSF implementation faces challenges, including insufficient funding, limited technical capacity, and weak inter-sectoral coordination, particularly in developing countries. ²⁷ Without climate resilient schools, vulnerability to loss and damage increases.	As part of recovery efforts, developing countries need sufficient finance, technical assistance, and capacity building to implement CSSF. Developed countries must ensure that this support is provided, including by exceeding the ODA target of 0.7 percent of GNI.

CURRENT SOLUTIONS	HOW DOES IT WORK?	WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?	WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?
Education Cannot Wait (ECW)	The ECW is the UN’s global fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises. It supports children and youth affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters, and displacement, ensuring access to safe, quality education.	The ECW needed a minimum of 1.5 billion USD for the strategic period 2023–2026. ²⁸ Yet only 950 million USD has been mobilised. ²⁹ As a result, only 8.3 million of the target of 20 million children have been reached. ³⁰	Developed countries must increase contributions to ECW so it can meet its target. ³¹
Global Partnership for Education Fund (GPEF)	The GPEF addresses climate change by focusing on building climate-resilient education systems in lower-income countries.	The GPEF secured only 4.2 billion USD of its 5 billion USD target in the previous replenishment period of 2021-2025. ³²	The 15 billion USD in grants and innovative finance target for the 2026–2030 period must be met by developed countries. ³³
International Finance Facility for Education (IFFE)	The IFFE is a global financing engine launched to tackle the education crisis in lower middle income countries (LMICs).	IFFE is reliant on loans to finance education in LMICs. ³⁴	Finance must be grant based to avoid the risk of debt crisis in LMICs.

Endnotes

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