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Education for children in climate-induced migration and displacement settings



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

▶ ▶ ▶ The interdisciplinary climate education group at the University of Bergen works towards improving global access to education with a focus on climate-induced migration and displacement settings. This report summarizes current challenges in this area and proposes policy measures to address these issues.

Climate-induced displacement will prevent many children from access to high quality education. At the 26th UN Climate Change Conference held in November 2021 (COP26), governments must accelerate their efforts to safeguard the future of these children. Strengthening core funding towards this work will support the delivery of SDGs 13.1 (strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change), 13.3 (improve climate change education) and SDG 4.1 (ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030).

Key points

- Climate-related events have already contributed to over 50 million children being forced from their homes, migrating across borders or being displaced within their own countries.
- Education is an essential element of the global response to climate change. It helps people understand and address the impact of global warming, adapt to climate change related trends and build resilience.
- It is therefore crucial to ensure a high quality of education for children who are displaced and forced to migrate as a result of the climate emergency - both to protect vulnerable populations and improve future climate mitigation.

Introduction

The consequences of climate change will significantly limit which areas of earth humans are able to inhabit. Inevitably, this will lead to the displacement of millions. In 2018, 17.2 million people were internally displaced because of natural disasters. Just one year later, in 2019, 24.9 million people were displaced due to natural disasters and extreme weather events.

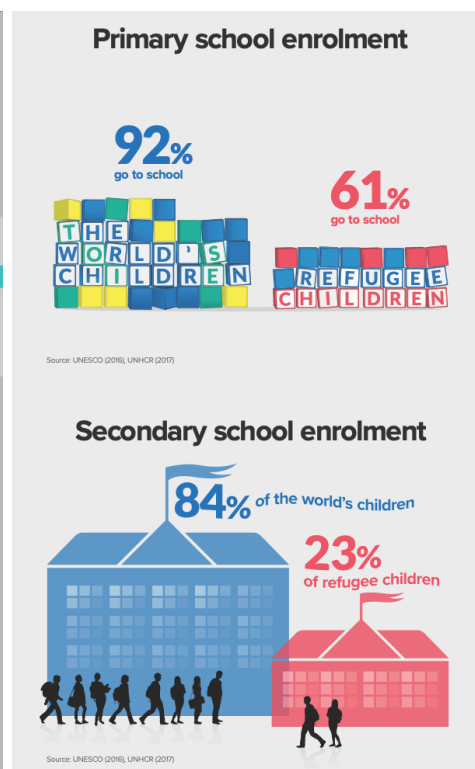
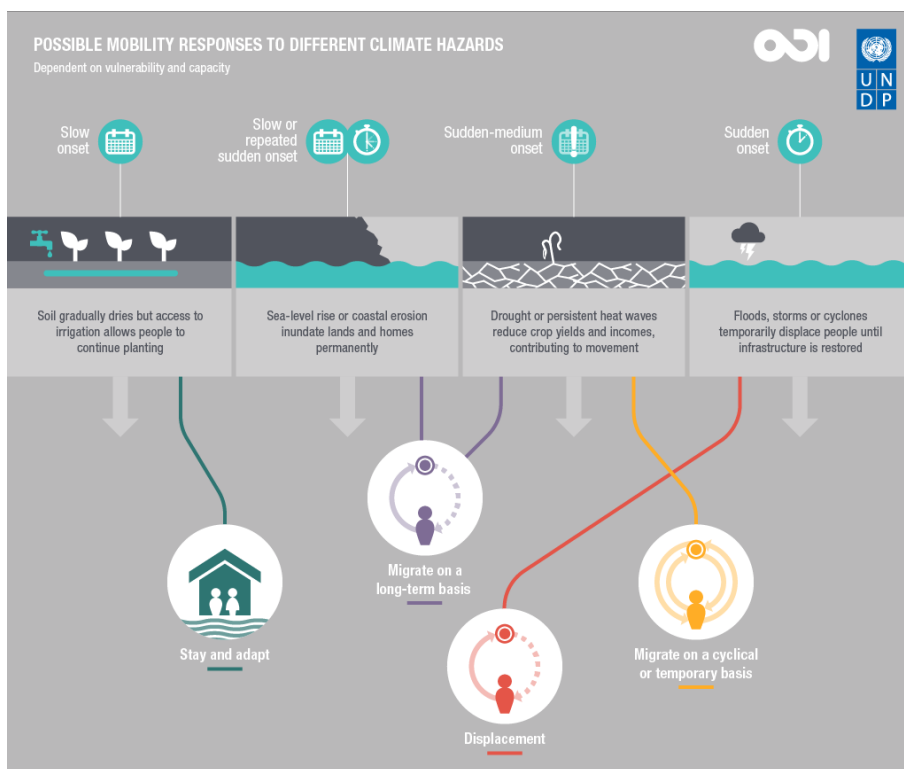
Displaced children face significant challenges in exercising their right to education from infrastructure, resource constraints to persistent insecurity and discrimination. There are two major reasons why governments must undertake urgent actions to safeguard these children. Firstly, access to education is a human right which must be established for vulnerable populations (cf. SDG 4.1). Secondly, including climate education in these programs will improve climate resilience, mitigation and adaption of future generations.

Analysis

The consequences of the climate crisis will displace millions from heavily impacted areas - a development which is in fact already starting to take shape. Nevertheless, institutions and frameworks are currently not set up to respond to this situation. Addressing this issue now is crucial, especially as those in the least developed countries will be affected most, burdening already vulnerable populations who have little capacity to adapt to environmental changes.

Among the major consequences from climate-induced displacement, limited access to education might be considered as the most detrimental from the long-term perspective. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report shows that there are approximately 7.5 million school aged asylum-seeking children among which only 61% and 23% of the total number have access to respective primary and secondary schooling opportunities. Prolonged lack of education was stated to considerably affect human capital as well as to cause gender inequities with the girls having more obstacles for fulfilling their right to education. Girls are often expected to stay at home and support their families by taking care of their siblings. Early or forced marriage and pregnancy are additional barriers, particularly during humanitarian crises when parents may send their daughters off to be married or cared for by another family.

Ensuring equal access to education is of course a goal in its own right. Additionally, educating those personally affected by the climate crisis will strengthen future climate resilience, especially when climate education is included in curriculums (cf. SDG 13.3). With the growing economic development and increased consumption, it is evident that we need to develop new technologies such as renewable energy to sustain our planet. The children of today require knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to act as agents of such change. Educating children on climate emergencies and ecological crises could



Causes of climate-induced migration and displacement and its effect on education. Sources below.

therefore create systems that will help build countries' capacities to tackle climate-related problems for decades to come. Climate literacy can be spread via the means of education by integrating topics such as environmental sciences in students' curriculum.

Conclusions

Climatic changes have significantly impacted natural and human systems across the planet. An inevitable consequence of this is human migration, as parts of the globe become increasingly uninhabitable. As a result, many displaced children will lose or be prevented from gaining access to high-quality education, especially in already vulnerable populations. This means that wellbeing and future prosperity of children will be negatively impacted. Education systems need to be adapted to respond to the settings of these climate-induced displaced children. Far greater priority needs to be given, and efforts and investment devoted to minimizing disruptions to children's education. At the same time, an opportunity is provided to strengthen children's resilience and adaptive capacity to the

effects of climate change. Educating those who have personally felt the impacts of climate change on the causes and potential solutions to the issue, will help future generations develop sustainable ways of mitigating and adapting to the climate crisis.

Climate change is a global issue, and the impacts on natural and human systems will be borne globally and cannot stay regionally isolated for long. It is therefore essential that the global community must come together to address climate-induced migration and education for affected children.

Recommendations

1. Strengthening the resilience of education systems in countries affected by climate change.
2. Remove financial barriers by abolishing school fees.
3. Provide additional funding of climate change education for internally displaced children.
4. Include climate education in curriculums to enhance climate resilience of future generations.

IMPRINT

SDG Bergen Science Advice in collaboration with Bergen Summer Research School's 2021 PhD course holders professor Birgit Kopainsky, Dr. Hiwa Målen and Dr. Ingunn Johanne Ness.

Relevance to the 2030 Agenda

SDG 4.5 (equal access to all levels of education) is one of the targets under SDG 4: *Quality Education*. SDG 13.3 (improve climate change education is part of SDG13: *Climate Action*).

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