



The charity for
girls' equality

RAISING OUR VOICE

FUNDING CLIMATE EDUCATION AND YOUTH
LEADERSHIP IN SE ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



RESEARCH SUMMARY

This briefing note highlights the key findings and recommendations from Plan International Australia's technical report *Mapping the financing for Climate and Girls' Education in SE Asia and the Pacific*, which provides the policy overlay to supporting young people's calls to action as outlined in Plan International's *Reimagining Climate Education and Youth Leadership* survey report.

The impacts of climate change are now recognised as the single largest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of people in the Asia-Pacific region. Climate change also threatens to undo so many of the gains that we have made through Australia's aid and development programming in the region.

"Climate Change has already affected my health, it has destroyed plants, it affects the water, and it also affects my community by coastal erosion."

Turinga, 25, Kiribati

In particular, climate change poses an unprecedented threat to girls' education. Climate change impacts increase the size of the barriers to girls' education that already exist – from being pulled out of school for domestic chores, including rebuilding seawalls, homes and toilets; to being forced into early marriages/unions, or families choosing to send boys to school if they are struggling to pay school fees, due to livelihood losses; to being unable to access school during climate-related extreme weather events such as typhoons, cyclones, flooding and rising sea levels. Further, we know that when girls lose their education during humanitarian emergencies, they rarely get sent back to school.

"Our homes and toilets were destroyed [by the seawall breach] and this makes it harder for us because sometimes we skip school because we need to rebuild our seawalls and also our toilets to be rebuilt too."

Tebwebwe, 20, Kiribati

Yet, girls' education is also one of the more powerful – and often overlooked – solutions to the climate crisis. Even though girls are significantly impacted by climate change, they are also powerful agents of change capable of strengthening a country's response to climate change. Girls around the world

tell us they want to be part of the solutions that will address climate change; the solutions that will help their communities and the world.

"My hopes include making the youth from generation to generation to be part of climate leadership in Kiribati, this is because youth always see the problems and even have a lot of solutions for it."

Tebwebwe, 20, Kiribati

Why invest in a socio-cultural solution to climate change?

- Project Drawdown ranked girls' education at number six out of the top 100 solutions to tackle climate change (rooftop solar panels and electric vehicles come in at numbers 10 and 26 respectively);¹
- Girls' education is one of six key climate solutions listed in Damon Gameau's documentary, 2040;²
- A 2017 Brookings Institute study suggests that for every additional year of schooling a girl receives on average, her country's resilience to climate disasters can be expected to improve by 3.2 points;³
- According to UNESCO, educating girls could result in a massive reduction in emissions of 51.48 gigatons by 2050;⁴
- According to the World Bank, the return on one year of secondary education for a girl correlates with as high as a 25% increase in wages later in life;⁵ and
- The international community recognizes the importance of education and training to address climate change. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, and the associated Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) agenda, through the Doha Work Programme, calls on governments to educate, empower and engage all stakeholders and major groups on policies and actions relating to climate change.⁶

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GIRLS' EDUCATION: CONTENT AND OUTCOMES

Climate change education should build on existing climate education around climate science and impacts, and expand it, in line with Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7, to include social dimensions, sustainable development and human rights framing.

This includes:

- Examining the broader social and political dimensions of the climate crisis and striking the right balance between promoting individual actions, which disproportionately burden individuals, and a whole society approach;
- Teaching about climate policy processes at all levels: including the different policies that exist, how to engage in decision making processes, developing relevant skills, and how to hold decision makers to account;
- Incorporating green skills and learning in a variety of subjects, beyond geography and science, such as history, politics, psychology, mathematics, languages, biology; and
- Adapting and translating climate information to local contexts and languages and different population groups: involving real life stories and examples that are locally relevant and include indigenous knowledge.

"My hope for my community and my country is that we encourage climate change education so that children, young people and future generations can grow up with a good understanding of climate change and be able to give very effective adaptive measures for our country."

Maria, 25, Kiribati

There are three key ways that girls' education can be a pathway for fighting climate change:

1. Developing skills to lead a low carbon economy

Providing girls with greater access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in secondary education can grow a much needed workforce leading to a low-carbon economy. Adolescent girls and young women, when given the opportunity and skills, can drive innovation in climate resilience and green technologies.

2. Playing a critical role in disaster risk reduction and responding to climate emergencies that threaten their homes and their lives

Embedding transformative climate change education in curriculums is essential; increasing understanding and skills in risk identification, reduction and mitigation, early warning systems and early action, contingency planning, life-saving information and skills, and response and adaptation actions to extreme weather events.

3. Education empowers girls to be leaders and to participate in decision-making

Supporting girls to complete twelve years of quality education also accelerates gender equality – positioning them to be leaders and decision-makers in conservation efforts, as climate activists and during climate related emergencies.

"My hope for the future is that we discourage people from migrating by teaching children what measures can be used for protecting our island from the effects of climate change, like planting mangroves and building seawalls, managing our lifestyles and cleaning our land and sea, etc."

Turinga, 25, Kiribati

EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC⁷

The 2008-2018 Education Plan addressed the issue of quality education, including education for sustainable development (ESD), and introduced climate change into the curriculum. Importantly, this was supported through teacher training and curriculum support. Financial support from the government funded a range of formal, non-formal and informal projects on ESD led by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, young leaders and local communities.



ITALY¹⁰

In 2019, the Italian Education Minister announced the intention to put climate change and sustainability at the core of Italy's school curriculum, with the aim of educating students in each school year. Environmental experts from Columbia and Oxford Universities have designed the new curriculum targets for each grade, including advice on the best approaches to engage each age group. The curriculum roll-out has been supported with teacher training.



VIETNAM, COSTA RICA AND KENYA⁸

In 2016, Vietnam, Costa Rica, and Kenya partnered with UNESCO to establish high standard ESD policies at a regional and global level. This included the Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), teacher training, and youth empowerment.⁹



NAURU

The Accelerating Climate Education (ACE) Pacific program has helped review Nauru's Year 1-10 Curriculum to advise on the inclusion of climate change concepts. Drawing from the review outcomes, the program is training teachers to use "Learning about Climate Change the Pacific Way", a suite of Pacific based climate education resources that help student's contextualize climate impacts and solutions.

CASE STUDY: GIRL-LED ACTION FOR CLIMATE EMPOWERMENT IN KIRIBATI AND FIJI

Pacific nations are at the front line of the extreme impacts of climate change, facing both slow onset events and increasingly extreme weather events, and placing them in a state of protracted crisis. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to crises, yet are also powerful change agents and part of the climate solution.

Plan International recognises that access to age and gender responsive climate information is an essential factor in enabling girls and women to become leaders in climate action and to participate in climate change decision-making. *The Pacific Girls in a Changing Climate* project aims to create safe spaces and provide training for Pacific girls to build their confidence and

skills for meaningful engagement in community based adaptation and climate change strategies, policies and processes, through supporting their leadership, amplifying their voices and strengthening their capacity to take action for climate justice and hold leaders to account for their future.

Throughout 2021, six young women aged 18-25 have completed a comprehensive training in Kiribati, which covered skills and understanding in climate change, gender and climate justice, climate action, community engagement and consultation (including participatory methods), and climate policy mapping to understand engagement in climate policies and processes. This same process will be delivered in Fiji early 2022.

These young women speak powerfully about the impacts of climate change on their lives – on their health, their access to safe water and sanitation, their food security, and their access to education – on their communities, and on their country; they have all witnessed the disappearance of beaches as sea levels rise, and fear "that [their] country will sink."

They all spoke about how excited they were to have received more formalised climate learning, so that they can actively contribute to community based adaptation efforts and engage in climate policies and processes, to bring their solutions to the table.

"There are many things that I have learnt from this project like approaching and interacting with others

and conducting activities but mostly learning what Climate Change really is and its strategies to find solutions to help us adapt in a changing climate."
Turinga, 25

This group of young women are now working with adolescent girls in Kiribati to further understand the impacts of climate change, identify potential innovative solutions, and raise Pacific youth voices in national, regional and international climate policies and processes.

To follow this project please visit: plan-international.org/fiji/pacific-girls-changing-climate

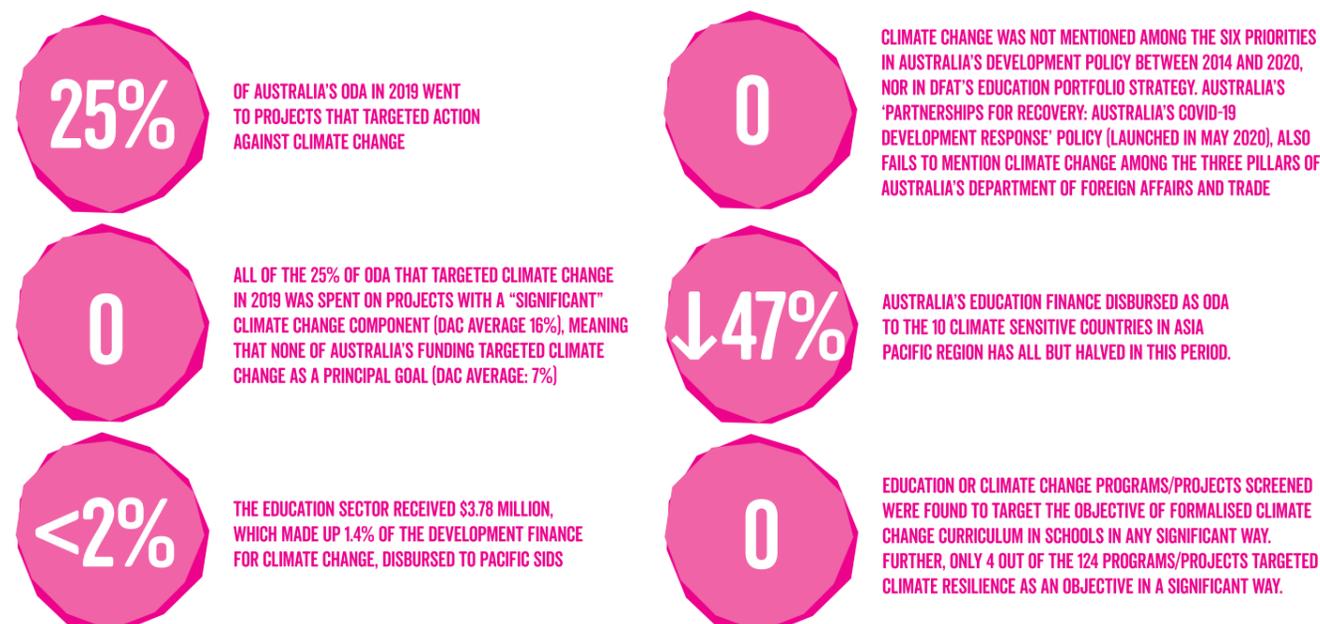
FINANCING FLOWS AND POLICY CONTEXT

The *Mapping of financing for climate and girls' education* report finds that, while strategic and targeted financing has become increasingly important because of COVID 19, Australia's climate financing in the region is severely lacking in addressing girls' education as a pathway to tackling

climate change and building disaster risk resilience.

The research identifies an urgent need for climate financing that builds the capacity and skills of children and young people, especially girls, in the region.

A total of 43 climate relevant projects/programs were tracked in this study for the 10 selected countries for financial years 2015-2020. These projects were then screened for youth, gender and adolescent girls/young women integration, to the extent possible. For the projects/programs assessed, Australia disbursed a total of \$1,173 million to the 10 countries combined.



FINANCING FLOWS FROM OTHER DONORS

Regional and global gaps and opportunities for improvement in financing gender transformative action for climate empowerment

This section details the coverage and gaps in climate and education finance provided by other development partners – specifically the Asian Development Bank (ADB), MFAT (New Zealand's ODA), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the Global Climate Fund (GCF).

- MFAT has a primary focus on Small Island Developing States in the Pacific region, with New Zealand's climate financing having a strong bilateral component and contributions to the GCF. Climate change is integrated across development portfolios rather than standalone projects.
- There is uneven distribution of GPE funding across the 10 climate vulnerable countries in the study sample, and the GPE strategy for climate vulnerable countries needs further investigation.
- National climate plans or NDCs fail to capture either the risks to, or inclusion/empowerment of girls in climate response. These can be addressed in future NDCs that countries would submit to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as through the gender commitments made through the GCF, for instance at the Generation Equality Forum.
- Replenishment of the GCF is needed for greater mobilisation of global public finance, including for the Action for Climate Empowerment agenda under the Doha Work Programme of the Paris Agreement.
- There is scope to integrate a youth focus, as well as a specific focus on adolescent girls and young women, in ADB's climate projects.
- All donors need to consider integrating climate change in their education and youth empowerment, employment and leadership portfolios, with a gender equality and social inclusion lens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to:

1. Create an enabling policy environment and finance climate change and girls' education through the Australian Aid program, by:
 - Integrating gender and youth responsive climate change solutions, including girls' education, climate education and youth leadership, across the education, gender, Pacific and other relevant portfolio action plans;
 - Increasing the number of projects that target climate change as a principal goal (DAC average: 7%);
 - Increasing secondary education funding, particularly in the Pacific; and
 - Integrating climate change in the new education strategy beyond 2020, including by:
 - ◊ Increasing funding focused on resilience strengthening and girls' access to education in the most climate vulnerable countries in our region
 - ◊ Increasing funding to transform curricula content, curricula delivery and teacher training to support climate justice and pro-environmental behaviours
 - ◊ Aligning financial flows consistent with country Nationally Determined Contributions (Article 2, Paragraph 1(c) of the Paris Agreement), particularly those related to transformative education
2. Work with donor-recipient Ministries of Education, Environment and Finance to:
 - Develop education sector plans that are gender responsive and prioritise resilience, climate change adaptation and mitigation and sustainable development in line with SDG target 4.7;
 - Include transformative education in all national climate strategies (e.g. NDCs, NAPs, ACE enhancement and implementation).
3. Standardise and disaggregate data gathering, monitoring and evaluating by:
 - Including gender and youth indicators for all project data

We call on the Australian Government to:

- Sign the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action;¹¹
- Fully implement the Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development;¹²
- Make an ambitious pledge at the high-level climate education summit at COP26, which centres the voices and demands of young people, including girls' priorities, by highlighting the **youth-led statement** and its recommendations;
- Support and advocate for improved access and outcomes from the Green Climate Fund, including setting a target for adaptation finance of at least 50% for public adaptation finance (both pre-and post-COP26) to ensure adequate funding for the most climate vulnerable countries (LDCs and SIDS); and
- Champion a strengthened Action for Climate Empowerment Agenda at COP26, under the review of the Doha Work Programme.



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ENDNOTES

- 1 Project Drawdown, 'Climate solutions: educating girls', viewed online at: <https://www.drawdown.org/solutions/women-and-girls/educating-girls>
- 2 2040, 'Climate solutions: educating girls', viewed online at: <https://whatsyour2040.com/solutions/>
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- 6 UNESCO, 'Education for climate action', viewed online at: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/cce>
- 7 UNESCO (2015). Not Just Hot Air: Putting Climate Change Education into Practice
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- 9 "UNESCO Global Action Programme On Education For Sustainable Development". UNESCO Digital library. 10 February 2020.
- 10 International Bureau of Education, Is Italy the first country to require Climate Change Education in all schools? 26 August 2020. <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/news/italy-first-country-require-climate-change-education-all-schools>
- 11 The Children's Environmental Rights Initiatives (CERI) (2021). Declaration on children, youth and climate action. <https://www.childenvironment.org/declaration-childrenyouth-climate-action>
- 12 UNESCO (2021). UNESCO World conference on education for sustainable development. <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/esdfor2030-berlin-declaration-en.pdf>

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Date: October 2021

Cover Image: *Sophie, 35, is concerned that she will lose her home again due to climate change*

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