Du bewegst mehr als Du gibst
Children‘s Rights and the Environment
Question

Do you have any prior knowledge of the relationship between children’s rights and the environment?
Context

- Environmental damage is a pressing human rights challenge, which has an impact on children’s lives today and in the future.

- Violations of their rights resulting from environmental harm can have irreversible, lifelong and even transgenerational consequences.

- The impact of pollution in one place can be felt by children living far away and climate change is unquestionably a global problem.

- While environmental harm affects people at any age, children are particularly vulnerable, due to their evolving physical and mental development and status within society. Certain groups of children, including children from indigenous, low-income or other marginalized communities are often at a higher risk, which raises the question of environmental injustice.
ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS KILL 1.7 MILLION CHILDREN EVERY YEAR.

Governments, businesses and the UN should monitor child health, promote accountability, and make child rights part of environmental decision-making.
**Case study:** Lead mine in Kabwe Zambia

![Bar chart showing distribution of blood lead level samples](chart.png)

*Caravanas, J.K., et al. (2012): Relationship between blood lead level and cognitive (IQ) changes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood lead levels (ug/dl)</th>
<th>IQ deficits in 0–4 years old (points)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lanphea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-3.74</td>
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<td>-4.83</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-7.31</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-10.56</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>-11.05</td>
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</table>
Nearly 1 in 10 under-5 deaths is linked to air pollution

Fig. 7: Regional breakdown of deaths from outdoor and indoor air pollution, 2012

- **Europe**: 117,000 deaths, 482,000 deaths including 3,000 under-5 deaths, 1,000 under-5 deaths
- **Eastern Mediterranean region**: 201,000 deaths, 250,000 deaths including 73,000 under-5 deaths, 24,000 under-5 deaths
- **Americas**: 81,000 deaths, 152,000 deaths including 8,000 under-5 deaths, 1,000 under-5 deaths
- **Africa**: 581,000 deaths, 176,000 deaths including 287,000 under-5 deaths, 45,000 under-5 deaths
- **South-East Asia**: 1,682,000 deaths, 936,000 deaths including 133,000 under-5 deaths, 41,000 under-5 deaths
- **Western Pacific**: 1,620,000 deaths, 1,738,000 deaths including 28,000 under-5 deaths, 14,000 under-5 deaths

This map is for illustrative purposes only. This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.
Polluted Cities: The Air Children Breathe

Dirty air: the silent killer

Average concentration of small particles (PM_{10}) in outdoor urban air by WHO sub-region 2000 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³)

- over 25
- 21 - 25
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- no data

Average concentration of small particles (PM_{10}) in selected European cities 2003 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³)

- over 30
- 21 - 30
- 20 and under

PM_{10} refers to particles less than 10 micrometres in diameter, which can penetrate deep into the lungs and cause adverse health effects. The European Union standard for 24-hour mean PM_{10} levels is set at 50 µg/m³, not to be exceeded more than 35 days per year.
Pneumonia is the biggest killer of children. Air pollution is responsible for about half of pneumonia cases.

Fig. 7: Number of childhood deaths due to pneumonia, 2015

1 in 6 childhood deaths were due to pneumonia in 2015.

It translates into...

922,000 childhood deaths per year.

2,500 childhood deaths per day.

100 childhood deaths per hour.

Bronchitis and asthma are likely to increase significantly in coming decades due to air pollution.

Fig. 11: Projected health impacts at global level.

Bronchitis in children aged 6 to 12

Asthma symptom days in children aged 5 to 19

= million number of cases

(in million number of days)
Children are physiologically highly vulnerable to air pollution.

“...the developing heart, lung, brain, hormone system and immunity can all be harmed by air pollution” – Royal College of Physicians, UK, 2016

Source: http://www.environment.ucla.edu/reportcard/article1700.html
The cumulative effects of air pollution can exacerbate poverty and inequity, through its social and economic impacts. 

Fig. 12: Lifelong effects of air pollution.
Climate Change and Children’s rights

More than half a billion children live in extremely high flood occurrence zones

Fig. 8: Children living in flood occurrence zones

- High child population density
- Flood occurrence
  - Number of floods (1985–2011)
  - Low (0–1)
  - Low to medium (2–3)
  - Medium to high (4–9)
  - High (10–27)
  - Extremely high (>27)
  - No data


Note: Flood occurrence is a count of the number of floods recorded from 1985 to 2011. Extremely high flood occurrence makes up areas with >27 floods between the period 1985–2011. The flood occurrence data is provided by WRI. For a full description, see Annex A.

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NEARLY 530 MILLION
children live in extremely high flood occurrence zones.

OVER 270 MILLION
children live in extremely high flood occurrence zones in countries with low access to improved sanitation.¹

NEARLY 100 MILLION
children live in extremely high flood occurrence zones in countries with low access to safe water.²

OVER 6 MILLION
children living in extremely high flood occurrence zones also live in fragile contexts.³

OVER 400 MILLION
children live in extremely high flood occurrence zones in countries with high proportions of diarrhoeal deaths.⁴

10 MILLION
children face the double danger of living in extremely high flood occurrence zones and in countries with high proportions of malaria deaths.⁵

¹ Countries where less than half of the population has access to improved sanitation facilities. Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation (WHO/UNICEF JMP).

² Countries where 10 per cent or more of the population lacks access to improved drinking-water sources. Source: WHO/UNICEF/JMP.

³ Countries defined by World Bank - Harmonised List of Fragile Situations FY16. 17

⁴ Countries where half or more of the population lives on less than $3.10 per day, as per recent updates on poverty thresholds by World Bank. 18

⁵ Countries where more than 5% of deaths under 5 years of age are due to diarrhoea. Source: WHO-MCEE estimates of child cause of death, 2000-2015/UNICEF.

⁶ Countries where more than 5% of deaths under 5 years of age are due to malaria. Source: WHO-MCEE estimates of child cause of death.
Nearly 160 million children live in areas of high or extremely high drought severity

Fig. 3: Children living in areas of high or extremely high drought severity

Drought severity
Mean length x dryness
- Low (<20)
- Low to medium (20–30)
- Medium to high (30–40)
- High (40–50)
- Extremely high (>50)
- No data


Note: Drought severity estimates the average of the length times the dryness of droughts from 1901 to 2008. Drought is defined as a continuous period where soil moisture remains below the 20th percentile. Length is measured in months, and dryness is the number of percentage points below the 20th percentile (Sheffield and Wood 2007, provided by WRI). For a full description of droughts, see Annex A.

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NEARLY 160 MILLION children live in areas of high and extremely high drought severity.

NEARLY 70 MILLION children live in areas of high and extremely high drought severity in countries with low access to improved sanitation.a

NEARLY 60 MILLION children live in areas of high and extremely high drought severity in countries with low access to safe water.b

OVER 50 MILLION children live in areas that face both high drought severity and where half or more of the population lives on less than $3.10 per day.c

OVER 20 MILLION children living in areas of high and extremely high drought severity also live in fragile contexts.d

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a - Countries where less than half of the population has access to improved water and sanitation. Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation

b - Countries where 10% or more of the population lacks access to safe sources. Source: WHO/UNICEF/JMP

c - Countries where half or more of the population lives on less than $3.10 per day. Source: World Bank

d - Countries defined by World Bank - Harmonized List of Fragile Situations
‘We’re still on fast-track to trial’: Kids’ climate lawsuit against Trump administration stays alive

The 11-Year-Old Suing Trump Over Climate Change
When Avery McRae decided to take on the government’s environmental policies, she had no idea who she’d be up against.

THE TEEN-AGERS SUING OVER CLIMATE CHANGE
By Michelle Nijhuis December 6, 2016

'Biggest Case on the Planet' Pits Kids vs. Climate Change
A pioneering lawsuit against the U.S. government on global warming won the right to a trial. Now Trump wants an appeals court to cancel it.
Emerging issues: the Nature deficit order

**Nature-Deficit Disorder**

**What is it?**
The combined psychological, physical and cognitive costs we suffer due to our alienation from nature, especially affecting children in vulnerable developing years.

**Causes**
- Parental fears
- Restricted access to natural areas
- Increasing consumption of electronic media

**Costs**
- Attention and mood disorders
- Lower grades
- Obesity
- Limited respect for the environment

**What can we do?**
GO WILD!
IGNITE CHILDREN’S INTEREST IN THE OUTDOORS
ENCourage NATURE EXPLORATION

[Link to Wilderness Society website: WILDERNESS.ORG]
Question

Do you think lack of access to nature or connection with nature should be framed as a human right for children?
158 environmental defenders have been killed so far in 2017 while protecting their community’s land or natural resources!!!
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The CRC is one of the few human rights instruments that explicitly require States to take steps to protect the environment:

- **Article 24 (2)** on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health provides that:
  “States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures: [...] to combat disease and malnutrition [...] **taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution**”

- **Article 29 (1)** on the aims of education provides that:
  “States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: [...] the development of **respect for the natural environment**.”
Developments at UN level


- Draft Guidelines on human rights and the environment
Environmental Agreements and children’s rights

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), e.g. SDG 3 (9) on healthy lives and pollution), SDG 13 (b) on climate youth action, SDG 4 (7) on education for sustainable development and human rights

- Paris Agreement on climate change (preamble): Commitment to respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on the rights of the child when taking climate change actions

- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda ....

- As States begin implementing these frameworks, it is essential that child rights obligations guide their actions
FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS...

- Children’s rights overlooked in international and national policies on climate change
- Climate change overlooked in child protection policies and initiatives, e.g. children’s healthcare
- But children & young people feel strongly!
BUT RECOGNITION IS EVOLVING...

States have obligations to...

- Protect against the harmful effects of climate change on children’s rights
- Ensure that the measures they take in response to climate change respect children’s rights
“[Climate change] is one of the biggest threats to children’s health and exacerbates health disparities...States should, therefore, put children’s health concerns at the center of their climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.”
NEXT STEPS & BEST PRACTICE

- Viet Nam law on environmental protection incorporates children’s best interests in context of green growth and climate change

- Philippines 2016 Children’s Emergency Relief & Protection Act – specific care and protection of children affected by disasters
Question

Do you think that a child rights approach adds value to conventional measures of environmental protection?
terre des hommes
Hilfe für Kinder in Not