

“WE MUST BE THE CHANGE”

A Children’s Pact for the Future



#GenerationHope



Save the Children

This document is based on messages and demands shared by children supported to engage in advocacy and campaigning as part of Save the Children's Generation Hope Weeks of Action. In May and June 2024, over 1,230 children articulated their hopes for the future through activities held in 23 countries. All their messages were captured to write this Children's Pact for the Future. We want to thank all the children who shared their stories with us and who campaign daily for a better future. A special thanks to Rita from Nigeria, Nafiso from Somalia and Favour from Malawi who dedicated time to review this document and shared further insights. We are very grateful for their contributions.



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Design by Emily Sadler

Cover image: José, 36, Mayor of the municipality of Cunén, joins children from the Friendly Space of this municipality, dressing as heroes of the planet, during the Action Week.
© Save the Children Guatemala.

“Children are not just the future; we are the present. Our voices matter today, and we have the right to be heard in decisions that shape our world. We are the generation that will inherit this planet. We cannot wait for change to happen; we must be the change. I call on world leaders to listen to us, to take our concerns seriously, and to act now for a brighter future for all children.”

Nafiso, 16, Somalia

Children like Nafiso hope for a world where their rights are protected, where countries live in harmony, where everyone has enough to eat, and all children can learn. A future where our planet is protected from the effects of climate change.

But most of all, children just want to be children. They want to **“dance and play... and lead a normal life like any other child.”** (Jamal, 13, Somalia)

Analysis by Save the Children conducted in 2023 showed that unless the current rate of progress towards delivering the Sustainable Development Goals rapidly accelerates, we will have failed children.



If leaders don't urgently take meaningful action, by 2030:

316 million
children born between
now and 2029 will
not survive their fifth
birthday.

Malnutrition will
leave more than
one in five
babies stunted.

Two in five
children who start
school will not be
able to read by
age 10.



2.6 billion (four in five)
children will have experienced
at least one extreme climate
event including flooding,
drought and heatwaves.

67 million
girls who should be finishing
primary school will have
married as children.

But there's still time to change course.

Children are sounding the alarm. They want meaningful actions, not empty promises. Now is the time for action, as children have some of the best insights into what needs to be done.



“The children we see today are the ones to unlock tomorrow. To develop a healthy and fulfilled future, all stakeholders and government officials must work towards achieving the promises they made to children because a promise to a child goes a long way into that child's life and if not fulfilled could even cause emotional pain to that child.”

Rita, 16, Nigeria

THE WORLD CHILDREN WANT TO SEE IS...

...A world where children are heard and have access to decision-making spaces...

Children represent a third of the world's population, but their rights and voices are largely absent from the policies that shape their world. Children have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously. All the children we talked to want leaders to provide safe, meaningful and child-friendly spaces for them to speak freely, where their ideas are respected.

**"I have a vision of a world where every child's voice is heard and respected. I am small but my ideas are big. I want to make the world a better place".
(Bhumika, 16, Nepal)**



...A world where children are protected from violence...

Children are concerned about wars, and they think leaders are not doing enough to prevent conflicts from escalating. They are witnessing armed conflict, gender-based violence, and girls being forced to marry when they just want to see peace. But children still hold hope for a better future, where they can live in peace and harmony.

“I wish to have a future full of hope, peace and love and all people and Nations can help and support each other.”

(Celine, 13, Syrian living in Egypt)

“I hope for a future where children’s rights are respected, and where children’s rights are not being abused and violated.”

(Moses, 14, Kenya)

“I wish for a future where countries live in harmony and children’s rights are protected. I wish for a future where a child’s ability to have rights is not based on where they come from or if they have parents or guardians or not; government, community and parents should protect the rights all children.”

(Favour, 13, Malawi)

“We need a world without violence, as it is alarming that children have to live in a country at war and in a world at war. Children should live in safe spaces where they can grow up in a healthy way.”

(Aylú, 16, Venezuelan living in Colombia)



...A world where leaders address climate change and protect children from its impacts...

Climate change is a major concern for children across the world. It affects every aspect of their lives, seriously impacting their physical, emotional and mental health. Children have done the least to cause climate change but are hit the hardest, and they are often invisible in plans and policies at every level. Children are demanding action from world leaders to protect the environment and ensure a healthier and more sustainable future for all. They want the countries most responsible for climate change to pay their fair share to fix it.

“The climate crisis has left a scar and led to human crisis.”
(Rita, 16, Nigeria)

“Climate change represents the greatest challenge humanity has faced in the last three decades; the threat that global warming poses to human societies and ecosystems is growing. In this struggle which requires the involvement of all, we, children, have always been considered as fragile and incapable of participating in the sustainable development of our country. However, we are well aware of the major problems we face.”
(Child campaigners from St Louis, Senegal)

“In an ideal future, I envision a world where governments prioritize sustainability, renewable energy, and environmental protection for children and all.”
(Esmeralda, 17, Peru)



“Personally, I believe that the responsibility for climate change lies more with the developed countries, which have been responsible for the majority of CO₂ emissions up to now.”
(Child from Japan)

“The adults do not inherit the land from their ancestors, but they borrow it from the future. Which means we are the future. So, when you borrow something, you would always want to keep it safe so that you give it back to the owner in a very good condition. I would like to urge the adults or the world leaders to keep the world they inherited from us the children in a very good condition.”
(Naomi, 14, South Sudan)



...A world where leaders address inequalities...

Children are facing more extreme weather in an increasingly unequal world. Those children already facing hunger and conflict, poverty and discrimination are suffering most of all. The children we spoke to are deeply concerned about those more at risk of discrimination and inequality, including girls and children with disabilities. They are also concerned about some countries and regions having more power than others.

“For me it is very important that they take into account that there are communities that are more vulnerable than others because they have lived excluded lives, such as women, indigenous communities, the LGBTI community.”

(Genesis, 17, Colombia)

“I dream of a country where everyone has enough to eat, where there are jobs for everyone, and where children can go to school without any constraints. A country where no child is forced to live on the streets.”

(Cassandre*, 16, Haiti)

“I would like for the world to be more balanced, where all the regions had power on their own and no region is left behind. Where development is a priority in all countries, but the regions are able to keep their roots and customs. I would like for afro descendants, indigenous groups and migrants to have their rights respected. I would also like for the world to work under a global citizenship model, in which no matter where you are or where you're from, you get access to basic services and human rights.”

(Paula, 18, Colombia)

*indicates where names have been changed



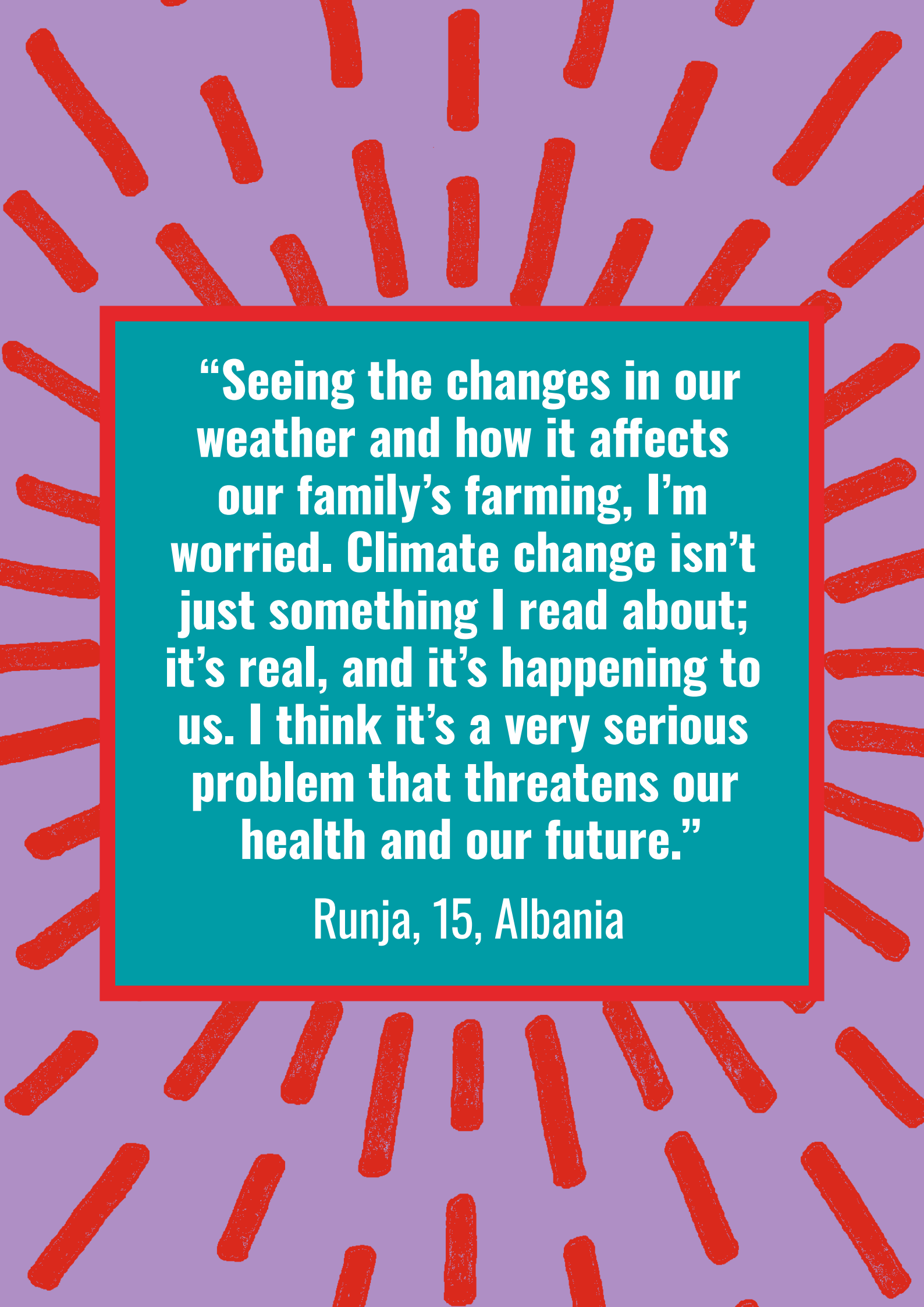
...A world where leaders invest in children and communities...

Children want their communities to be safe and healthy places where they can grow and flourish. They want their governments and decision-makers to invest in the systems and institutions that shape their worlds, from schools and playgrounds to hospitals and social protection systems.

“The country’s leaders must make a serious commitment to improving living conditions, working together to build more quality schools, hospitals and orphanages. Many children find themselves without parents and without help, and this is unacceptable.”
(Fabienne*, 14, Haiti)

“Imagine a world where every child can grow up safe, happy, and healthy. A world where education is a priority, and every child has access to quality learning opportunities. A world where the internet is a safe and powerful tool for learning and connection, not a source of fear and exploitation, A world where children can thrive, free from harm. This is a relatable picture painted in the mind of every young individual today and the future we want to see for the next generation.”
(Hamisu, 18, Nigeria)





“Seeing the changes in our weather and how it affects our family’s farming, I’m worried. Climate change isn’t just something I read about; it’s real, and it’s happening to us. I think it’s a very serious problem that threatens our health and our future.”

Runja, 15, Albania

THE CHILDREN'S PACT FOR THE FUTURE

At the Summit of the Future, governments will adopt a Pact for the Future, committing to actions under five themes* aimed to create a better world for all. Child rights are relevant to all these themes and children will live with the consequences of these actions, so their demands must be reflected.

*1. Sustainable development and financing for development 2. International peace and security 3. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation 4. Youth and future generations 5. Transforming global governance

**TO CREATE A GREENER, SAFER AND FAIRER WORLD,
CHILDREN CALL ON LEADERS TO:**

1. Give children a seat at the table

- > Recognise children as equal stakeholders by establishing child-friendly ways for children to engage at all levels of policy making –prioritising indigenous groups, children with disabilities, and children and adolescents who are most affected by inequality and discrimination.

“I want to tell leaders to not be afraid to invest in children, to have creativity - they need to empower children with knowledge and skills they need so they can serve well when they become adults.”

(Aminata, 17, Sierra Leone)

“I am asking [leaders] please provide space for me to speak freely and share all my ideas. When you listen to me, you are listening to all future generations.”

(Bhumika, 16, Nepal)



2. Invest in creating a greener, fairer planet for all children

- > Significantly scale up financial resources to invest in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for all children, including those most at risk of inequality, discrimination and the impacts of climate change.
- > Increase resources to address the climate crisis, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, with a focus on increased sustainability, renewable energy, and environmental protection ensuring that climate financing and actions are child- and gender-responsive.
- > Accelerate investment in financing for children's health, education, nutrition, protection and social safety nets to ensure that children, youth and future generations, especially those most impacted by inequality and discrimination, can flourish and realise their rights.

“We need government and its partners to invest in children both in and out of school, government must provide safety net in school.”

(Favour, 13, Malawi)



“We must stop consuming so many things. We must stop wasting and polluting. For example, we must eradicate fast fashion and focus on having things of better quality that can be reused and given another value.”

(Aylú, 16, Venezuelan living in Colombia)

“Considering a child's social, physical and emotional wellbeing is one key investment every government should prioritise towards ensuring quality education, good health care facilities and the security of children from every form of violence including food security.”

(Rita, 16, Nigeria)

“I'd like to see the country's leaders get together and work together. They should get organized to offer the population more hospitals, schools and jobs.”

(Melissa*, 13, Haiti)



3. Create a world where children are safe and their rights protected

- > Take steps to build peaceful and inclusive societies, uphold obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and increase efforts to de-escalate conflicts.
- > Guarantee the protection of children in armed conflict, making sure that they are considered in international peace and security conversations.

“If children are the future, then we must be left with the reason of surviving to become that future; when children are groomed in a peaceful society it breeds love and better shapes the future, all the government of the world should come together to promote peaceful co- existence and security of human rights.”
(Rita, 16, Nigeria)

“I want a world with peace, without violence or discrimination. We might not live in the same country, but we live in the same world. Humanity is key. We want to live in peace. The future is intimidating if we do not take action.”
(Hamisu, 18, Nigeria)

“I wish for a future where countries live in harmony and children’s rights are protected.”
(Favour, 13, Malawi)



4. Build a safe and equal digital world

- > Create a safe digital environment that protects children from the real risks of cyberbullying, abuse, trafficking, and exploitation.
- > Invest in safe online access to the estimated two-thirds of school-aged children who currently do not have access to the internet at home.
- > Prioritise the development of sustainable technology which has a positive impact on people and the planet, bridging rather than dividing groups affected by inequality and discrimination.

“Government must ensure that they invest in the access to technologies for children in communities as part of learning.”

(Favour, 13, Malawi)

“Specifically, they need to successfully respond to changes in political will, financing and allocation (technology, employment, equity) and consumer behavior. I would like to see concrete measures taken that are more in line with the position of children. I believe there is still much that can be done.”

(Child from Japan)



Save the Children stands by children and calls on Member States to step up and urgently act on these recommendations to create a world that delivers for children and future generations and fulfils their rights.



**“My message to our
leaders is that we
must act now to
save our world.”**

Zinhle, 12, Zimbabwe

Generation Hope is our global campaign for and with children calling for urgent action on the climate crisis and economic inequality to create a safe, healthy and happy future for children.

Find out more: <https://www.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/advocacy-campaigns/generation-fighting-action-climate-crisis>

