

Launching a New Guide:

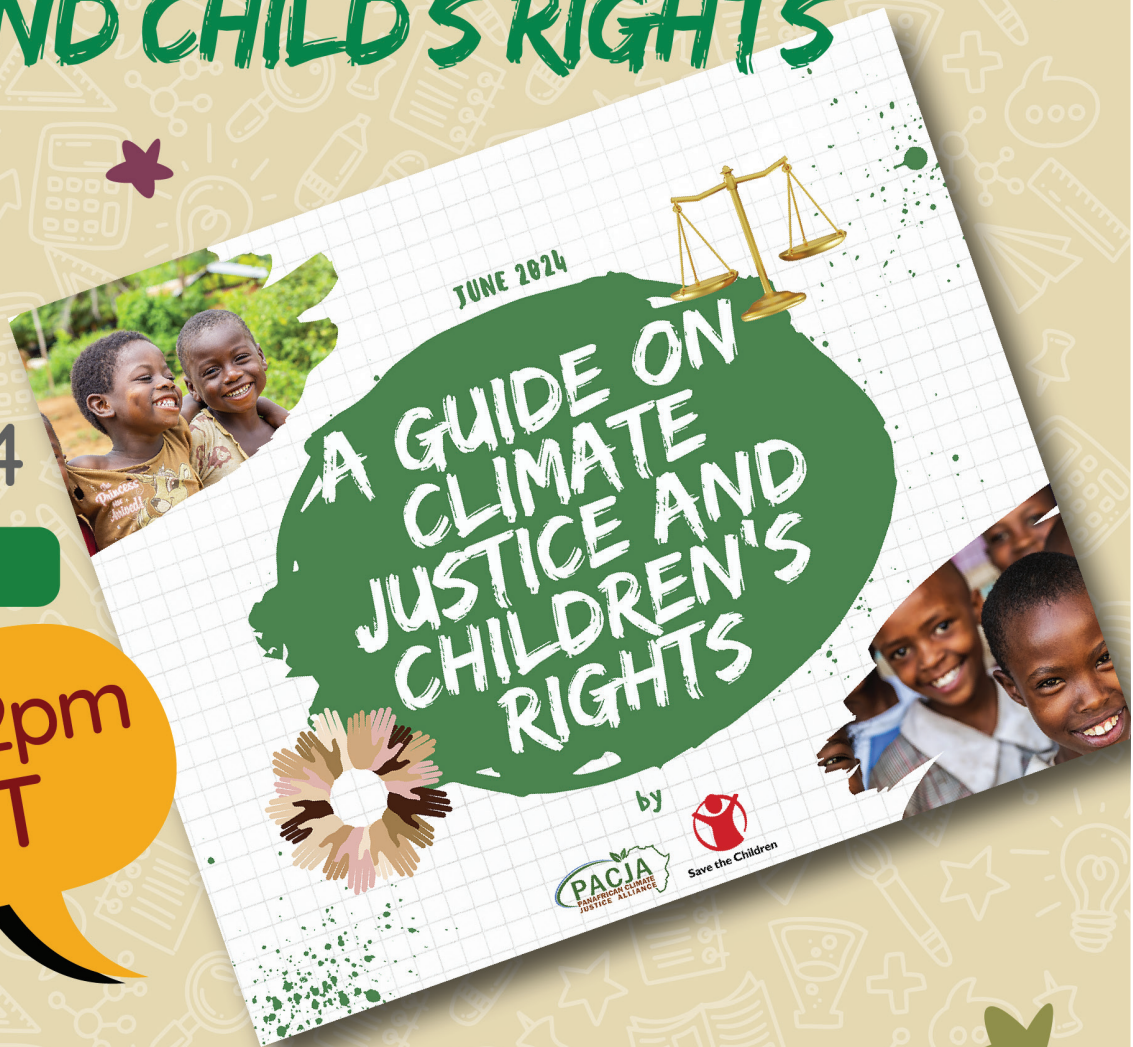
# EXPLORING THE NEXUS BETWEEN CLIMATE JUSTICE AND CHILD'S RIGHTS

23<sup>rd</sup>

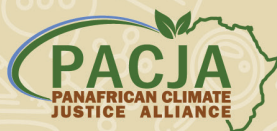
July 2024

VIRTUAL

10am-12pm  
EAT



## CONCEPT NOTE



# Background

The impacts of climate change and children rights are profound and far reaching although they are not well understood. Climate change significantly affects children's health, increasing their vulnerability to heatwaves as their bodies are less equipped to regulate temperature efficiently. In March 2024, heatwave and drought gripped several countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. In these regions, 45 million children are living through multiple and overlapping crises intensified by climate change, including cholera outbreaks, malnutrition, drought and floods.

Extreme drought and floods intensify water scarcity and pollution, compromising children's access to clean water and sanitation facilities, crucial for their health and well-being. Climate variability and extreme weather events disrupt agricultural systems, leading to crop failures and reduced food production. These disruptions result in food shortages and price hikes, making nutritious food inaccessible for many families. Malnutrition, particularly among children, becomes more prevalent in regions already grappling with poverty and food insecurity. Global hunger report of 2023 shows that 8 out of 9 countries with the most severe levels of hunger are situated in Africa, contributing to Sub-Saharan Africa holding the highest rates of undernourishment, stunting, and child mortality globally.

Education is disrupted by Climate-related disasters such as floods, cyclones and wildfires often damage schools and infrastructure, disrupting regular schooling and depriving children of educational opportunities. The recent floods in Kenya led to delay in opening of schools by two weeks. Early this year in South Sudan, the schools were closed for two weeks due to severe heat waves. Displacement sometimes leads to relocation of children to safer areas or face prolonged periods of instability, hindering their academic progress and future prospects as in case of cyclone Freddy in Malawi. More than a year later, many victims of the cyclone Freddy are still in camps and children have stopped schooling.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, by the end of 2022, climate shocks had displaced at least 1.85 million children within their countries in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>1</sup>. Climate induced environmental changes, such as sea-level rise and desertification, often force communities to migrate in search of safer living conditions and livelihood opportunities. Children are among the most vulnerable groups during displacement, facing increased risks of exploitation, abuse, and separation from their families. Migration also disrupts their education and social networks, further exacerbating their vulnerability.

A systematic review of 53 studies revealed that a 1°C temperature rise was associated with a 2.2% increase in mental health-related mortality.<sup>2</sup> Climate change can evoke a range of negative emotions

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1 [Reliefweb.int/report/world/number-children-displaced-across-sub-saharan-africa-climate-shocks-doubled-record-high-2022#:~:text=Based%20on%20analysis%20of%20data,by%20similar%20crises%20in%202021.](https://reliefweb.int/report/world/number-children-displaced-across-sub-saharan-africa-climate-shocks-doubled-record-high-2022#:~:text=Based%20on%20analysis%20of%20data,by%20similar%20crises%20in%202021.)

2 Liu J, Varghese BM, Hansen A, Xiang J, Zhang Y, Dear K, et al(2021). Is there an association between hot weather and poor mental health outcomes? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Environ Int.* 2021.

in young people, including fear, worry, anger, hopelessness and overwhelm<sup>3</sup>. Exposure to extreme climate events can lead to delayed mental health disorders like PTSD, anxiety, and depression, with vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing mental conditions being particularly affected. Witnessing the loss of homes, livelihoods, and loved ones, as well as experiencing displacement and uncertainty about the future, can have long-lasting effects on children's mental health and well-being.

Children from marginalized communities bear the brunt of climate change impacts due to systemic inequalities in access to resources, healthcare, and protective measures. Indigenous populations, for example, often inhabit regions disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and face additional challenges in accessing support and resources to mitigate these impacts.

## Rationale for developing the guide

Children, especially from the most vulnerable and marginalized backgrounds, are more exposed to and disproportionately impacted by all kinds of environmental harm than any other group, despite being the least responsible for it. Almost every child on earth is exposed to at least one form of climate and environmental hazard, shock or stress, affecting their ability to realize the rights guaranteed to them. The climate crisis and biodiversity loss are threats that will transform childhood and jeopardize a sustainable future for children and future generations in Africa and globally.

Children are not only physiologically and emotionally more vulnerable to these risks due to their unique stage of development – they are also among the least empowered to exercise their most fundamental rights to information, to be heard in decision-making on environmental issues, and to seek justice for violations of their rights.

A report by UNICEF shows that children in 98 per cent of African countries are at high or extremely high risk of the impacts of climate change<sup>4</sup>. As the relentless climate change intensifies, rendering our planet inhospitable and especially for young children, their voices and organizations that safeguard their fundamental human rights remain marginalized, relegated to the fringes of decision-making forums. Children are not recognized as a right order in climate discussions yet they are the most affected. Children's rights are just promises. There must be a way for those rights to be enforced. Climate justice is important in ensuring the rights of children are protected. Climate justice recognizes the rights and needs of the climate vulnerable poor and advocates for equitable distribution of resources, acknowledging that those who have contributed least to greenhouse gas emissions will be most affected by climate change.

The Pan Africa Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) has developed a guide on climate justice and child rights to serve as a crucial tool for safeguarding children's rights and well-being amidst the

3 Godden NJ, Farrant BM, Yallup Farrant J, Heyink E, Carot Collins E, Burgemeister B, et al. Climate change, activism, and supporting the mental health of children and young people: Perspectives from Western Australia. *J Pediatric Child Health*. 2021;57(11):1759–64.

4 <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/children-98-cent-african-countries-high-or-extremely-high-risk-impacts-climate>

challenges of climate change. A mixed methods approach was utilized in its development. Through purposive sampling, key stakeholders including children, academics, policymakers, and technocrats were identified to provide insights into the discourse surrounding climate change and child rights. Key informant interviews, utilizing a semi-structured tool with open-ended questions, were conducted to gather data on the normative and policy frameworks pertaining to climate justice and children's rights in Africa, engaging experts on the subject matter. A comprehensive review of available literature, policies, and laws supplemented the primary data collected. The qualitative data obtained from various stakeholders served as foundational information for the guide's development.

This guide serves as a point of reference on matters concerning child rights and climate justice for States Parties, UN agencies, AU organs and departments, climate activists, the private sector, NGOs, CSOs and child-led organisations. It empowers organizations, policymakers, and individuals to hold the government accountable in developing and implementing policies that protect children's rights amidst climate challenges. It provides valuable insights into children's vulnerabilities to climate impacts and offers recommendations for integrating child rights considerations into climate policies, adaptation plans, and disaster risk reduction strategies. It fosters awareness and action on the intersection of climate justice and child rights.

## Objectives of the launch

- ▶ To popularize the guide and ensure that its accessible to people from diverse backgrounds and communities.
- ▶ To equip children's rights organizations and other stakeholders with a comprehensive knowledge on climate justice and child rights, for enhanced awareness and advocacy
- ▶ To increase awareness among stakeholders and policy makers to prioritize children's rights in climate change policies, strategies, and actions, ensuring that their specific vulnerabilities and needs are adequately addressed

## Outcomes

- ▶ Increase accessibility and widespread adoption of the guide among diverse communities
- ▶ Empowered children's rights organizations with a deep comprehension of climate justice and child rights.
- ▶ Enhanced awareness among stakeholders and policymakers, advocating for the prioritization of children's rights in climate change policies, strategies, and actions, and ensure their unique vulnerabilities and needs receive adequate consideration and effective mitigation measures are implemented.
- ▶ Provide recommendations and strategies for defending and advancing children's rights in the face of climate-related difficulties

# Methodology

This is a virtual dialogue that will feature Expert -led panel discussion, presentation on the children’s guide and interactive session.

# Participants

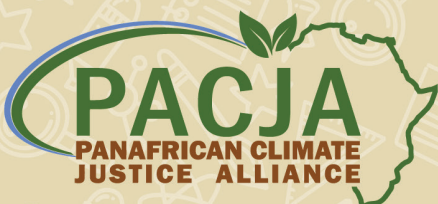
The participants will be drawn from child rights organizations, civil society organizations, Government, Africa Union, Academia, climate advocates, climate scientists and campaigners.

# Agenda

TIME	SESSION AND SPEAKERS	MODERATOR
10:00 am-11:20 am	<p><b>OPENING SESSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Dr Mithika Mwenda, Executive Director PACJA</li><li>▶ Solomon Gezahegne, East and Southern Africa Child Rights Governance Manager, Save the Children International</li><li>▶ Catherine Wanjiru Maina, Chair, AU Committee of Experts on the Right and Welfare of Children (ACERWC)</li><li>▶ Pacifica Ogola, Director, Climate change, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya</li></ul> <p><b>PARTNERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Alice Anukur, Country Director ChildFund, Kenya</li><li>▶ Priscilla Gathiga, National Executive Officer, Kenya Girl Guides Association</li><li>▶ Benedict Omillo, Executive Director, Eastern Africa Child Rights Network</li></ul>	Jessica Mwanzia, Climate finance lead PACJA
11:20 am-12:00 pm	<p><b>Presentation on Children’s guide</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Dr Robert Doya Nanima- Senior Lecturer of Criminal Justice, University of the Western Cape. A member of ACERWC and Special Rapporteur for Children affected by Armed Conflict.</li></ul> <p><b>Plenary questions and answers</b></p>	

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Save the  
Children

