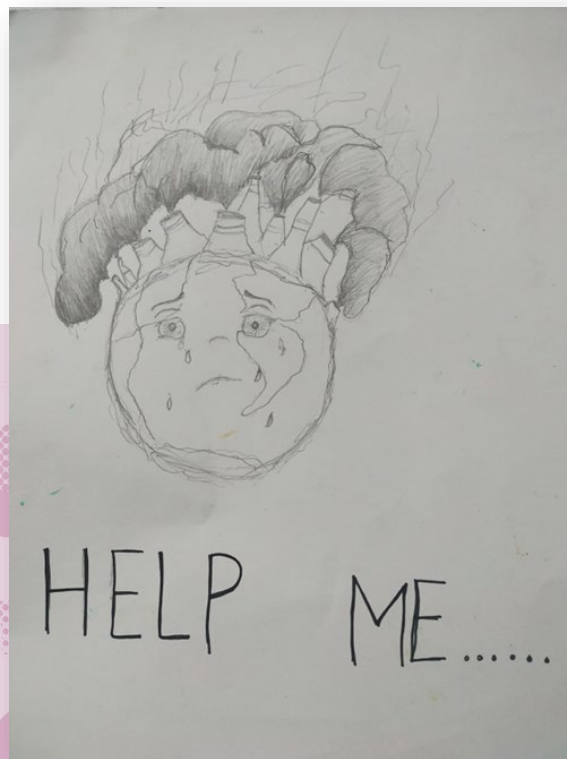


UN Committee on the Rights of Child General Comment No. 26: Second Consultation Results

Children and youth views on the first draft of guidelines for governments to protect children's environmental rights collated by Barnfonden, Sweden, from local partner consultations in Ethiopia, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Bolivia.



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With thanks to our local partner facilitators
and the children and youth who participated in this consultation process:

Estrella Del Sur, Bolivia
ChildFund Ethiopia and DFCDO, Ethiopia
ChildFund Cambodia (Battambang office) and KHEN, Cambodia
ChildFund Indonesia and YKKS, Indonesia

Introduction

The UN Committee on the Rights of Child held an open call for children and young people worldwide to provide their views on the first and second drafts of guidelines for governments to protect children's environmental rights, called General Comment No. 26. These consultations were held between December 2021-2023. The first draft was based on the contributions of 7,416 children from 103 countries and hundreds in the global community, gathered from the first set of consultations hosted by the Committee¹. The second draft aimed to provide revisions on the first draft to ensure final versions reflected the voices of children and youth.

The process led by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child with the support of The CERI Coalition (Children's Environment Rights Initiative) along with Terre Des Hommes and Child Rights Connect provided a platform for children and youth around the world to participate in consultations either via online consultations, a thematic workshop or a regional/local workshop.

Barnfonden (ChildFund Sweden) invited partners who work on climate change and environmental hazards/risks affecting children and youth in their communities to conduct workshops with children and young people so that they could participate in the second consultation. The platforms' toolkit with information and tips on how to host a workshop for children was utilized and adapted to the specific contexts of the areas where workshops were held.

¹ [Children and Young People's Second Consultation | General Comment No. 26 on Children's Rights and the Environment \(childrightsenvironment.org\)](https://www.childrightsenvironment.org/)

What is GC26?

General Comment No 26 aims to guide authorities on how children’s rights are impacted by the climate and environment crisis and what governments must do to uphold these rights. General Comments provided by UNCRC describe how children’s rights are impacted due to particular/specific issues and provide clear guidelines for duty bearers outlining what they must do to uphold child rights.

GC 26 – the comment on child rights, the environment, and climate change – will be the document used to inform and hold duty bearers accountable. It can help guide actions to advocate for the change required to uphold children’s rights related to climate and the environment and how these issues influence them. The final version of the General Comment will launch in 2023 after final consultations.



Background

| Partner facilitating workshop | Area of workshop | Demographics of participants |
|---|--|---|
| Estrella Del Sur; facilitated by Omar Mendieta and Franz Veizaga | San Miguel neighborhood, Oruro city, Bolivia | 28 girls and boys between 10 to 18 from remote neighborhoods in Oruro’s township. (18 F, 10M) |
| ChildFund Battambang office and KHEN volunteers and staff support. Facilitated by Kosal Prak (CFC). Supported by Socheat Keo (CFC) Keeva Duffey (BAF), Sina Nhen, Heam Roth, (KHEN Staff), Phai Deoun, Pheaktra Sang, Chamreoun Sok, Sophy Vinh, Sophan Chann (KHEN youth volunteers) | Sre Ponlok Primary school- Samlout district- Battambang province, Cambodia | 15 boys and girls (7 CWD) rural school-going children ages 7 to 17. (4F, 9M) |

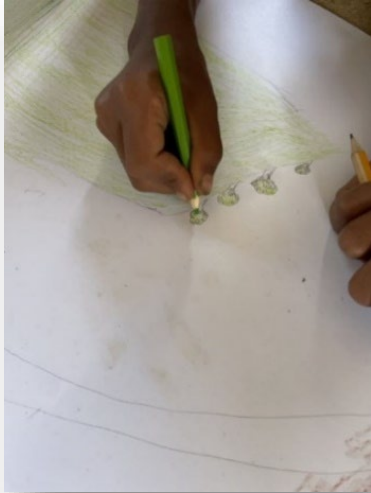
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|---|--|--|
| ChildFund Ethiopia office and DCFCO (Dugda Children's and Family Charitable Organization); facilitated by Tigist Tarekegn and Lidiya Gizaw (CFE) and Sete Shallo and Bethlehem (DCFCO) supported by Kasim (DCFCO) | Oromia Regional state, East Shewa Zone, Dugeda district Meke town, Ethiopia | 22 children and youth; 11 11-14-year-olds (5 F, 6M) semi-urban and 11 13-20-year-olds (5 F, 6M) (2CWD) (10 F, 12M) |
| ChildFund Indonesia and YKKS; facilitated by Dimas Pandia (ChildFund Indonesia), Prasasti Nugrahaning Gusti, (YKKS) | Semarang Regency and Semarang City, Central Java/Indonesia and Sikka District, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia | 26 children/youth between ages 16 -20 years old from student groups in senior high school. Over half are from rural areas, while the other half are from urban areas. (18 F, 12M). |

Results

A total of 91 children and youth (50F, 41M) participated in the GC 26 consultants facilitated through Barnfonden partners in four countries (n=28 (Bolivia), n=15 (Cambodia), n=22 (Ethiopia), n=26 (Indonesia)) between December 2022 and January 2023. The majority of participants came from rural or semi-rural areas, with 8 children with disabilities included in workshops in two out of the four countries. The following results are divided into key questions of the General Comment No. 26 toolkit and the country-specific quotes and summary results for each section.



What is being done or not being done by adults (government) to protect the environment/slow down climate change?



From Cambodia: We are told to keep the area clean from trash, but the reality is there are areas near the school that are full of trash and not safe for us to play near. We know of many dangerous areas in the community that are not safe when it rains a lot because adults do not protect the area.

“You should be charged 500 R (10 cents) if you throw trash on the ground.” – 11-year-old girl from Cambodia.

From Bolivia: The government has identified environmental problems in our community such as mining activity, forest fires due to deforestation, inadequate waste management, and population growth.

“Climate change is impacting us, and we are not responding with impactful activities.” – 16-year-old boy from Bolivia

○ “Maybe the government is not caring about the environment as it should, since the environmental actions are not well known by the population. They look more like symbolic actions [related to] reunions or commemorations of important days such as the mother’s, land’s, tree’s that do not represent an impact for the community.” – From Bolivian youth participants

○ “Caring for Mother Earth seems more like an empty speech without any actions, it seems that it does not exist.... We only contemplate the ‘Do not litter’ or ‘Avoid creating fires’ signs.” – Bolivian youth participants

From Indonesia:

- “The Government (Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia) has planted Waru trees along the north coast of Maumere and has built a wave barrier (*Turab*) on the north coast of Maumere” – From a 17-year-old boy, Indonesia
- “The Government (Semarang, Central Java) need to improve their mitigation action for controlling coastal flooding including drainage systems and coastal-land reclamations.” – From two 18-year-old girls, Indonesia
- “Several attempts have been made for environmental improvement but only temporary (ceremonial and curative) and not for long term.” – From an 18-year-old boy, Indonesia

“In our area, we have a football court built for children, but we couldn’t play at mid-day, the sun is burning... I will say that it’s a lesson for adults before they build in the area. They must consult us and get our views how we want things to be.” – 12-year-old from Ethiopia

From Ethiopia: Family, children, community, Ethiopia government, and world leaders are responsible. Families are responsible to teach children and attend different awareness programs. Children are responsible to clean the home and school environment; to be a member of the environmental club, and to teach others, while Governments design laws to protect children and youth and the environment.

Adults/government doing well:

- Participate in tree planting.
- Planting trees in a different place
- Kebele staff organize workshops once a year
- Construct dams
- Mobilize the community for tree planting.

“We have a lot of complaints, but we will fix it!” – 17-year-old boy from Ethiopia

Adults/ government not doing well:

- Provide information to the community, especially to children
- Not protecting trees and planting by mass with no follow-up
- Giving land to rich people for forest areas for investment
- Hire people for cleaners but do not have enough garbage so they burn it
- Absence of optional power and they buy and sell charcoal
- Rivers are not protected and most people throw their garbage near the river

“Look outside, our land is dry and trees are not green, and we must wait for the rainy season to see the green plants. Planting trees is not enough. We have to nurture and look after the plants to escape the warmer season.” – 11-year-old boy from Ethiopia

What should be done by adults to protect the environment?

From Cambodia: There should be more support at the local level on knowledge and solutions to help keep the community clean and safe. Governments should create a committee that focuses on protecting the environment for children. All people, regardless of who they are (kids too), should be fined when they do not respect the rights of children and their right to a clean and safe environment.

“Don’t cut down trees.” – 12-year-old girl from Cambodia.

- “If we see people don’t respect their responsibilities, we should go to the police and report this.” – Cambodian children from the workshop.
- “It is good to live by example. We should tell these people they shouldn’t do that, and then we should do what we think we should do to protect the environment.” – Cambodian children from the workshop

From Bolivia: The government and any institution, whether a manufacturing or educational company, should think about their environmental responsibility before any other activities’ development, from using eco-friendly materials to allocating financial and/or human resources for direct actions such as supporting environmental initiatives. In case the activities have to do with educational constructions (schools), and recreational spaces (courts, parks, etc.) an environmental diagnosis should be done where the construction is planned to go, CTY (children, teenagers, and youth) should be prevented from being prone to contamination. We strongly believe that the government should not be creating any more sports zones, and instead, they should be putting more interest in finding a way to establish the maintenance of the existing ones so these could be eco-friendly and contamination-free zones.

- “If institutions do not assume their responsibility, it is imminent to introduce Economic fines for environmental irresponsibility according to the damage degree of what has been done. This amount of money must be for the repair of the damage caused.” – Bolivian youth participants
- “There should be environmental actions sanctioned, from planting trees to green areas care, that are of direct benefit to the affected community.” – Bolivian youth participants
- “Governments and businesses should learn proper waste management (collection, treatment, reuse, and disposal).” – Bolivian youth participants
- “Governments and businesses should make an environmental diagnosis before the development and execution of any plan, especially if the project involves contact with CTY (children, teenagers, youth) to measure the environmental impact and integral health.” – Bolivian youth participants
- “Governments and businesses must have alternative strategies if their actions are impacting the environment.” – Bolivian youth participants

From Indonesia:

“Business actors and the government must make (legal) agreements by the law and impose sanctions on violators. If there are no regulations in the law, you can use local customary law to solve problems [as a form of responsibility].” –18-year-old males, Indonesia

“Government should penalise the private sector that contributes to the highest pollutant and carbon emission.” – 18-year-old male, Indonesia

“The government must provide supervisors from several fields of government (multi-sectors) so that fraud does not occur [in industrial activities].” – 17-year-old girl, Indonesia.

“[The government] should conduct periodic evaluations to protect the environment.” 16-year-old boy, Indonesia

“Government should take action on the environment and climate change” – 18-year-old female in Indonesia.

- “The industry sector must cooperate with environmental engineering experts in efforts to manage waste [from industrial products].” – 17-year-old girl, Indonesia.
- “Supervision from the government on industrial parties and entrepreneurs (in industrial activities)” – 16-year-old girl, Indonesia
- “Entrepreneurs (industry sector) when planning [industrial activities] must pay attention to the location (environmental conditions) first” – 18-year-old girl, Indonesia
- “Before the construction (of industrial factories) the entrepreneur must first research the [environmental] impacts after production starts, make plans and agreements with the government if in the future there are problems with land and the environment.” – 18-year-old male, Indonesia



“Children in our community feel that it is adults’ duty and responsibility...[to protect children and youth].” – 16-year-old girl from Ethiopia

From Ethiopia: We all are aware in the community about teaching prevention and if this is disrespected there needs to be a strong law such as punishment and prison. The community and private sector should first have the knowledge and understand the relationship between children’s rights and climate change, because adults think climate change is not a matter concerning children. A boy (14-years-old) mentioned how important it is to create awareness among the community about children’s rights and climate change, to make it easier for children to understand their rights on environmental protection and to participate in the issues. “As we are a part of the community, climate change is also affecting us children like adults.” – 12-year-old girl. Children felt adults should be fined if using environmental protection laws in the country. It is important to replace the damage caused – for instance, factories may build in large areas and cut trees, which causes deforestation of the area. Then the owners must replant trees in the area and manage their wastes appropriately. “In our area, a highway was built recently, and they planted trees alongside the road but that is not even enough. They should plant more trees because the area was a farming plot and grazing land.”

“Cutting a tree means hurting a person- so the punishment needs to be.... seriously taken like if you were to actually hurt a person.....” 15-year-old boy from Ethiopia

What are the challenges for children when it comes to finding information about the environment and climate change and what are the best ways for children to find information?

From Cambodia: There is limited access to information in Khmer, and no one in our community owns a TV or accesses the internet so what we learn is what is taught at school or what the community knows. The best way for children in our community is to go to the village chief and local community forums. Here, we learn many things. Also, the local NGO Khen and its volunteers sometimes come to our home or school and we learn from them. Teachers and schools are the best places for us to learn. We tell our parents what we learn in school and they listen to us about not cutting trees. We also like to learn through poems, videos, and art – we like to draw and talk about these things together.

“We want to know.... what children in Sweden are learning about the environment and climate change.” – 10-year-old boy from Cambodia

“Use social networks, pictures, videos (Tik Tok) challenges, infographics, memes, and other things that can generate interest in young populations.” – Bolivian youth participants

From Bolivia: Environmental topics are not new, but lately, they are creating big expectations around us. Access to proper information for children and youth is a challenge. Parents do not talk with their children about caring for the environment. Educational systems do not carry out activities with an impact on the environment and its care for mother earth. Environmental care issues are not integrated into the educational curriculum and social awareness is not being generated with children and youth as there are no activities beyond small ads in the media or NGOs and government campaigns.

From Indonesia: All the information provided is more from an academic perspective, and does not consider children’s perspective.

- Hoax information is circulating on the internet so that it is easy for young people [to be influenced] to believe without confirming (rechecking information).” – 17-year-old girl, Indonesia
- “Young people lack curiosity [about environmental issues] and there is lack of awareness on the part of information providers (media) who disseminate information that is not of good quality and is not related to the environment (environmental issues are rarely discussed by the media).” 18-year-old male, Indonesia
- “(children and young people) are not given enough knowledge about the environment (contents) from school (and/or teachers).” – 17-year-old girl, Indonesia

The best ways to change limited or misinformation is through NGOs and through Government programs via schools and television, YouTube, children’s clubs and social media. There could be local competitions on the issues and a child-friendly report provided by NGOs. Information could also come through the school’s curriculum.

From Ethiopia: The youth and children in Ethiopia ranked themselves as having very little knowledge and felt they cannot explain more on the detailed issues, thus highlighting the challenge that these conversations are not being held with children and youth. In school, youth learn about climate change in an environmental science book and in three subjects; Geography, General Science and Civics, which teaches them about the environment, types of climate, and their rights. The children’s access to information about climate and environmental protection at school covers limited topics and is not about the current situation of climate change’s impact in the country and in the world.

The children explained that they only study the issue at school and rarely hear from the media, but they are aware of the impact and do their best in their local area, such as cleaning and planting trees. A girl, aged 13, said, “People living in rural areas are suffering from a shortage of rainfall and dry land which leads to drought and food shortages.”

The workshop then aimed to build some knowledge of the topic and help the children and youth explore where they could best get information. The way they like to get information is through school, media, peer education, and club leaders. At home social-media and TV are very rarely used. A 15-year-old boy said, “We children need examples to make the issues easily memorable and to know more. We prefer to learn new ideas, like about climate change, by example.”

“Dear Children’s Advisory Team. I am learning at the government primary school here in Dugda and we learn about environmental protection and climate in only two subjects. Rarely do I hear about the topics from people and media. I am aware of the impact of climate change, but I wish we could learn and explore more about climate change and environmental protection in those two subjects.” – Ethiopian youth participant



A figure of tree (problem tree with root causes described in the roots, and negative impacts on the leaves), made by Ethiopian youth participants.

The root cause: Water pollution through waste products around the river; cutting trees; community not aware about climate change so they contribute as a cause; plastic material; garbage waste near to home and school.

The impact: Shortage of food; lack of fresh air; lack of water; low family income; no harvest; displacement; children and family went for begging; displacement; high flu/COVID; flood; very cold and very hot; drought; school closures; sickness; health post service not accessible.

What should children learn in school about the environment and climate change?

From Cambodia: Find out how other children in other places in the world are learning about the environment and climate change. We want to know how to keep our village safe and protected.

From Bolivia: Children and youth should learn key concepts related to the environment and climate change.

- Herbal education according to the community (planting, care, and plants development)
- Waste management (the 7 Rs)
- Environment and waste management (startups could be based on these issues).
- Green house elaboration
- Development of environmental projects

Topics should not only be theoretical; they must have a key component describing practice so what is learned is meaningful. It also should include the socio-community component, including parents and community leaders.

From Indonesia:

Participants described what they want from a curriculum:

- “More practical activities such as in the *Merdeka* curriculum (national Indonesia curriculum) on the environment.” – 17-year-old girl and 18-year-old female
- “Environmental issues/themes are made as compulsory subjects (in school) instead of local content.” – 18-year-old female
- “Lessons about the environment and how to manage a good and healthy environment are included in school extracurriculars. Approach teachers who will teach and provide an understanding of the importance of (responding to) environmental problems.” – 18-year-old male
- “Utilize the student council (student organization) and teachers in schools to provide information about the environment issues.” – 16-year-old female

From Ethiopia: Children and youth participants listed various ways to best learn about climate change and their rights to a healthy environment. The following are examples.

- participatory
- short time – the longer period the less easy it is to follow
- teachers’/adults’ ability to appreciate
- telling jokes and creating humor
- simple language etc.
- pictures
- videos
- media programs and children’s shows
- competitions on climate change
- Up-to-date information on climate change
- Mitigation plans from other countries experiences
- Experience sharing to meet other children from other countries and share experiences.

“I am also glad that the Children’s Advisory Team sent us a message and let us know about the GC 26 document and we are looking for such kinds of experience in the future through our schools and any agencies that [facilitate the] participation of children to share their view and opinions”. – 12 year old girl from Ethiopia

“We children need examples to [make what we learn] easily memorable and we want to know more new ideas to [prevent and protect] against climate change... by learning by example.” – 15-year-old boy from Ethiopia

How can children share their views and ideas and be involved in reviewing government and business decisions that impact the environment?

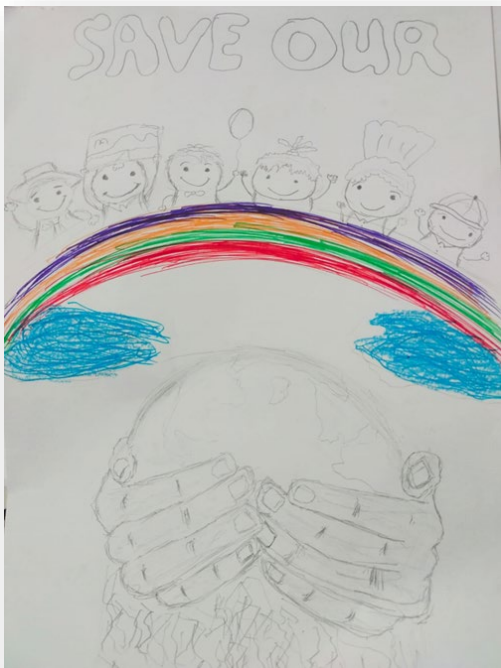
From Cambodia: Community forums, MJP (Maddox Jolie-Pitt foundation), Involvement in school, or with local forums, the village chief, and spaces where children can be involved.

From Bolivia: Children and youth can share their points of view – the hard part is that most of the time it is only looked at as symbolic (‘youth-washing’). Children and youth must seek to be part of (or generate) meeting spaces with the governments and companies that are making plans and decisions that impact the environment

and/or climate change, where they can share their points of view and ideas. Before that can be accomplished, they have to develop public speaking skills and knowledge about environmental projects, and social and environmental impact to ensure that their opinions are not only heard but considered. They can also engage through the signing of organic letters (petitions) and by feeding back on proposals that are circulated. A child and youth committee should be created that works on environmental subjects. This committee must be made up of various institutions and represented by leaders who must:

- Set up meetings based on a timeline.
- Develop training on environmental and climate change issues.
- Create youth environmental clubs at educational units.
- Establish meeting spaces with the government.
- Create an alliance with the Ministry of Environment and Water (and others).
- Plan and develop environmental summits to get to know the activities the government will carry out concerning the environment.

This committee can directly ally with other well-known youth organizations, such as High School Students Federations and Municipal Children's Committee.



From Indonesia: Children can share their views through posters and involvement in the promotion of climate change in their schools and community.

“Children and young people must be involved in organizations working on environmental issues so that they can convey aspirations (to the government and the community) and be involved in *Musrenbang* (development planning meetings) in districts and villages.” – 18-year-old male and 20-year-old female

“Government reports should be designed as child-friendly and user-friendly reports.” – 17-year old female

○ “Children and young people can set up a reporting system (if a case occurs).” – 17-year old female

○ “Children and young people can be involved in *Musrenbang* (development planning meetings) at the district level as well as in the village.” – 18-year old male and 20-year-old female

○ “Children and young people can monitor the company's accountability report.” – 17-year old female

From Ethiopia: Participants felt they would like to expand and contribute to change in the community, however, they all felt they needed more information to do this. They enjoyed the workshop session and would like more similar to it. Children are a part of the community and are affected by any change in the area. It is important to involve them in community conversations and planning. Children have unique ideas to contribute and want to be involved.

“We (children and youth) need to ask the adults/teachers and government: if you agree that children contribute to future generations, then teach us so we can practice with small guidance.” – Youth participants from Ethiopia

If we participate with governments and adults, we can achieve the following vision in 10 years:

- After 10 years we will see a green Africa and world so let's plant more trees, and teach the community environmental protection from home to home.
- 60% of the land will be covered by trees in the world.
- No one will use fuel for household cooking.
- More industry will use solar energy.
- No hunger; no thirst; no displacement; no unhealthy life.
- We need to breathe in the fresh air – it is easy...let's protect the environment.

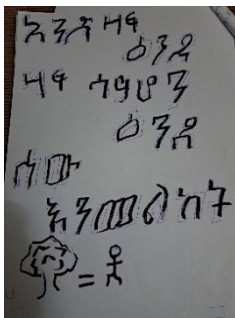
What should the governments do to keep the children safe and sound when they express their points of view, stand up for their rights, or when to act?

From Bolivia: Governments must generate adequate mechanisms so that children and youth can not only express their points of view but propose actions that can be executed with social feedback. Municipal and departmental governments must guarantee that human and financial resources will be in their respective planning for the activities' development where children and youth can have the opportunity to express their many topics' points of view, among them climate change and environmental care.

From Indonesia: “The right to express opinions is regulated in state law and protects a person from expressing his opinion, but sometimes the implementation of law enforcement is still not in favor of children and young people when conveying their aspirations.” – 18-year-old male

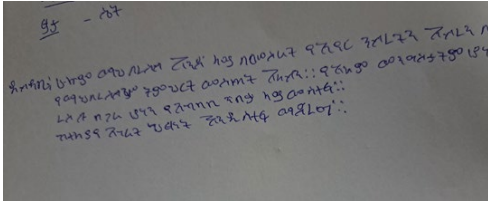
From Ethiopia: Messages were created to send to the government and the Children's Advisory Group.

- Let's train ourselves and the community how to collect material for reuse and recycle
- We need to come together not only to request, but instead to act.
- Impairment is not a challenge – I can teach our community!
- Action starts from home to country.

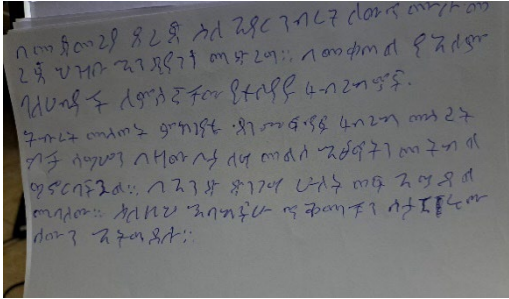


“The government with world leaders need to agree on one action/ one law for one common issue. Tree = human being”

– 17 year old boy from Ethiopia



“We need to see a result from a responsible body of government/adults for climate change action.” – 16-year-old girl from Ethiopia



“Dear Child Advisory Committee: Please tell governments to save children’s lives and rights, and stop cutting trees for industry construction. The country economy can be increased by industry but life is in danger – or please find a way to compensate.” Youth from Ethiopia

- “If everyone knows about the relationship between climate change and children’s rights, we are protected in any way.” – 14-year-old boy from Ethiopia
- “Don’t mess up this beautiful world – think about the future generation.” – 14-year-old boy from Ethiopia
- “What we kids want you [adults] to do for us is: Protect our green legacy; please properly manage waste... and hear us. Listen to our voices!” – 12-year-old girl from Ethiopia

Summary

Ninety-one children and youth (50F, 41M) from four countries gathered in workshops facilitated by Barnfonden partners in Cambodia, Bolivia, Ethiopia and Indonesia to provide input for the second round of GC No. 26 consultations between December 2022- January 2023. The workshop provided a space for children and youth to learn more about their rights and government and adults’ responsibility to uphold children’s rights as they will be impacted by the environmental crisis. This workshop provided children and youth an opportunity to offer their voice and feedback to General Comment No. 26, noting what they perceive as adults and governments responsibility. All children and youth felt it was important for adults and governments to listen to them and protect their future. They are asking for more information on the issue of climate and environment, and on their rights that is engaging for children and youth. They are asking for meaningful participation where their voices can be heard and taken seriously. They have noted their role in educating their peers and families, but want the tools to do this, presented in ways that make it easier for them and their community’s to understand – such as teaching using examples. Schools and children’s clubs are logical venues for teaching, as is social media, but it is clear not all have access to conventional media let alone social media. They want a more responsible media and an end to misinformation. They want to know what children are learning elsewhere in the world, and how others are responding. In brief, they want to engage on the issue of climate change and the environment not only as it affects their right to survival, protection, and development but also as spoken by a 14-year-old in Ethiopia, quoted above, they want a beautiful world fit for future generations.

