

Climate Change and Children

Christian Responsibility for Children

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live . . .
-- Deuteronomy 30:19

Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."
-- Matthew 19:13-14



Current Situation

- Children currently suffer from an increase in food scarcity, disease and lack of water in many of the world's developing nations and are living in poor conditions in much of the developing world.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), climate change is already causing 150,000 deaths a year, and these numbers will continue to rise as a result of the greenhouse gases we have already emitted. Children are one of the most vulnerable populations to changes in surrounding environment because their lives are dependent on the constant availability of food, water and a healthy environment.
- Climate change impacts will only continue to increase the risk to children's health. According to the WHO nearly ten million children under the age of five die every year, largely of malnutrition and easily preventable diseases, both of which are on the rise as a result of climate change, warming temperatures and changing agricultural cycles.

Why Are Kids At Greater Risk?



- Children interact with their environment and are more affected by changes in their surroundings than are adults. Children's bodies are still developing and are more vulnerable to changes including increases in pollution, warmer weather, and changes in food availability which are hard for children to adapt to.
- Also, compared to a grown adult, children eat more, drink more and breathe more for their body weight, exposing them to pollutants that may be present in the air, food or water. Climate change is a direct result of increased pollution in the air.
- Children in their developmental years require exceptional nutrition. While changes in the quality or quantity of food have little short term impact on adults, these changes can have devastating consequences for youth who depend on the right food for successful long term development. This is particularly true of those living in poverty who have limited access to food.

Primary Health Effects of Climate Change on Children

- As agricultural production is disrupted by changing climate and water shortages, major weather events, and soil depletion, food security will become a more prevalent issue leading to malnutrition particularly in children.
- Diarrheal diseases, currently a leading cause of child mortality, will increase with poor nutrition, poor water quality, and increasing poverty, all of which will become more prevalent in developing countries as many communities' subsistence lifestyles struggle from the increased droughts and floods brought on by a changing climate.



- Respiratory ailments, which have been increasing here in the US as a result of increased pollution and emissions, can be fatal, and certainly impact quality of life. Increased temperatures from climate change will only further magnify air pollution.
- Heat-related fatalities are a greater risk to children because children are more vulnerable to dehydration due to their smaller size
- Malaria currently kills two African children every minute. As temperatures climb, malaria-carrying mosquitos will move into new parts of the world where human populations are non-resistant, spreading malaria in parts of the world that hasn't experienced this disease in decades, if ever.
- Predicted sea level rise from will displace 64 million people in China and the Philippines alone. Children are often the most vulnerable because they are shorter and cannot move as quickly as their parents once water begins to rise
- Similarly, most weather disasters such as hurricanes, floods, droughts, heat waves, and dust storms, are a threat to children because of their small size and inability to cope with high water levels, strong winds and increased heat.
- Natural disasters will also cause children to be displaced from their homes and separated from their families.
- The current genocide in Darfur is partially attributed to famine caused by climate change and has had a horrifying impact on children as can be seen with the Lost Boys of the Sudan. This is likely to happen in other developing countries if we fail to address climate change in an effective manner.

What Concerned Christians Are Doing

There are numerous opportunities for individuals and churches to get involved in efforts to curb climate change, advocating for the needs of children, and increasing awareness about this moral issue.

- Check out your [ecological footprint](#) to determine how many emissions you are producing in your daily life with the knowledge that emissions have a negative impact on children, and that you can play a role in preventing further climate impacts.
- Learn more about climate change through faith-based resources available at: www.nccecojustice.org
- Sign the [Countdown to Copenhagen](#) postcard, calling on President Obama to attend the upcoming climate negotiations in Copenhagen and asking the US to engage in an effective manner in the any future international climate talks. An effective global agreement will ensure we are able to prevent the worst impacts of climate change.