



Submission of Young Lives, University of Oxford, on Gender and Climate In response to the mandate in Decision -/CP. 29, paragraph 15

Young Lives¹, University of Oxford, welcomes the opportunity to submit views on the format and scope of the technical workshop to be held at the 62nd session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, to facilitate the design of gender action plan activities, as well as on the progress, challenges, gaps and priorities and future work to be undertaken on gender and climate change.

Young Lives welcomes the decision taken at COP29 on the ten-year extension of the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and the development of a new Gender Action Plan in 2025. This submission highlights the importance of the new Gender Action Plan being informed by robust longitudinal data, and presents relevant findings of the Young Lives study which can support filling gaps in the existing gender plan on the distinct vulnerabilities of adolescent girls, the gender-related intergenerational impacts of climate change, women and girls' mental health, unpaid care, and the need to take a proactive approach to women's economic empowerment in the face of climate change. Young Lives recommends that these issues be included on the agenda of the technical workshop to be held at SBI62 in June 2025 and in the new Gender Action Plan.

Young Lives' unique longitudinal research over more than 20 years shows that climate shocks disproportionately impact women and girls, especially those from marginalised groups, with significant intergenerational impacts. Girls and young women shoulder additional burdens of care and household work in times of crisis, amplifying their risk of dropping out of school and early marriage, and affecting future employment prospects. Gender bias and structural inequalities also affect women's and girls' skills, job choices and earning expectations, which can put them at a disadvantage in accessing green jobs.

Developing a new Gender Action Plan is an opportunity to set ambitious goals and targets and encourage Parties and other stakeholders to implement effective gender-responsive climate policies and actions. This will help drive an inclusive and just transition that advances both women's economic empowerment and transformative climate action.

1. The new Gender Action Plan should be informed by robust longitudinal data

Longitudinal data is essential for understanding how climate change affects women and girls at every life stage, both in the short-term (e.g., nutrition, physical and mental health, access to school) and in terms of their long-term development and life chances (e.g., physical growth, cognitive skills, risk of early marriage, educational achievements, and future job opportunities).

Young Lives' unique longitudinal research provides nuanced insights into the long-term impacts of climate change on women's and girls' education, health, and economic opportunities, particularly in the most marginalised and rural communities. Our data spanning three generations reveal the intergenerational

¹ [Young Lives](#) is one of the largest and longest-running longitudinal mixed-methods studies of poverty and inequality ever conducted in the Global South. Since 2002, it has been following the lives of 12,000 individuals from infancy to adulthood in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. In 2024, Young Lives launched a new [Research Hub on Climate Change and Environmental Shocks](#)

impacts of climate shocks on young women and girls, as well as the role of targeted social protection in helping to shield vulnerable girls and young women and mitigate the effects on the next generation.

The following key Young Lives findings can help inform a Gender Action Plan that addresses the climate-related inequalities and risks faced by women and girls throughout the life course:

- **Childhood exposure to climate shocks such as droughts and floods has a [profound and unequal impact on children's development](#)**, affecting nutritional health, physical growth, cognitive skills and education - with children growing up in the poorest households being the most affected. When climate shocks intersect with gender inequality, **adolescent girls are particularly disadvantaged**.²
- **The impact of climate shocks can have significant, gender-related, long-term *intergenerational* effects on children's development**. [In India](#), Young Lives' data matched with historical rainfall data shows that droughts and flooding experienced by a **mother during pregnancy** negatively affect her child's vocabulary skills by age five. Longer term effects on basic maths and socio-emotional skills such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and agency manifest even into adolescence.³
- [Analysis](#) across all four Young Lives study countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) indicate that rainfall shocks and malnutrition experienced by **adolescent girls even prior to pregnancy** can have a negative impact on their future children's height, from infancy through to adolescence.⁴
- **Poorer households are less resilient to financial hardships when climate shocks hit, which can increase the risk of interrupted education, especially for girls**. [In Vietnam](#), reduced household income due to crop failures directly impacts the amount of time children spend in school. Families without access to affordable credit spend less money on their children's education during periods of stress and are more likely to withdraw children temporarily from school.⁵
- **Families typically revert to or reinforce traditional gender roles in times of stress, further increasing unpaid care work for women and girls**. Global crises such as COVID-19, climate change and conflict increase unpaid care work, with women and girls disproportionately affected. This unequal distribution of unpaid care responsibilities affects many areas of women and girls' lives, restricting their opportunities in education and paid work, as well as limiting their leisure time.⁶
- **Young Lives' latest findings, released in March 2025, confirm these gender inequalities**: by age 29, women are doing 5.3 hours more unpaid care work per day in Ethiopia, 5.3 hours more in India, and 4.5 hours more in Peru. In all three countries, women also do more work overall, including unpaid care work and paid work. Gender gaps in unpaid care work start as early as age 12.⁷
- **Adolescence is a critical period when inequalities in unpaid care work emerge**. Additional household work (e.g., walking further to collect clean water in times of flooding/drought) and **childcare responsibilities** often fall disproportionately on girls and young women, further reducing their time to

² Ford, K., and S. von Russdorf (2024) *Weathering the Storm: Climate Shocks Threaten Children's Skills and Learning But Social Protection Can Mitigate Impact*, Young Lives Policy Brief 61, Oxford: Young Lives. <https://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/weathering-storm-climate-shocks-threaten-childrens-skills-and-learning-social>

³ Chang, G., M. Favara and R. Novella (2022) 'The Origins of Cognitive Skills and Personality: The Effect of In-utero Climate Shocks on Adolescents and Young Adult Life Outcomes', *Economics & Human Biology* 44: 101089. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ehb.2021.101089>.

⁴ Georgiadis, A., L. Benny, L.T. Duc, S. Galab, P. Reddy and T. Woldehanna (2017) 'Growth Recovery and Faltering Through Early Adolescence in Low- and Middle-income Countries: Determinants and Implications for Cognitive Development', *Social Science & Medicine* 179: 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.socscimed.2017.02.031>

⁵ Nguyen, T.D. (2013) *Shocks, Borrowing Constraints and Schooling in Rural Vietnam*, Young Lives Working Paper 94, Oxford: Young Lives. <https://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/shocks-borrowing-constraints-and-schooling-rural-vietnam>

⁶ Ford, K., N. van der Gaag, F. Curtin and T. Tanima (2025) *Lightening the Load: New Evidence on the Impacts of Unpaid Care Work on Women and Girls*, Young Lives Policy Brief 62, Oxford: Young Lives (forthcoming)

⁷ Preliminary Findings from the 2023–24 Young Lives Survey (Round 7) on Work and Family Lives in [Ethiopia](#), [India](#) and [Peru](#).

study and increasing their [risk of dropping out of school](#) altogether, as was seen during the COVID pandemic.⁸ This can **heighten the risk of child marriage**.

- Gender bias and structural inequalities affect women’s and girls’ job choices and earning expectations, which could put them at a disadvantage in accessing green jobs.⁹ Evidence in Peru shows that **young women (particularly from poorer households) are less likely to enrol in universities with the highest graduate incomes**, and less likely to study subjects that lead to more highly paid jobs, especially engineering and other STEM subjects.¹⁰
- Gender disparities in important socio-emotional skills associated with empowerment, such as self-efficacy and agency, can begin to appear in adolescence. Across all four countries **young women at the age of 19 have significantly lower self-efficacy** than young men. This impacts young women’s confidence and could deter them from pursuing education and job opportunities.¹¹
- Young Lives research shows the compounding effects of climate change, COVID and conflict are [impacting young people’s mental health](#), triggering high levels of [anxiety and depression](#) among young people at a critical life stage when resilience to mental health issues is typically built.¹²
- In Ethiopia, the extended closure of schools and universities during the pandemic had an acute impact on **young women’s mental health and education**, particularly in poorest households, an important consideration in view of increasing incidents of **climate-related interruptions to learning**. Those out of school reported higher levels of mental stress and there has been a [long-term impact on education](#), with significantly fewer girls advancing to higher and tertiary education.^{13, 14}
- The **gender employment gap** increased significantly during the pandemic, with additional unpaid care work cited as the single most important factor in the slower economic recovery for women.¹⁵
- Young Lives latest data shows that 37% of 22-year-old women in India are **not in employment, education or training (NEET)**, compared to only 7% of men. In Ethiopia, 24% of 22-year-old women are NEET, and 9% of men, while 11% of 22-year-old women in Peru are NEET compared to just 1% of men. The most common reason given for not working is **domestic and childcare responsibilities**.¹⁶
- Importantly, the negative effects of exposure to climate shocks are not inevitable and can be mitigated. **Social protection schemes (such as cash transfers or food aid) can have huge benefits for disadvantaged children, including for their long-term growth and nutritional health**. Young Lives [ground-breaking evidence](#) shows – *for the first time* - that social protection programmes can reverse the negative effects of early poverty and climate shocks on foundational cognitive skills throughout

⁸ Favara, M., R. Freund, C. Porter, A. Sánchez and D. Scott (2022) ‘Young Lives Interrupted: Short-Term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Adolescents in Low- and Middle-Income Countries’, *The Journal of Development Studies* 58.6: 1063–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2022.2029421>

⁹ Curtin, F., N. van der Gaag, K. Ford and T. Tanima (2025) *Building Fairer Futures: Enabling Women’s Economic Empowerment in the face of Climate Change*, Young Lives Policy Brief 63, Oxford: Young Lives (forthcoming)

¹⁰ Sánchez, A., M. Favara, and C. Porter (2021) Stratification of Returns to Higher Education in Peru: The Role of Education Quality and Major Choices, Working Paper No. 180, Lima: Peruvian Economic Association. [WP-180a.pdf](#)

¹¹ Hossain, M., and M.C.H. Jukes (2024) Gender Differences in Socioemotional Skills among Adolescents and Young Adults in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 61(1), 21–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2024.2388100>

¹² Health, Nutrition and Well-Being: Preliminary Findings from the 2023–24 Young Lives Survey (Round 7): Ethiopia (2025) Oxford: Young Lives. <https://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/health-nutrition-and-well-being-preliminary-findings-2023-24-young-lives-survey-round>

¹³ Ford, K., R. Freund (2022) *Young Lives Under Pressure: Protecting and Promoting Young People’s Mental health at a Time of Global Crises*, Young Lives Policy Brief 55, Oxford: Young Lives. <https://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/young-lives-under-pressure-protecting-and-promoting-young-peoples-mental-health-time>

¹⁴ Education and Learning: Preliminary Findings from the 2023–24 Young Lives Survey (Round 7): Ethiopia (2025) Oxford: Young Lives. <https://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/education-and-learning-preliminary-findings-2023-24-young-lives-survey-round-7>

¹⁵ Scott, D., Freund, R., Favara, M., Porter, C., & Sanchez, A. (2021) Unpacking the Post-lockdown Employment Recovery of Young Women in the Global South. Discussion Paper Series, Bonn: IZA – Institute of Labour Economics. <https://docs.iza.org/dp14829.pdf>

¹⁶ Preliminary Findings from the 2023–24 Young Lives Survey (Round 7) on Work and Family Lives in [Ethiopia](#), [India](#) and [Peru](#).

childhood and adolescence.^{17, 18} **This can help to mitigate some of the unequal impacts on girls and young women** that leave them disadvantaged as they move into the labour market.

- In Ethiopia, Young Lives found that **the negative impact of droughts and floods** on children's long-term memory were mitigated for children benefitting from the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), even when experienced by their mother during pregnancy. Other research has also shown that women who benefit from social protection are more resilient to droughts and floods.¹⁹ This shows the importance of **social protection programmes that target vulnerable adolescent girls and young women during pregnancy**.

2. Recommended priorities for the Technical Workshop & Gender Action Plan

The COP29 decision to develop a new Gender Action Plan in 2025 is an opportunity to centre the voices and needs of women and girls at the heart of the just transition.

The transformative action needed to achieve a just transition offers huge opportunities to shift the dial on women's empowerment. But this will not happen automatically. Targeted action is needed to ensure the climate crisis does not continue, or even deepen, existing gender inequalities. Protecting women and girls, strengthening their resilience to climate change, and supporting women's economic empowerment requires a broad range of adaptation and mitigation measures, along with a holistic approach that integrates health, nutrition, education, paid and unpaid work, and provision of basic services.

Young Lives recommends that the Technical Workshop at SBI62 and the new Gender Action Plan address the following priority areas:

1. **Scaling-up gender-responsive social protection that addresses women's and girls' climate-related vulnerabilities**, particularly in disaster-prone regions, and with sustained support for acute nutritional deficits. Targeted social protection can support girls to stay in school, reduce early marriage and intimate partner violence, and increase women's access to decent jobs.
2. **Prioritising safety nets for adolescent girls and young women**, particularly for pregnant teenagers and young mothers vulnerable to climate shocks and nutritional deficits. This is crucial not only to safeguard their own health and well-being, but also for their children's long-term development to **break intergenerational cycles of poverty and inequality**.
3. **Recognising that climate change disproportionately threatens the health and well-being of women and girls**, and requires deliberate action to support maternal health, reproductive health, and the physical and mental health of adolescent girls, particularly during emergencies.
4. **Supporting girls and young women to stay in education**, especially through adolescence, and increasing their access to **higher education and vocational learning** to acquire the skills and confidence needed to access green jobs, particularly in STEM fields where women are underrepresented. Pre-emptive action to **make schools more climate resilient** to reduce extended closures that heighten the risk of school drop-out, worsening mental health, and early marriage.

¹⁷ Ford, K., S. von Ruedorf and L. Ahlborn (2023) *Unlocking Potential: How Social Protection Can Improve Disadvantaged Children's Foundational Cognitive Skills*, Young Lives Policy Brief 59, Oxford: Young Lives. <https://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/unlocking-potential-how-social-protection-can-improve-disadvantaged-childrens>

¹⁸ Freund, R., M. Favara, C. Porter and J. Behrman (2024) Social Protection and Foundational Cognitive Skills during Adolescence: Evidence from a Large Public Works Program, *The World Bank Economic Review*, Volume 38, Issue 2, May 2024, Pages 296–318, <https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhad035>

¹⁹ Hirvonen, K, Gilligan, D., Leight, J., Tabet, H., and Villa, V. (2023) Do ultra-poor graduation programs build resilience against droughts? Evidence from rural Ethiopia. IFPRI Discussion Paper 2206. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). <https://doi.org/10.2499/p15738coll2.137000>

5. **Improving women’s employment and entrepreneurship opportunities** in green industries, including **creating an enabling environment by** eliminating discrimination in the labour market and workforce and challenging gender stereotypes.
6. **Systematically integrating care into climate policies and action** – starting with the new Gender Action Plan – to support women’s economic empowerment while also recognising the vital importance and job creation potential of the care economy.
7. **Investing in public services and infrastructure to help women and men balance unpaid care responsibilities with paid employment.** This includes access to quality, affordable childcare and elderly care; providing affordable and accessible access to clean water and efficient cooking stoves; and the adoption of care-friendly employment policies. Responses to climate shocks and public health emergencies should also take into account impacts on unpaid care responsibilities. The [2024 ILO Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy](#) recognises the need to monitor the impact of climate change on care, including unpaid care.
8. **Ensuring that climate finance is gender-responsive.** As climate finance is scaled up to meet the New Collective Quantified Goal it is vital that both international funds and individual countries’ climate finance mechanisms prioritise gender equality and ensure impacted women can access funding.
9. **Meeting commitments to achieve gender parity** in national delegations at COPs and other decision-making fora. The **leadership, participation and lived experiences of women** should be amplified in climate negotiations, including regarding the Global Goal on Adaption, as well as in NDCs and NAPs.
10. **Enhancing gender disaggregated data collection** that recognises women’s diversity, and targeted research to examine how **poverty and undernutrition related to climate shocks** can impact children’s foundational cognitive skills and deepen gender inequalities. More research is also needed **to better understand the barriers to women’s employment in emerging green jobs**, especially in LMICs.

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