

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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UNICEF works to safeguard children and pregnant women from heat-related illnesses and emerging disease patterns by enhancing community preparedness and strengthening health, WASH, and education responses at national and local levels.

UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. Together with its partners, UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. UNICEF is uniquely placed to help nations develop healthy environments that enable children not only to survive, but also thrive.

Aligned with UNICEF's Global Programme Framework on climate change and Early Warnings for All initiative, UNICEF supports countries through technical assistance and advocacy to address extreme heat globally and locally.

Lead Heat Entities:

Healthy Environments for Healthy Children
(Under UNICEF's Programme Group)

Technical Focal Points:

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KEY FACTS

By 2050, approximately 2.2 billion children will face frequent heatwaves.

By 2050, nearly every child globally will face frequent heatwaves, up from 24% in 2020. Already, 559 million children experience high heatwave frequency, while 624 million face other severe heat risks, including prolonged heatwaves, extreme severity, or dangerously high temperatures.

The coldest year of the rest of their lives

Extreme heat is impacting learning outcomes.

Heatwaves harm children's school performance, by reducing school attendance and ability to learn due to limited cooling interventions. In addition, extreme heat increases safety risks and resource scarcity, driving displacement, migration, and conflict, exposing children to violence and mental health challenges, jeopardizing their future opportunities.

A threat to progress: Confronting the effects of climate change on child health and wellbeing

Children face unique vulnerabilities to heat stress from pregnancy to adolescence.

Extreme heat impacts child development from pregnancy onwards, causing complications like preterm and low-weight birth, congenital defects, and stillbirth. Infants and children are uniquely vulnerable due to their underdeveloped systems, higher heat production, poor sweat production, and low ability to self-regulate. Heat can also act synergistically with overlapping hazards such as air pollution to worsen health outcomes in children.

Protecting Children from Heat Stress: A technical note

Some regions have children experiencing significant increases in extreme heat.

Globally, children in West and Central Africa face the highest exposure to extremely hot days and the most significant increases over time. For instance, children in South Sudan are living through a yearly average of 165 extremely hot days this decade compared to 110 days in the 1960s.

Press Release: Almost half a billion children live in areas experiencing at least twice as many extremely hot days as their grandparents

Healthy Environments for Healthy Children: Global Programme Framework

UNICEF's Healthy Environments for Healthy Children Programme is aligned with UNICEF's [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(2023-2050\)](#). It supports country offices as they address [environmental pollution and climate change](#) through UNICEF's health programmes, complementary to the organization's WASH strategy, food system approach, and the organization's overall policy on climate change and the environment. The Programme focuses throughout on the impacts of extreme heat on children.

Core Partners: Country governments, public and private institutions

Early Warnings for All (EW4All)

UNICEF is a key partner in the United Nations' Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative to ensure that everyone on Earth has access to early warning systems by 2027. UNICEF's role is to support governments and communities to implement and adapt existing early warning systems to be child responsive. This includes promoting the implementation of heat-related early warning systems.

Core Partners: Partnership across the United Nations, International Agencies, and International Financing Institutions

Country-Level Technical Support and Advocacy Initiatives

UNICEF supports countries to address extreme heat internationally. Some snapshot examples include:

- [UNICEF Bangladesh Office](#) has supported the national government to establish a national technical advisory committee, conduct a country situation analysis on the heat stress, and launch a national guideline on addressing heat-related illnesses in health facility settings.
- UNICEF Belize Office has adapted and included the B.E.A.T the Heat Risk Communication Framework, presented in the global technical note [Protecting Children from Heat Stress](#), into their revised [National Training Manual](#) for community health workers. In partnership with the Ministry of Health and Welfare, UNICEF also developed training resources on how caregivers and pregnant mothers can protect themselves and their children from heat stress. In addition, the CO helped head 20,000 individuals through a sensitization campaign on protecting children from heat stress.
- Indonesia Office has developed a new training course on climate change and child health, which covers a range of climate-informed health issues including heat stress and the B.E.A.T the Heat Risk Communication Framework.

Core Partners: Country governments

★ Featured initiative

Children's Environmental Health Collaborative – Spotlight Risk Page on Extreme Heat

UNICEF's Children's Environmental Health Collaborative, co-founded in 2023 with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank, is an initiative with a mission to mobilize international action to protect child health and development from the impact of climate change and environmental degradation.

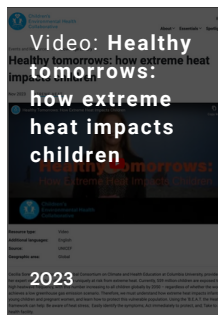
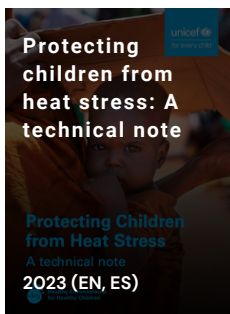
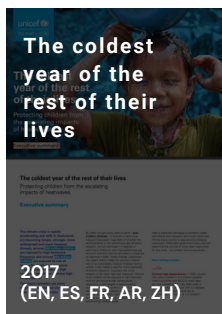
The Collaborative has a Spotlight Risk on Extreme Heat, providing guidelines and resources, including tips for caregivers, technical notes, and networks and coalitions.

The Collaborative hosts country-level [Children's Environmental Health profiles](#), which provide a holistic snapshot of the child-specific deaths and DALYs caused by a range of climate and environmental hazards, including extreme heat.

Core Partners: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Bank Group, [Partners of the Collaborative](#) (government, academic and non-governmental)



HEAT RESOURCES



Foundational documents governing institutional heat activities

Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (2023-2030)

The aim of this Action Plan is to, by 2030, ensure a world where every child thrives on a liveable planet by aligning development and humanitarian agendas to build climate and disaster resilience, expanding access to sustainable energy for health, education and WASH sectors, and accelerating progress on sustainable WASH services.

Protecting Children from Heat Stress (Technical Note)

This note aims to improve the understanding of the impacts, symptoms, prevention, diagnosis, care, and treatment of heat stress on pregnant women, infants, children and adolescents. The note proposes a B.E.A.T. the Heat risk communication framework for effectively protecting children's health.

National Guidelines on Heat-Related Illnesses

UNICEF in Bangladesh supported the Ministry of Health in developing guidelines for diagnosing, treating and discharging pregnant and pediatric populations experiencing heat-related illnesses.

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SUPPORTING THE SDGS, INCLUDING:



This heat action profile was developed by the [Global Heat Health Information Network](#) in partnership with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), as a contribution to the [United Nations Secretary-General's Call to Action on Extreme Heat](#) (2024). The content was validated by focal points from the profiled international organization / agency, and captures a snapshot of its heat work at the time of publication. The profile will be periodically updated.

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