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Headline: Children most vulnerable to climate change—Unicef

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Children will be among those most affected by climate change, according to a report released early this week by Unicef.

The report, titled “Children’s Vulnerabilities to Climate Change and Disaster Impacts in East Asia and the Pacific,” states that millions of children across the region are already suffering from lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation, and are vulnerable to food shocks and risks of disease. Climate change is expected to worsen this situation.

The leading killers of children worldwide are highly sensitive to climate change, the report says. Higher temperatures have been linked to increased rates of malnutrition, cholera, diarrhea and vector-borne diseases like dengue and malaria, while children’s underdeveloped immune systems put them at far greater risk of contracting these diseases and succumbing to complications.

The report presents an analysis of the climate change trends and potential impacts on children in East Asia and the Pacific, drawing on findings from five Unicef-commissioned country studies in Indonesia, Kiribati, Mongolia, the Philippines and Vanuatu, as well as children’s own perspectives on climate change and other research.

More than 2,000 journals

This research was supported by Reed Elsevier, which works in partnership with the global science and health communities to publish more than 2,000 journals, including The Lancet and New Scientist.

“The findings in this report remind us of the connection between climate change and the other challenges confronting children,” said Anupama Rao Singh, Unicef regional director for East Asia and the Pacific. “They also remind us that children’s experiences, and the risks they face in terms of their health, education and development, are unique.”

While the report suggests that the impacts of climate change vary from country to country, children in all countries were aware that changes in their environment were already present.

In the Philippines, children spoke of heavier rainy periods. The issue of climate change is none more critical in the archipelago as it is considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change.

Scientists have proven what the children noted: that the prolonged and warmer days of late experienced by their communities have spawned heavier rains and fiercer storms.

Filipino children are among the worst affected, being exposed to health risks, displacement, abuse and exploitation, and deprived of their schooling.

"It is a great concern that a vulnerable country such as the Philippines is also bearing the brunt of climate change," said Unicef Philippines representative Vanessa Tobin.

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"It is important that we reach out to the most disadvantaged children to ensure that they are able to cope with not only the changing environment but also the economic and social challenges that impede their full development," Tobin said.