

Unicef: 2.4 crore children
impacted every year

Climate and funds toll on Indian kids

JAYANTA BASU

Bonn: The climate lead of a United Nations agency working for children has pointed out in Bonn that kids across the world, particularly those living in climatically challenging situations in India and other parts of the subcontinent, have suffered significant losses because of climate change and urged countries to fund the sector.



A child wears a hat and shades to shield from a heatwave in Ranchi.

File picture

Gernot Laganda, the global technical director of climate and environment at Unicef, told **The Telegraph** on the sidelines of the ongoing global climate summit that the agency is working in tandem with state governments in India to help make 1 lakh schools heat-proof, trying to counter the impact of searing heat on school education.

According to Unicef studies, approximately 24 million (2.4 crore) children in India are impacted by climate change-linked emergencies such as floods, cyclones and heatwaves every year.

In climate parlance, loss and damage refer to the impacts of climate change that have already occurred or are occurring, covering both economic and non-economic losses.

Non-economic losses refer to the impacts of climate change that cannot be easily measured in monetary terms but have a huge toll, such as loss of life, ill health, biodiver-

sity depletion, and loss of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge.

"...We are now in an era of loss and damage, which makes it very real for the world's children. Loss and damage for Unicef is of great urgency. We have had more than 30 years of climate action, and we do not see the greenhouse gas emission curves bending, and we do not see sufficient investments," said Laganda. "It has impacts on education, on their health... basically impacts the ability of children to have a worry-free childhood, and having a future where they are not affected by disasters."

Matilde Angelteit, global climate policy lead of Save the Children, said kids born in 2020 were 6.8 times more exposed to extreme heat and suffered more loss and damage than their grandparents born in the 1960s or earlier. She said developed nations should fund this sector more.

Laganda emphasised that most of the loss and damage children face are not economically quantifiable, pointing out that climatic impacts, including extreme weather events, worsened the ill-effects of child labour, child marriage and mental health problems.

Laganda pointed out that India and a major part of South Asia are suffering long-term climate impacts and said building infrastructure needed to be done "with future loss and damage in mind (like)... in the health and education sectors".

On funding, Laganda acknowledged that loss and damage is generally "underfunded" and said the agency was helping several countries in drafting child-attested loss and damage proposals, which are being accepted by the UN for funding.

"This is a very difficult period for multilateral climate funds because the overall global landscape is contracting. There is a lot more investments in defence spending," he said.