



Impact of Heatwaves on Children: UNICEF

For Prelims: UNICEF, COP-27, Heatwaves, Climate Change, UNFCCC.

For Mains: Impact of Heatwaves on Children.

Why in News?

Recently, [UNICEF \(United Nations Children's Fund\)](#) released a report titled “**Coldest Year of the Rest of Their Lives - Protecting children from the escalating impacts of [heatwaves](#)**”, showing that nearly all the children across the world will be exposed to more frequent and severe heat waves by 2050.

- UNICEF is a special program of the [United Nations \(UN\)](#) devoted to aiding national efforts to improve the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children.

What are the Findings of the UNICEF Report?

- **Current Scenario:**
 - Around **559 million children are exposed to high heatwave** frequency and around 624 million children are exposed to **one of three other high heat measures** - High heatwave duration, High heatwave severity and Extreme high temperatures.
 - One in four children lives in areas where the average heatwave event **lasts 4.7 days or longer as of 2020.**
 - This percentage will **rise to over three in four children** under a low-emission scenario **by 2050.**
 - Children in southern, western and south-eastern Asia, eastern and southern Europe and northern Africa experience **heatwaves of longer duration.**
- **Future Impact:**
 - The number of children exposed to high heat waves **will quadruple to over two billion** by 2050 — up from 24% of children in 2020.
 - This amounts to an increase of about 1.5 billion children.
 - Virtually every **child** on earth will face severe heat waves even under a **low greenhouse gas emission scenario** — with an estimated 1.7°C of warming in 2050.
 - At 2.4 degrees of warming, 94% of children will be exposed with only **small areas of southern America, central Africa, Australasia and Asia not exposed to high heatwave duration.**
- **Higher Vulnerability of Children:**
 - Heat Waves with longer duration pose more risks for children as they spend more time outdoors than adults for — **sports and other activities — putting them at greater risk for heat injury.**
- **Impact on Health:**
 - High temperatures are linked to **increased [mental health](#) problems in children** and adolescents, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression.
 - Extreme heat will essentially affect children's education and future livelihoods.
 - Heatwave risks to health include — heat stroke, heat stress, allergy, **chronic [respiratory](#)**

[conditions](#), asthma, [mosquito-borne disease](#), [cardiovascular disease](#), [undernutrition](#) and diarrhoea.

▪ **Threatens Children's Safety:**

- Communities are forced to search for and compete over food and water resources as pastures and household income dry up. The **resulting migration, displacement and conflict expose children to serious physical harm** and violence risks.

Note:

- In July 2022, the UN-backed agencies issued [guidelines to provide the first-ever global policy framework to protect children displaced](#) due to climate change.
- It contains a set of **nine principles** that address the unique vulnerabilities of children who have been uprooted.
- The principles are based on the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and are informed by existing operational guidelines and frameworks.

What are the Recommendations?

- There is a need to ensure that the **vulnerable have the resources to adopt the critical social services** required to protect them.
- It is high time Countries must act now by:
 - **Protecting children** from climate devastation by **encouraging social services**
 - **Preparing children** to live in a climate-changed world
 - **Prioritising children** and youth in [climate finance](#) and resources
 - **Preventing a climate catastrophe** by reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- The 27th Conference of Parties (COP-27) to the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) must unlock progress on loss and damage, placing the resilience of children and their communities at the centre of discussions on action and support.

What are the Other Related Indices?

- [Children's Climate Risk Index: UNICEF:](#)
 - It **ranks countries** based on **children's exposure to climate and environmental shocks**, such as Cyclones and Heatwaves, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on their access to essential services.
- [Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative \(ND-GAIN\) Index:](#)
 - It has shown the **impact of climate change on children across the world.**
 - It explains that the children will be impacted by food shortages, diseases and other health threats, water scarcity, or be at risk from rising water levels – or a combination of these factors.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question

Q. With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, consider the following: (2010)

1. The Right to Development
2. The Right to Expression
3. The Right to Recreation

Which of the above is/are the Rights of the child?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

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