



Photo by Danilo O'Victoriano Jr.

Intensifying Need for Climate Adaptation

Climate change is here.

Current global warming projections indicate that we are fast approaching a “**three-degree world**”—double the temperature increase that the **IPCC Special Report on Climate** warned of in 2016. **With the threats of COVID-19**, climate change, and the debt crisis creating barriers for governments to provide basic services, it has never been more important to address the underlying causes of vulnerability, reduce risk, and build resilience to changing climates.

Climate change could compound the effects of COVID-19 on poverty, with the World Bank estimating that **132 million people** will slip back into extreme poverty by 2030 due to climate change. Left unaddressed, nearly **200 million people** could require international humanitarian assistance for extreme weather disasters by 2050, roughly double those in need today. In Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia alone, **143 million people** could be forced into climate change-induced migration by 2050.

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Indigenous **peoples**, low-income communities, coastal and small-island residents, **women**, and other vulnerable populations are **predicted** to experience the worst of climate impacts, forcing many to either adapt or move. No group will face the effects of climate change or environmental harm for longer than children. Yet, children are consistently overlooked in the design and content of climate policies and related processes.

The need for communities to adapt to these changes is very high—such as changes to protect their well-being due to intensifying flooding, heatwaves, decreased crop yields, and more. Without adaptation, climate change may depress growth in global agriculture yields up to **30% by 2050**, affecting more than **500 million small farms** globally. Already, climate change is **undermining** the food security of rural people around the world—a **recent report** from the Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network found that in 2020 the severity and magnitude of global food insecurity increased, with at least 155 million people in 55 countries and

territories in crisis or worse. Over 142 million people are expected to need urgent food security assistance in 2021. Additionally, the number of people who currently lack sufficient water for at least one month per year is projected to soar from **3.6 billion today to more than 5 billion by 2050**. At current greenhouse emission rates, **1.2 billion people** are expected to be living in intolerable heat in 30 years, with developing countries experiencing the worst of it.

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The 2020 UNEP Adaptation Gap Report estimated that climate adaptation needs would grow between \$140 and \$300 billion by 2030 and to \$500 billion by 2050. Yet, global investment in climate adaptation **fell in 2020**, and global financing to support climate adaptation and mitigation are not going to the communities most in need. For example, smallholder farmers and producers remain underserved by global climate finance, as only about **1.7%** of the money invested globally in climate finance reaches them.

2021 is a decisive year for climate action. In January 2021, U.S. President Biden catalyzed the reentry of the U.S. back into the Paris Agreement and issued a sweeping Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. These changes called on the entire Federal government to address the climate crisis. The U.S. hosted the Leaders' Summit on Climate, where President Biden announced **ambitious emission reduction targets** for the U.S. to achieve net-zero by 2050. There is hope that U.S. commitments can accelerate other countries' commitments at COP26. The U.S. must lead by prioritizing a just transition to clean energy, protecting human rights as greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, and implementing locally-led adaptation efforts.