

Independent Education Union of Australia Climate Policy

Ratified in 2022

OVERVIEW: The role of education in addressing climate change and supporting biodiversity

As a key stakeholder, the IEU acknowledges the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations in 2015, in particular *SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* and *SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*.

Education is integral to any strategy to foster resilience in future generations and support their advocacy for sustainability, biodiversity and climate justice. Teachers, education workers and school leaders must be properly resourced, trained and supported to prepare students to advocate for social and environmental justice, to innovate technological, environmental and social solutions to climate and biodiversity impacts, and to be equipped for life in a changing world.

The link between climate change and biodiversity has long been established. Although throughout Earth's history the climate has fluctuated and ecosystems have developed and evolved, human-accelerated climate change critically undermines the ability of ecosystems and species to adapt and massively increases biodiversity losses. Climate change driven increases to the intensity and frequency of fires, storms, floods and drought have a devastating impact on biodiversity. As the environment deteriorates, access to clean water, fresh air, green spaces, and shared resources are diminished. Threatened natural habitats play a vital role in regulating climate by absorbing and storing carbon.

Climate change will impact human wellbeing in all countries via:

- **Agriculture:** Including decreased livestock and crop production from heat stress, droughts and flooding and climate-induced pest and disease migration, due to 1.5°C-2°C warming, drought and aridity.
- **Food security and safety:** Greater risk of food shortages, and access to safe food due to air and sea temperature changes and increased contact between pest species and food. Increased malnutrition and resulting illnesses, with impact on child growth and development.
- **Coastal systems:** Including sea level rise, loss of coastline land, coastal flooding, extreme storms, water pollution, the destruction of human settlements and local resources (e.g., fisheries and biodiversity) and forced migration.
- **Water security and safety:** Reduced drinking water, and increased and more severe droughts, due to lower availability and quality of water, and increased spread of water-related diseases and water contamination.
- **Human settlements and infrastructure:** Human settlements and vital infrastructure are at risk from rising sea level, extreme weather events and desertification, which could result in forced migration.
- **Climate-induced disasters** (e.g., storms, floods, droughts, fires and heat waves): Injuries, deaths and damage to housing, livelihoods and settlements, population displacement, impact on food production, malnutrition, infectious diseases and respiratory diseases and water contamination.

- **Infectious diseases:** Change in the level, range, and intensity of infectious diseases due to temperature changes.
- **Economic and socio-cultural resources:** Reduction in income from tourism and agricultural production, and destruction of traditional, cultural and spiritual sites.
- **Women:** Women are typically responsible for food production and ensuring water and energy supplies, and typically have fewer economic resources than men which means that they are less able to use finance to mitigate the impact of climate change.
- **Education:** Children are the most affected in the event of natural or man-made disasters. Schooling and learning systems are disrupted, affecting their right to education and inducing stressful situations. Developmental gains in education are reversed with the damage or destruction of school facilities or use of school facilities as refuge centres, the prolonged disruption of education and limited access to learning opportunities.

SCOPE: Guiding Principles in approaches to promote sustainable development in Education

The IEU supports:

- › **Curriculum** where climate change education is integrated into the curricula at all levels, tailored to local contexts. This could include:
 - Information on key climate change related subjects.
 - Practical measures of mitigation and adaptation that students can utilise in their home lives and future careers, and resilience skills to prepare them for the challenges of climate change, such as migration (including the role of ICT).
 - Opportunities for students to apply their knowledge to real life situations through climate change projects and problem-solving activities.
- › **Teacher training** which includes a climate change focus (e.g., disaster risk reduction education, and aspects of policy, planning and implementation) to ensure educators can effectively communicate its significance to students, with professional development opportunities to ensure up to date knowledge.
- › **Green school policies** to promote environmentally friendly behaviour through schools which embody the values they teach through ensuring they are environmentally sustainable and carbon neutral.
- › **Adaptation plans for schools** to protect students from heatwaves, dust storms, floods, fires, mudslides, hurricanes and storms.
- › **Mitigation plans for schools** to encourage use of green renewable energy, waste management, insulation and efficient energy use, healthy food and drink, physical activity and sustainable transport.

ACTION

The IEU is committed to advocating and lobbying employers, governments and other stakeholders to deliver:

- **Resources** and toolkits for the non-government education sector to help education workers address climate change in their own work practices and the wider industry.

- **Professional Learning opportunities** for short training sessions to support, share and educate workers on how they can tackle climate change through their work practices.
- **Financial incentives** to support work practices which support climate change mitigation and adaptation in schools and childcare centres.
- **Green workplace policies** which promote environmentally friendly behaviour by supporting adoption of environmentally sustainable and carbon neutral policies non-government schools and childcare centres.
- **A national education strategy** which is jointly devised and implemented and maintains a national education strategy for all levels, with appropriate goals and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- **Indigenous knowledge** to promote sharing and documentation of indigenous knowledge of cultural, social and technological innovations to contribute to mitigation and adaptation efforts and to build resilience against climate change.

Furthermore, the IEUA calls for:

- **Stronger national policies** regarding Climate Justice and Education.
- **A National Curriculum** which supports the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **The celebration of best practice** by highlighting and promoting the sharing of best practices within education.
- **Ongoing collaboration** between educators to address climate justice.
- Governments and Non-Government organisations to work together to **achieve SDG 13 and its 5 targets as outlined below, by 2030:**
 - Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related disasters
 - Integrate climate change measures into policies and planning
 - Build knowledge and capacity to meet climate change
 - Implement the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; and
 - Promote mechanisms to raise capacity for planning and management.

The IEUA and IEU branches have:

- Committed to providing support in times of climate disasters.
- Made budgeted allocation for the provision of monetary assistance as requested by COPE and EI in times when affiliate education unions experience climate disaster.