

PRESS RELEASE

**Save the Children Calling on World Leaders in Copenhagen to Help
Children Cope with Increased Natural Disasters**

Climate Change is a Global Emergency for Children

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK (**December 4, 2009**) -- Save the Children is calling on world leaders to sign an ambitious agreement at the Copenhagen climate change conference, being held from December 7 to 18, to help the world's children cope with the effects of global warming.

Save the Children believes, as highlighted in the organisation's recent report, *Feeling the Heat – Child Survival in a Changing Climate*, that climate change is a real threat to children in the 21st century and is an immediate global emergency.

Natural disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity. The average number of natural disasters has increased from 200 a year to more than 400 today, and this is predicted to increase by as much as 320 percent in the next 20 years. Save the Children estimates that over the next decade, 175 million children per year will be affected by these disasters.

“Climate change is no longer a distant, futuristic scenario and the devastating effect on children's lives is already apparent,” said Mimi Jakobsen CEO, Save the Children Denmark. “As a result of a changing climate the number of natural disasters is now four times higher than in the 1970s.”

As disaster risk reduction is a first step in helping communities to adapt to increasingly intense and frequent natural disasters, child-centered risk reduction should be a corner stone of climate change adaptation.

Save the Children is calling on governments to ensure that children be included in the final Climate Change Agreement text on adaptation. Children are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and adaptation therefore must involve children and support interventions responding to their needs and priorities.

Save the Children is already on the front lines helping children and families impacted by climate change disasters including the current drought in East Africa and the recent typhoons in Asia Pacific. And while not linked to climate change, this December also marks the five-year anniversary of the devastating tsunami that struck Asia and Africa on December 26, 2004. To mitigate emergencies of this kind, we must protect the lives and livelihoods of people affected by investing in disaster risk reduction.

Climate change disasters have and will also continue to increase malnutrition and certain diseases that often kill children. Diarrhea, the killer of one million children each year, is set to increase by as much as 10 percent by 2020 because of climate change. Malnutrition, which today affects 178 million children and is associated with up to 3.2 million child deaths each year, will affect 25 million more children by 2050.

The recent report calls on governments to strengthen health, water and sanitation systems in the poorest countries so that they are ready to cope with the effects of climate change,

Climate change also brings new urgency to the Millennium Development Goals especially those related to eliminating poverty and hunger and improving maternal health.

“Climate change has put us at risk of not meeting the Millennium Development Goals, and even taking several steps backwards from what has been accomplished to date,” said Rudolph von Bernuth, Emergency Director for Save the Children.

Children in the poorest communities will be most affected, as climate change reduces communities’ access to clean water and their ability to grow nutritious food, increases food prices and allows malaria mosquitoes to spread.

In East Africa the current food crisis, exacerbated by erratic weather patterns, is rapidly getting worse. Up to 20 million people are threatened with severe hunger, leaving them in desperate need of emergency food aid. In Ethiopia, 6.2 million are in urgent need of food relief and in Kenya, nearly 4 million people alone are on the brink of starvation.

“Climate change is an immediate global emergency for the world’s poorest children. And children, who are not responsible for climate change, will be the ones who are hardest hit,” said Mimi Jakobsen. “The decisions taken in Copenhagen in December 2009 will affect them the most, and they must not be forgotten. The time to act is now.”

Note to Editors:

To bring attention to the impact of climate change on children, Save the Children’s CEO Mimi Jakobsen and the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, Ulla Tornaes, will launch the “Don’t Drown our Future” event on 4 December.

Save the Children will let ten child dummies stand in water up to their shoulders as a symbol of the millions of children across the world, who will be exposed to floods and other severe natural disasters if we do not act to prevent climate change.

The event will take place on **4 December at 11 o’clock in Copenhagen**, at Peblingesøen Lake. B-roll and photographs will be available (from 1230 CET) for media outlets [here](#). Please contact Sarah Tyler on +44 7958 337 624. For media interviews please contact Press Manager Mette Hilden, on +45 24 21 45 35