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PROTEKNON

Nature and Nurture:

A checklist for protecting children
with regard for the environment



**"YOU SAY YOU LOVE YOUR
CHILDREN ABOVE ALL ELSE,
AND YET YOU ARE STEALING
THEIR FUTURE IN FRONT
OF THEIR VERY EYES."**

GRETA THUNBERG CLIMATE ACTIVIST

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DISCLAIMER

This checklist is currently in draft form. Proteknôn is exploring ways to get direct input from children on their views of how our child protection programmes can reduce our negative impact on the environment and encourage all to better protect our planet.

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1. WHY WE ARE WRITING THIS ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST NOW?

Child well-being is intrinsically linked to the health of the planet. If the earth is not safe, we as a race are not safe.

Having listened to the voices of the children and young people who are currently uniting as climate crisis activists, Proteknôn is reflecting on how we can prevent, mitigate, and reduce any unintentional damage to the environment. We have committed to examining how we impact the environment and considering any potential repercussions of our work on the lives of current and future generations of children.¹ Child well-being is intrinsically linked to the health of the planet. If the earth is not safe, we as a race are not safe. Proteknôn, as a group of informed child protection practitioners, researchers, and writers, is seeking to minimise the ecological impact of the programmes we and our partners conduct.

Global heating is an emergency² that impacts upon the lives and well-being of children in much the same ways as other humanitarian crises. Indications are that children are already disproportionately affected by global heating and will likely bear the brunt of on-going and future environmental changes.³ Children in developing countries have contributed the least to the causes of the climate crisis, yet they are the most affected by it.⁴ Over 99 percent of deaths already attributable to climate-related changes occurred in developing countries – and children

¹ Greta Thunberg stated, “You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes,” at the United Nations Climate Change Conference summit in Poland in December 2018.

² Greta Thunberg stated, “This is an emergency,” in a speech at Guardian Live in April 2019 - <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/video/2019/apr/23/this-is-an-emergency-greta-thunberg-speaks-at-guardian-live-video>, In April 2019 the Welsh government made a climate emergency declaration (<https://gov.wales/welsh-government-makes-climate-emergency-declaration>) followed in early May 2019 by the UK Parliament who also declared a climate emergency - <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-48126677>.

³ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, A/HRC/37/58, 24 January 2018, available at:

https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/37/58

Child friendly versions are also available in various languages, see for example: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/UNSREnvir_English.pdf

⁴ Children in a changing climate (2012). A right to participate: Securing children’s role in climate change adaptation.

"This is an emergency."

— G. Thunberg

make up over 80 percent of those deaths.⁵ Children of marginalised and excluded groups are especially at risk.⁶ Globally, millions of children are already experiencing violations of their rights in relation to access to clean water, sanitation, health services, education, food, and shelter as a result of global heating, environmental degradation, and poor management of natural resources.⁷ Environmentally related vulnerabilities include economic instability, gender inequity, family migration, rapid urbanisation, global heating, and natural disasters. The cumulative effect of multiple environmental stressors negatively impacts upon children's development and puts families at risk of separation and even death.

The climate crisis also has gender dimensions. Environmental justice and gender equity are interlinked.⁸ Domestic chores, such as harvesting water and firewood, are predominantly carried out by women and girls. Changes in the climate may significantly decrease the availability of water and other natural resources, and increase the time needed to complete these tasks, reduce the time available for school and/or livelihoods, and increase the risk of other rights violations.⁹ The harm resulting from these violations may be equated with maltreatment on the part of duty bearers. Children need to be protected from disasters, conflicts, and population displacements resulting from resource scarcity and global heating.¹⁰

Proteknôn is committed to minimising our contribution to the same global heating that is causing harm to children, their families, and communities at large.

The following is a checklist that all Proteknôn members can reference to ensure that the work we are performing, or that we are supporting our partners to perform, is mindful of humanity's impact on the environment of which we are a part.

⁵ UNICEF Innocenti (2014). The challenge of climate change: Children in the front line.

⁶ Unless we act now: The impact of climate change on children, UNICEF, 2015, https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Unless_we_act_now_The_impact_of_climate_change_on_children.pdf.

⁷ "Millions of children around the world suffer violations of their rights to health, food, water, and other rights because of problematic government responses or inaction to environmental degradation and climate change." - Child Rights and the Environment – The Need For Action: Submission by Human Rights Watch to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Human Rights Watch, 22 July 2016, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/22/child-rights-and-environment-need-action>.

⁸ SOS Children's Villages International (2012) Green Policy Scan. Global Literature Review. Contributions to the ongoing debate on green issues and children's rights.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ SOS Children's Villages International (2012) Green Policy Scan. Global Literature Review. Contributions to the ongoing debate on green issues and children's rights.

2. HOW DO WE DEFINE “ENVIRONMENT”?

The environment is the “...physical, chemical, and biological surroundings in which disaster-affected and local communities live and develop their livelihoods. It provides the natural resources that sustain individuals and determines the quality of the surroundings in which they live. It needs protection if these essential functions are to be maintained. A healthy environment contributes to disaster response.”¹¹

3. HOW DO CHILDREN’S RIGHTS LINK WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS?

There are clear and significant links between realising children’s rights and ensuring the environment is protected, as reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Article 6

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Article 24

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ...
2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures: ...
 - (c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution; ...
 - (e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, ... hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents...

¹¹ SPHERE Glossary, 2018.

Article 27

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Article 29

2. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:...(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

CORE REFERENCES AND RESOURCES:

- Children in a changing climate: www.childreninachangingclimate.org.
- Children's Charter Children's Charter an action plan for disaster risk reduction an action plan for disaster risk reduction for children children by children children, UNICEF, Plan, Save the Children, World Vision, 2011.
- Child-centred adaptation: Realising children's rights in a changing climate, Children in a Changing Climate (CCC) coalition, 2015
- No place to call home: Protecting children's rights when the changing climate forces them to flee, UNICEF, 2016
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, A/HRC/37/58, 24 January 2018. Child friendly versions of the report are also available in various languages: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/Pages/environmentandrightschild.aspx>
- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030

4. WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS CHECKLIST?

- I. Reduce our impact on the environment. We aim to better manage resources and lower our carbon and ecological footprint by reducing our consumption, reusing when we can, and recycling materials whenever possible.
- II. Increase environmental awareness of children, their families, and communities.
- III. Enable child-led and child-focussed advocacy on environmental issues that impact upon their protection.

5. WHAT ACTIONS CAN WE TAKE TO REDUCE OUR OWN NEGATIVE IMPACT?

5.1 Organisational environmental policies

- Regularly review our carbon and ecological footprints and seek ways to reduce the negative impact of our actions.¹² *(Contributes to Objective 1)*
- Support organisational efforts to implement environmental policies that consider and include children’s voices and opinions. *(Contributes to Objective 3)*
- Apply organisational environmental policies when designing and implementing programmes and activities so that all interventions respect the environment. *(Contributes to Objective 1)*
- Include information on environmental practices in new staff induction procedures. *(Contributes to Objectives 1, 2, and 3)*
- Monitor progress on improvement of environmental performance in child protection interventions. *(Contributes to Objectives 1, 2, and 3)*

5.2 Human resources *(Contributes to Objective 1)*

- Promote working from home as much as possible to reduce the requirement to commute.
- Identify local staff, consultants, or volunteers who require the least travel to reach a work site in the first instance. Only when all local options are exhausted will associates be deployed internationally.
- Train all new staff on reducing their carbon footprint and integrating environmental considerations into programme activities. *(Contributes to Objectives 1, 2, and 3)*

¹² This can be done through the use of simple online footprint calculators, such as <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/>.

5.3 Staff and partner capacity building

- Mainstream environmental concerns and their links with relevant child protection issues in appropriate staff, volunteer, and partner agency training modules (e.g. explain the fact that competition for scarce natural resources puts women and children at risk through firewood collection). *(Contributes to Objective 1, 2, and 3)*
- Train child protection staff on strategies for reducing our environmental impact (e.g. workshops on making recycled toys and materials for safe spaces). *(Contributes to Objective 1)*

5.4 Reduced air miles and alternative options *(Contributes to Objective 1)*

As people who work in international development and humanitarian action, we have relatively large carbon footprints due to our regular use of international flights. We will take action to reduce our carbon footprint through individual and organisational efforts:

- Reduce non-essential flights. Explore alternative ways to ensure the work is completed to a high standard, for example through:
 - Providing support from a distance;
 - Developing guidance material, videos, and webinars; and
 - Deploying a associates that are as close as possible to a work site to support any project.
- Plan and design online or phone-based meetings and training events instead of face-to-face meetings and events, where possible.
- Dedicate resources to invest in the environment.
 - Include the cost of a carbon offsetting donation – or other ethical alternatives that support ecological diversity and regeneration of natural habitats – in all budgets when assignments include international travel.
 - Invest a percentage of any programme or project budgets or net income in environmental projects.
- Travel via public transport or car-share wherever it is safe to do so and does not negatively impact on delivery of urgent assistance to children and their families.

5.5 Eco-friendly workplaces *(All contribute to Objective 1)*

In our offices, we will aim to contribute to our ecological ethos as we:

- Identify local recycling schemes and projects for every site of work. Create a list of the range of objects they are able to recycle.
- Purchase materials that are more easily recyclable and less frequently require disposal (e.g. if using disposable cups use paper cups rather than plastic cups; use rechargeable batteries; buy Energy efficient light bulbs that last longer and can be recycled instead of older style 'incandescent' bulbs).
- Think before we print, using digital formats over printed material wherever possible.
- Use recycled paper, print double-sided, and recycle any paper used when printing is unavoidable.
- Buy fewer and replace less frequently any electronic devices, material goods, and supplies for our work. When we do buy, we will seek to buy second-hand or recycled items, we will keep items for a

longer timeframe, and we will properly recycle items when we are finished using them. This especially relates to mobile phones, personal computers, printers, and cameras.

- Control and reduce energy consumption (e.g. use heaters/air conditioners reasonably, close windows/doors to keep the temperature stable, use energy-efficient bulbs, turn off lights and appliances when not using them, and avoid leaving appliances on “stand-by” mode).

5.6 Information technology and software

- Identify and use online service providers that are more environmentally friendly (See *Clickclean for an assessment of the environmental friendliness of a range of online service providers*).
- Search for and download items from the internet only once.
- Reduce and / or delete any duplicate copies of files stored virtually.

6. WHAT ACTIONS CAN WE TAKE TO INTEGRATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS INTO CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMING?

6.1 Programme strategy and planning

- Include actions to reduce, mitigate, or respond to the potential environmental impact of child protection programmes when developing programme strategies or plans (as outlined below). *(Contributes to Objective 1)*
- Identify any possible risks of harm to the environment when planning programmes and agree strategies for mitigating risks. This process must include setting aside contingency funding to cover costs of mitigation actions.
- Design programmes that target diverse children and include marginalised children, focussing on those most at-risk as a result of the climate crisis.

6.2 Monitoring, evaluations, accountability, and learning

- Use an Environment Marker to assess any project plans, proposals, or strategies that we seek to deliver for our partners. *OCHA and UNEP's Environmental Marker (2016) is available [here](#).*
- Include questions on environmental impact of our activities in any needs assessment or baseline data collection processes.
- Identify children who are most at-risk from the climate crisis in needs assessment processes.
- Include one or more indicators that identify any unintentional harm we may cause to the environment in monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- Put in place systems for receiving feedback from children and their families on child protection programme impact on the environment. Ensure that there is capacity – human and financial resourcing – for addressing and responding to the feedback received.
- Document and share lessons learned on positive practices and challenges as it relates to integrating environmental considerations into child protection programming.

6.3 All child protection programme activities *(Contributes to Objective 1)*

Programme design

- Integrate environmental assessments and planning into toolkits, programme models, and new technical guidance. This may include providing programmatic tips to reduce air and water pollution (such as the above); adding environmental concerns to training of staff, partners, or children; or including environmental analysis in research or assessment tools.

Language use

- Speak of the “climate crisis”, “climate emergency”, and “global heating”. Do not use language (such as “climate change” and “global warming”) that may downplay the gravity of the situation children are facing today and in their future.

Transport

- Car-pool with other programmes to reduce fuel consumption. By planning field trips far enough in advance, it may be possible to go with other colleagues to the same place at the same time to deliver different activities. This may require a system for sharing the costs of running cars, paying drivers, and buying petrol.
- Choose the location of trainings, meetings, or workshops so that the fewest number of people are travelling. For example, if the programme manager (PM) is in the head office and the programme team is in a field location, move the PM to join the team for a meeting rather than the other way around.
- Avoid sending individuals on long-haul flights if it is possible to obtain and support equally qualified local colleagues to facilitate the work or do research for us. If in-person support is required, explore options of virtual mentoring prior to, during and following the training.
- Where budget is available for the purchase of vehicles encourage the selection of electric or hybrid vehicles that lower emissions.

Procurement

- Buy recycled paper, clothes, furniture, and equipment wherever possible. This includes refurbished computers and phones.
- Buy second-hand items made from natural materials and reuse them and fix them as long as possible. Avoid using any disposable and single-use items such as disposable cups, plates, and cutlery.
- Buy reusable, washable cups and a water filtration system for the office and workshops instead of bottled water.
- Avoid the use of any capsule coffee machines. The process for recycling capsules is rarely available and highly energy inefficient when it is.
- Buy locally produced food with minimal disposable packaging when organising meals and refreshments for workshops. It is possible for foods to be wrapped in plant-based materials such as

banana leaves. Where human-made packaging is unavoidable, choose materials that are more easily recyclable and pose less threat to the natural world – for example paper and tin cans, not plastic.

- Include environmental selection criteria in the process for choosing suppliers that will be engaged for child protection programme activities.
- Identify suppliers/ venues with environmentally friendly policies, such as reducing waste associated with training meals/snacks, using solar energy to power the facilities, etc. Where these policies are not in place (e.g. small local supplier in a refugee camp), work with the existing suppliers to identify practical solutions to reduce waste and improve energy efficiency.
- Buy local materials and goods rather than shipping goods internationally. This applies to kits, such as recreational kits and school kits.
- Purchase items from producers who make their goods according to ethical approaches. Avoid those who are renowned for their negative impact on the environment.
- Ensure that t-shirts for branding are made from natural and, wherever possible, organic fibres. Washing synthetic materials sheds tiny fibres of plastic into our water systems.
- Focus on purchasing locally made clothes, bags, and toys for children.

Energy use

- Seek alternatives to air conditioning (i.e. a fan) for the office/car.
- If applicable, power children’s centres and offices with an inverter and/or solar panels rather than a generator

Waste management

- Set up a waste management system that allows you to separate materials so they are more easily recycled (e.g. separate glass bottles, collect organic compost separately from other waste, etc.).
- Explore local options for recycling used paper and other materials such as plastic and glass. *Ensure CP programme-printed materials are shredded to maintain confidentiality when going through the recycling process.*

6.4 Advocacy (Contributes to Objective III)

- Support and enable children to engage in advocacy activities on the subjects of sustainable development and environmental protection.
 - Provide children with information on the environment ensuring this is presented in ways that diverse children of different ages, capacities and with disabilities can understand.
 - Brainstorm with children about how they can promote care for the environment. Develop related action plans.
 - Support children’s participation on key days such as Universal Children’s Day, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) day, Earth Day, and others to focus on environmental protection.
 - Support child climate change activists by asking them what kind of assistance they need. See what you can offer that is in children’s best interests.
- Support advocacy for the integration of environmental education into school curricula.

6.5 Children's participation, association, and life skills

- Support children to analyse the risks associated with their participation and activism and to identify and apply risk mitigation strategies.
- Work with children to identify the best – most effective and safe – strategies for supporting them in their engagement in environmental activism.
- Support children's activism on climate change and environmental protection by asking children to tell you what type of support may benefit them (e.g. capacity building, accompaniment, or helping them access key decision makers) *(Contributes to Objective II and III)*.
- Support training of children on environmental awareness and support their environmental action initiatives. *(Contributes to Objectives II and III)*
- Integrate environmental consciousness into life-skills and behavioural change activities you run with children *(Contributes to Objective II)*.
- Teach children – such as child heads of households, child mothers, etc. – cooking skills that focus on seasonal, local meals *(Contributes to Objective I and II)*.
- Introduce disaster risk reduction strategies in participatory activities with all children.
- Support environmental organisations set up by children as well as children's participation in inter-generational environmental organisations *(Contributes to Objective II and III)*.
- Promote children's participation in multiple levels of environmental governance, from local to global *(Contributes to Objective II and III)*.
- Listen to and act on children's perspectives on environment protection.
- Enable children's participation in the work of other sectors to represent children's views on potential impact on the environment – for example support child participation in strategy development for camp management, shelter, and agriculture Cluster and sector working groups.

6.6 Case management

- Seek to have digital formats for case management files instead of printed files wherever technology and staff capacity allow *(Contributes to Objective I)*.

6.7 Community based mechanisms

- Work with community groups to set aside communal lands dedicated to planting and growing trees and allowing wild vegetation to grow natural. This should be a space that can be accessed and support by children's clubs and groups.
- Build on traditional socio-cultural norms and beliefs that recognise the value and connection of nature to humankind. Organise theatre, art, writing, and story telling that reinforce respect for, links with and love of the natural environment.

6.8 Safe spaces and other group activities for child wellbeing

- If there is not an appropriate building...
 - Select sites for safe spaces with careful consideration of the environmental impact. For example, avoid removing or clearing trees and vegetation to make space for a new safe spaces.
 - Build new safe spaces from sustainable materials. In many settings, the best option may be bamboo or mud brick.
 - Include rainwater collection mechanisms in the design of any structures built for the purpose of child friendly spaces.
- Establish kitchen or school gardens that enable children to plant and care for crops (*Contributes to Objective I and II*).
- Plant trees around any sites of long-term child friendly spaces, ideally with children's participation (*Contributes to Objective I and II*).
- Make equipment for the child friendly spaces from easily accessible recycled materials. Children enjoy making the toys and playing with them when they are made. For example, you can:
 - Make musical instruments (e.g. a rattle/shaker from empty milk bottles and seeds, sand or grains; a guitar from empty cereal boxes and elastic bands) (*Contributes to Objective I and II*). (See *Learning Toys Production Guide for Early Learning Programs and Home Play (from Birth to Six Years)* Amandine Baillet and Deborah Llewellyn for Plan International, 2014).
- Prioritise buying toys or equipment for safe spaces with lower environmental impact. For example, choose toys made from wood, cloth, metal, or clay as opposed to plastic and source items locally (*Contributes to Objective I*).
- Set up a schedule of activities to discuss environmental concerns with children. Identify with them the ways in which they want to advocate for environmental awareness raising in their communities. Acknowledging children's role in environmental stewardship and their participation in decision-making on solutions to environmental issues is paramount to addressing children's needs and capacities. (*Contributes to Objective II and III*).
- Encourage story-telling that presents indigenous/local worldviews that promote environmental stewardship (*Contributes to Objective II*).

6.9 Mental health and psychosocial support

- Tailor MHPSS programmes to be responsive to children and caregivers who experience greater levels of stress as a result of the impact of climate change on their environment.
- Prepare caregivers with strategies for talking to their children about natural disasters before the crisis occurs.

6.10 Sport activities

- Consider pre-existing land use when developing sport facilities. Ensure you do not clear large areas of vegetation or trees to make areas of play without replanting elsewhere (*Contributes to Objective I*).
- Encourage nature walks with children (*Contributes to Objective II*).

6.11 Economic strengthening

- Consider the environment as well as gender and market analysis when deciding on appropriate livelihoods activities for children and their families.

6.12 Family strengthening

- Promote the participation of families in environmental adaptation and emergency preparedness to prevent family separation and improve outcomes during and following crises. Support male and female caregivers and children in environmental adaptation and emergency preparedness to increase recognition of and value for the different roles that may be influenced by gender, age, and sibling order.
- Encourage families to promote green practices as an integral part of community development processes.
- Encourage caregivers to provide a healthy environment. Encourage and enable contact with nature and access to fresh fruit and vegetables as possible. Depending on the context and individual family, this may be possible with cooperatives.
- Facilitate outdoor activities between caregivers and their children. Couple this with awareness raising for parents and caregivers on the value of allowing children time to have safe, free play outside. (*Contributes to Objective II*)
- Encourage older generations to share traditional indigenous knowledge on organic farming and environmental issues with younger generations if relevant.
- Work jointly with children and their families on family and community gardens and tree plantations in the areas surrounding schools, safe spaces, and community spaces if possible.

7. HOW WE HAVE USED TERMS IN THIS CHECKLIST

Environment

“The physical, chemical, and biological surroundings in which disaster-affected and local communities live and develop their livelihoods. It provides the natural resources that sustain individuals and determines the quality of the surroundings in which they live. It needs protection if these essential functions are to be maintained. A healthy environment contributes to disaster response.”¹³

Environmental degradation

“Refers to unsustainable natural resource exploitation and pollution that can further threaten disaster-affected populations and ecosystems. Some examples include land degradation, deforestation, desertification, wild-land fires and loss of biodiversity.”¹⁴

Environmental sustainability

“Refers to meeting present needs while not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹⁵


Children

“Children” is used here to mean all those under 18 years old. This includes girls; boys; and those of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. It includes those of all backgrounds (racial, ethnic, linguistic, economic, social, etc.), with or without disabilities.

¹³ SPHERE Guidelines Glossary 2018.

¹⁴ SPHERE Guidelines Glossary 2018.

¹⁵ SPHERE Guidelines Glossary 2018.



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