**A REPORT EXAMINING HOW GIRLS WITH ALBINISM MAY BE IMPACTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE IN THEIR PURSUIT OF EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

This report is submitted by Women and Girls with Albinism Network (WGWAN). This report focuses on girls with albinism[[1]](#footnote-1) and how they may be impacted by climate change in their pursuit of equal access to education. For further information please contact: [constanceonyemaechi@gmail.com](mailto:constanceonyemaechi@gmail.com); [womenandgirlswithalbinism@gmail.com](mailto:womenandgirlswithalbinism@gmail.com)

1. Girls with Albinism are distinctly affected by Climate Change in several ways.
2. Obstacles facing Girls with Albinism in schooling that impede their contributions to climate action.
3. How the barriers affect the four elements of education for Girls with Albinism.
4. Recommendations

**Girls with Albinism are distinctly affected by Climate Change in several ways:**

* Increased sun exposure: Since Girls with Albinism already have a restricted amount of melanin produced, the current climate of greater temperatures and more intense sunlight has contributed to an increased risk of skin cancer and serious damage.
* Access to healthcare: Because of the disruptions caused by Climate Change to healthcare systems, it is difficult for girls who have albinism to get the specialised care and protective measures they need to manage their disease and avoid harm to their skin and eyes.
* An increase in violence against girls who have albinism can be attributed to the myths and superstitions surrounding the condition in Africa. In communities that experience droughts and floods, people often blame Girls with Albinism for these natural disasters, which puts them at further risk of sexual and other forms of abuse.
* Human rights and protection: Because of damaging beliefs and cultural practices, girls who are albino already face the risk of discrimination, violence, and exploitation. Disruption caused by Climate Change may increase these dangers and make them more susceptible to violations of human rights, such as violence, discrimination, and human trafficking.
* Access to resources: Climate change disrupts access to resources and livelihoods which puts families at greater risk of poverty and exclusion. To reduce household costs, girls with albinism may be compelled to marry young and be removed from their communities or schools.
* Migration and displacement: Communities may be forced to relocate or face natural disasters like floods, storms, and droughts because of Climate Change. During displacement, girls with albinism may encounter additional difficulties, such as greater exposure to sunlight and restricted access to medical treatment, sexual, reproductive and health services and social services.
* Education: Disasters linked to Climate Change, including displacement, loss of resources and livelihoods, have the potential to disrupt education and economic prospects, affecting girls, including girls with albinism disproportionately. Inadequate access to educational possibilities can worsen prejudice and social stigma, further marginalising albino girls in their communities. There is also evidence of increased rates of child marriage of girls who have dropped out of school following climate related disasters.
* Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing can be adversely affected by Climate Change-induced disasters and environmental changes, which can lead to stress, anxiety, and trauma among affected populations. This includes Girls with Albinism who must cope with these challenges in addition to social barriers and discrimination.
* Water scarcity: In some areas, Climate Change may make it more difficult to obtain clean water for skincare and hygiene regimens that are crucial for Girls with Albinism to preserve their health including menstrual health and hygiene.

**The following are some of the most significant gaps and obstacles in schooling that Girls with Albinism face to enable them to contribute to Climate Change:**

1. Absence of inclusive policies and programming: A lot of programmes and policies pertaining to disaster risk reduction and Climate Change adaptation do not sufficiently consider the unique requirements and susceptibility of girls who have albinism. Because of this exclusion, there is a lack of resources and assistance available to address and overcome challenges (as mentioned above), which exacerbates already-existing disparities.
2. Lack of empowerment stems from several factors, including cultural norms, stigma and stereotypes that restrict their ability to engage and be accepted in society, a lack of education, and a lack of work prospects.
3. Economic disparities: Poverty and economic gaps disproportionately affect Girls with Albinism, making it difficult for them to access opportunities and vital resources. Disparities brought on by Climate Change, such as crop failure and loss of livelihood, can exacerbate economic inequality and make it more difficult for girls with albinism to receive basic services like education, as well as healthcare and social protection that determine access to schooling.
4. Lack of information and research: Particularly considering Climate Change, there is frequently a dearth of disaggregated information and studies on the unique requirements and experiences of Girls with Albinism. Policy makers and practitioners may overlook or underestimate the difficulties faced by people with albinism in the absence of reliable data and evidence, which would impede efforts to adequately ensure that girls with albinism enter and complete school.
5. Weak institutional capacity: Many organisations in charge of meeting the needs of marginalised groups, such as girls with albinism, lack the resources and capacity to adequately address the challenges brought on by Climate Change, including ensuring girls attend and continue schooling.
6. Restricted voices and agency: Girls with albinism may encounter obstacles when it comes to actively participating in schooling and making decisions in schools and their broader communities. Their agency and voice are further restricted by disruptions caused by Climate Change, as they are often disregarded or left out of conversations and decision-making processes pertaining to adaptation and mitigation measures including due to inaccessibility of information and communications.
7. Poverty: It is more common for Girls with Albinism and their families to be impoverished, with the absence of social protection programs that recognise and consider disability related extra costs, which makes it more difficult for them to adjust to Climate Change and recover from climate induced disasters. The practice of child marriage that increases due to lack of resources following disasters, impedes girls’ schooling.
8. Access to high-quality education: Due to issues including poverty, discrimination, and a lack of inclusive educational policies and practices, many Girls with Albinism encounter obstacles when trying to obtain high-quality education. To close these inequalities, efforts must be made to provide fair access to education for everyone, including girls with albinism, by offering inclusive learning environments, easily accessible curriculum, and focused support services.
9. Lack of knowledge and sensitivity regarding the unique needs and difficulties faced by Girls with Albinism in school, especially their susceptibility to hazards associated to Climate Change, exists among educators, legislators, and communities. Training and awareness campaigns help dispel stigma, clear up misunderstandings, and establish accessible and accommodating learning settings that encourage Girls with Albinism to take an active role in combating Climate Change.
10. Inclusive curriculum: A lot of educational systems may not have curricula that sufficiently address concerns about environmental sustainability, Climate Change, or the requirements of children with albinism. Girls' comprehension of Climate Change and their capacity to contribute to the Climate Change agenda can be improved by the development of inclusive, accessible and pertinent curriculum materials, the integration of environmental education into the curriculum, and the use of participatory and experiential teaching methods.
11. Support and capacity building: Girls with albinism may not have access to opportunities for mentorship, support, and capacity building, which are necessary to acquire the information, abilities, and self-assurance required to actively participate in climate action. By offering focused capacity building projects, networking opportunities, and mentorship programmes, Girls with Albinism can be empowered to overcome obstacles and emerge as leaders and effective advocates in the fight against Climate Change.
12. Intersectional approach: The effects of Climate Change interact with other grounds of marginalisation and discrimination that Girls with Albinism experience, such as gender inequality, disability, and socioeconomic inequality. The various educational challenges that girls with albinism confront can be addressed, and they can be given the tools they need to make a significant contribution to the fight against Climate Change, by taking an intersectional approach that considers their vulnerability and intersecting identities.
13. Participation and representation: Girls with albinism frequently have fewer representation in the decision-making processes pertaining to education and Climate Change, which limits their ability to influence the creation and execution of pertinent programmes and policies. Encouraging Girls with Albinism to participate meaningfully and be represented in educational institutions, advocacy forums, environmental organisations, and youth councils ensures that their opinions are respected and that their voices are heard when forming the agenda for Climate Change.

**How the barriers affect the four elements of education for Girls with Albinism.**

1. **AVAILABILITY**

Due to several issues like geography, the lack of schools in remote areas, or inadequate funding for education, Girls with Albinism may have limited access to educational possibilities. Furthermore, fewer educational options tailored to Girls with Albinism may result from social stigmatisation and discrimination.

1. **ACCESSIBILITY**

For Girls with Albinism, physical accessibility and accessibility of information and communications might be difficult, particularly if they need specific accommodations or help because of visual impairment or photosensitivity. Social hurdles, inaccessible school infrastructure and learning material, lack of resources including for accessible learning materials, inadequate transportation alternatives and safety risks can all make it more difficult for them to receive an education. Educational institutions and programmes must be accessible to everyone, without discrimination, especially the most vulnerable groups. It also has to be within safe physical reach either by attendance at some reasonably convenient geographic location and has to be affordable to all.

1. **ACCEPTABILITY**

Girls with albinism may experience bullying, discrimination, and social stigma in school environments, which can have a detrimental effect on their sense of acceptance and community. Peer or instructor discrimination may also have an impact on students' willingness to attend class and engage fully in class activities. the form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods, must be acceptable (e.g., relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality) to students and, in appropriate cases, parents.

1. **ADAPTABILITY**

Learning environments and resources are not sufficiently tailored to fulfil the needs of girls with albinism. This includes things like the lack of training for teachers, the dearth of easily available educational resources, the poor support provided for people with visual impairments, and the neglect of the difficulties posed by their conditions. Furthermore, curricula do not always include education on climate change or when it does, this does not always include accessible material and might not include a variety of viewpoints or appropriately handle topics pertaining to albinism. Education must be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings.

**For Girls with Albinism to effectively protect themselves against Climate Change, as well as to rise as agents and leaders on climate action, several enablers must be put in place:**

1. Access to education: Educational policies and programmes that are inclusive and promote the entry and completion of schooling by girls with albinism.
   1. Teacher training: Ensure that training on inclusive education and teaching learners with albinism and other disabilities is compulsory and an integral part of core teacher training curricula across universities and teaching colleges. Further, educators should be regularly trained on inclusive teaching methods, disability awareness, and classroom management techniques for students with albinism.
   2. Accessibility measures: Take steps to guarantee that schools are accessible in terms of the physical environment, information and communications, and transport, and ensure that adapted learning materials, assistive technologies and support services are available.
2. Access to Accessible Information: Education gives girls with albinism knowledge about the causes, effects, and options for adaptation of Climate Change. Through knowledge of the dangers and vulnerabilities associated with Climate Change, girls can be empowered to take proactive steps to safeguard both themselves and their communities. Information and communications should be available in accessible formats including large print, Braille, and materials with high contrast, as well as being appropriate and understandable for younger students, for example in plain language.
3. Policy reform and advocacy: Introduce and reform policies to mitigate and adapt Climate Change and make it a top priority, particularly ensuring protection of populations that are most affected, including girls with albinism.
4. Collaboration and partnership: To help Girls with Albinism in their efforts to prevent Climate Change and safeguard their environment, foster collaboration and partnership between government agencies, civil society organisations, educational institutions, and communities. Together, stakeholders may make a significant and long-lasting influence by combining their resources, knowledge, and networks.
5. Conduct education and health campaigns on solar protection: To reduce the risk of solar health issues for all students, particularly Girls with Albinism, schools should conduct information campaigns and provide sun protective measures such sunscreen, hats, and shaded spaces.
6. Promotion of diversity and inclusion within campaigns: Make sure that campaigns and programmes pertaining to the environment represent a range of opinions and give equal weight to the needs of all communities, particularly those who are disproportionately impacted by Climate Change. Highlight the distinctive viewpoints, life experiences, and contributions of Girls with Albinism and other marginalised groups.
7. Raise awareness on environmental sustainability targeting youth communities: Girls acquire knowledge about the value of environmental sustainability and the connections between human activity and the environment via their education. Girls with albinism can contribute to awareness raising in their families and communities towards incorporating sustainable practices into their daily life by conserving natural resources, cutting back on energy use, and encouraging the preservation of biodiversity.
8. Develop services and ensure that social protection mechanisms and build the resilience of communities against economic shocks, including those linked to climate-induced events. Disparities brought on by Climate Change, such as crop failure and loss of livelihood, exacerbates economic inequality and makes it more difficult for girls with albinism to receive basic services like education, as well as healthcare and social protection that determine access to schooling. This requires recognising and factoring in disability related extra costs to effectively pull out and protect households of girls with albinism from poverty and eliminate risks of not sending girls to school and subjecting them to child marriage. Social protection should also account for assistive devices such as glasses, magnifiers, sun protective gear, healthcare (including sexual and reproductive health) and habilitation and rehabilitation to enable girls with albinism to reach their full potential including through accessing and completing schooling.
9. Empowerment and advocacy: Education enables girls with albinism to speak up for their interests and rights when it comes to making decisions about Climate Change. Through activities such as advocacy, support mobilisation, and awareness-building, people can help shape and carry out climate policies and initiatives that specifically address their needs and concerns. By guaranteeing that Girls with Albinism raise their voices and participation in environmental conversations and activities, education promotes inclusive engagement in climate efforts
   1. Training and capacity building: Provide training and programmes aimed at strengthening their advocacy and leadership abilities as well as their ability to solve environmental and Climate Change-related problems. Workshops, seminars, and skill-building sessions on subjects including waste management, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and Climate Change adaptation may fall under this category.
   2. Mentorship & peer support: Provide mentorship, guidance, and encouragement to help Girls with Albinism develop the confidence, resilience, and agency necessary to pursue their environmental goals and aspirations. Promote peer support networks to build collective advocacy skills, leadership development, and mutual support for Girls with Albinism. Empower and support them to overcome obstacles and challenges they may encounter in their efforts to act for the environment.
   3. Ensure equitable access to opportunities, networks, and resources is necessary to empower Girls with Albinism to take an active role in addressing Climate Change. This covers resources for participating in environmental projects and activities, such as platforms, money, mentorship, and informational and technological support. Community involvement: Involve families, communities, and local authorities in assisting Girls with Albinism with their education and self-determination, including encouraging them to take part in Climate Change activities.
10. Participation in decision-making: Ensure that all decision-making spaces within school, community and local and higher government are accessible to enable the participation of girls with albinism on an equal basis with others. Promote an inclusive environment where people's viewpoints, experiences, and contributions are appreciated and considered when making decisions.

1. Albinism is a genetic condition typified by reduced or absent melanin synthesis in the skin, hair, and eyes. The pigment called melanin is what gives these tissues their colour. People with albinism frequently have pale skin, hair, and eyes in addition to being light-sensitive. This condition may also impair eyesight, leading to issues including light sensitivity and diminished visual acuity. On account of this condition and associated stigma and discrimination, persons with albinism face barriers in the enjoyment and exercise of their rights. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)