

35 million children in the country are at risk from climate change

A two-day Children's Climate Conference was held in Khulna with children. More than two hundred children from the coastal region of Khulna division participated in the conference. Five separate seminars were held in the conference. Based on the discussions that emerged in the seminar, the children raised 21 demands in the concluding session. They raised these demands to protect children from the harmful effects of climate and ensure their normal growth.

The concluding session of the conference was held at the CSS Ava Center in Khulna city on Monday afternoon. A non-governmental development organization named Jagrata Jubo Sangha (JJS) organized the conference. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German non-governmental organization Kindernothilfe (KNH) collaborated in organizing the conference.

The demands raised by the children at the conference are ensuring disaster-resistant housing, ensuring transportation of children and people with special needs to schools and health centers, ensuring shelters for all at risk in coastal areas, ensuring overall cooperation in salt-tolerant vegetable crops and agricultural production, ensuring protection of the Sundarbans, freeing rivers, canals, and reservoirs from encroachment and protecting navigability, ensuring clean drinking water for all, ensuring irrigation water for agricultural work, making arrangements for the continuation of the education system for children during disasters, and taking initiatives to protect children's safety and mental health during disasters.

Other demands of children are opening schools during disasters in flood and tidal wave-prone areas, providing employment to climate displaced people, ensuring the inclusion of climate refugees in social protection programs, ensuring adequate compensation for climate-affected families, ensuring safe housing for families displaced due to dam collapse and salinity, ensuring the inclusion of children in discussions and plans on climate change and disasters, ensuring children's participation in planning and implementation to develop children's leadership on climate, ensuring adequate and multifaceted support for sustainable livelihoods at the local level to combat climate change, forming a special fund for the education, health and protection of climate-affected children, ensuring nutritious food for children during disasters, and providing quality health centers in remote areas in coastal areas.

Speakers at the conference session said that about 35 million children in Bangladesh are directly and indirectly at risk due to climate change. To make them risk-free, the country's national plans and budgets should keep children in mind. If plans are not made to protect children's rights, the future world will become unsafe. Environmental damage means child damage. Therefore, we must leave not only money and resources but also oxygen, rivers and environment for future generations.

Khulna University Vice Chancellor Md. Rezaul Karim, Khulna Additional Divisional Commissioner Abu Sayed Md. Manzur Alam and Bangladesh Press Institute (PIB) Director General Faruk Wasif were present at the inaugural ceremony of the climate conference chaired by JJS Executive Director ATM Zakir Hossain yesterday. UNICEF Field Office Head Kawsar Hossain, Disaster Specialist Gohar Naeem Wara, Khulna University Professor Zakir Hossain and Professor Nazmus Sadat, KCC Chief Executive Laskar Tajul Islam and several climate researchers spoke in various sessions.

The organizers said that a large part of Bangladesh's population is children. These children are the most affected by the effects of disasters and climate change. However, the issue of children is not given much importance in discussions related to climate impacts. The Children's Climate Conference has been organized with children to bring these issues to the discussion. This year's event is the fourth. About 200 children from the coastal region participated in the conference.