



Expert Group Meeting: Population Dynamics and Climate Change

24-25 June, 2009, London, UK

Children: a large and vulnerable population in the context of climate change

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Abstract

Many of the areas most at risk from climate change are also seeing high rates of population growth and have very young populations. This paper discusses the disproportionate vulnerability of children of different ages to many of the probable impacts of climate change. Their stage of development leaves them less well equipped on many fronts to deal with deprivation and stress. Their exposure to various risks is also more likely than with adults to have long-term repercussions, with effects for individuals, but also for larger populations. Almost all the disproportionate implications for children are intensified by poverty and by the difficult choices low-income households make as they adapt to more challenging conditions. Events that might have little effect on children in high-income countries and communities can have critical implications for children in poverty. The paper will include some basic principles for adaptation that take children's needs into account.