



**BROKEN
CHALK**

Submission to the United Nations OFFICE OF THE HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

**CALL FOR INPUT | OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS
ISSUED BY OHCHR**

Report on how climate change can have an impact on the
realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education
by every girl.

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March 2024

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Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to addressing human rights violations in the education sector. It was established in October 2020. A multinational team of dedicated human rights advocates collaborates extensively on researching violations in every corner of the world.

The organisation's primary activities include removing obstacles to education, promoting peace and tranquillity in society through intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and eliminating educational opportunity gaps across different demographics.

Broken Chalk works hard in advocacy and lobbying on behalf of these educational victims, engaging with international organisations to prompt action. Additionally, the volunteers and interns working remotely worldwide at Broken Chalk prepare comprehensive reports for international organisations, stakeholders, and governments, highlighting human rights violations in education. These reports aim to draw attention to the often-overlooked aspects of human rights violations, providing stakeholders with a complete understanding and calling for the international community to act in cases where conflict halts access to education and endangers civilians' lives. This approach ensures that awareness is raised and necessary actions are taken to address these violations. Broken Chalk is genuinely international, achieving a local and global perspective in its work.

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Identifying Barriers to Girls' Equal Enjoyment of the Right to Education in Relation to Climate Change

The barriers to girls' equal access to education in Ecuador are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with socio-economic disparities and the differential impacts of climate change. Women are at the forefront of paid and unpaid work, representing 34% of unpaid domestic work. In June 2019, 17% of women were engaged in unpaid labour, a decrease from 18% in the previous month.¹ Statistics on Ecuador's female unpaid labour employment rate are updated quarterly, averaging 16% from Dec 2013 to June 2019, reaching an all-time high of 18% in March 2019 and a record low of 11% in June 2014.²

Women often hold the responsibility of caring for the home and family. This burden is exacerbated by household resource scarcity (such as water and services). Women, particularly in rural and indigenous communities, work significantly more extended hours than men, usually around 86 and 62 hours a week for women and men, respectively.³ In turn, this increased workload can restrict girls' time and opportunities for education, as they may be required to assist with household tasks instead of attending school.

Another barrier that women and girls face is poverty, as 66% of women in Ecuador live in conditions of poverty, as opposed to 11% of men.⁴ These increased levels of poverty often result in women and girls taking on an increased domestic workload but also attempting to take on additional work outside the home to sustain themselves and their families financially.

Gender-based violence poses an additional obstacle to girls' education by creating unsafe environments both inside and outside the home, particularly in regions with high rates of violence. In 2022, 332 femicides were documented in Ecuador, the highest number of the study period, a significant increase from the 197 cases in the previous year.⁵

Disparities in political representation and decision-making exacerbate the challenges faced by both women and girls, limiting their ability to advocate for their rights to education and protection.

¹ CEIC. (2019). Ecuador Employment Rate: Unpaid Labour: Female. Available at: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/ecuador/enemdu-employment-rate/employment-rate-unpaid-labor-female>

² CEIC. (2019). Ecuador Employment Rate: Unpaid Labour: Female. Available at: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/ecuador/enemdu-employment-rate/employment-rate-unpaid-labor-female>

³ De ser sensibles al compromiso por la igualdad y el clima, CDKN Latin America, 2019. Available at: <https://cdkn.org/es/noticia/generoecuador>

⁴ De ser sensibles al compromiso por la igualdad y el clima, CDKN Latin America, 2019. Available at: <https://cdkn.org/es/noticia/generoecuador>

⁵ Statista. (2023). Number of Femicides Victims in Ecuador from 2013 to 2023. Available at:

Concrete Measures to Address Barriers Faced by Girls in Education Due to Climate Change

Ecuador's Constitution is committed to addressing gendered climate change-related barriers to education. The 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution constitutes the first time that rights were granted to nature, respecting its existence and conservation.⁶ The Constitution grants the right to education in art. 26, while art. 27 emphasises that education shall be inclusive and promote an equal society.⁷

To fulfil these rights, Ecuador includes environmental studies and climate change in the national curricula to guarantee equal opportunities for all people and train future citizens and decision-makers to make informed decisions regarding the environment and climate change.⁸ Increased access to environmental and climate change-related education has the potential to cultivate future climate leaders and actions and can improve broad citizen awareness of the fundamental right to access education and live in a healthy environment.

Ensuring awareness of these rights is particularly important for girls, and most especially for indigenous girls and girls living in poverty, given their experiences of intersecting oppressions and systemic barriers. However, the current climate-change curriculum is not translated into the fourteen officially recognised indigenous languages,⁹ meaning indigenous girls will not have equal access to this knowledge. This lack of language inclusivity also results in many forms of indigenous knowledge on conservation and climate action being left out of climate education and the broader socio-political discourses. An essential step towards a more equitable and useful climate change approach, therefore, requires a concentrated effort to improve linguistic access and equality, including, in particular, the translation of the current curriculum into the fourteen indigenous languages of Ecuador.

Furthermore, research shows that environmental and climate change education is often only addressed once a year, meaning students must engage in self-directed learning of their own volition. In addition, students are not tested on how they can incorporate green skills into daily life but are instead tested on whether they can classify waste.¹⁰ Thus, the curriculum needs to be adjusted to help incorporate more practical and action-oriented skills into the

⁶ Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education Project. (N.d). CCE Country Profile: Ecuador. https://mecce.ca/country_profiles/cce-country-profile-ecuador/#:~:text=Ecuador's%20National%20Strategy%20of%20Environmental,academic%20training%2C%20and%20promoting%20education

⁷ Constitución de la República del Ecuador. (2008). https://www.oas.org/juridico/pdfs/mesicic4_ecu_const.pdf

⁸ Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education Project. (N.d). CCE Country Profile: Ecuador.

⁹ Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education Project. (N.d). CCE Country Profile: Ecuador.

¹⁰ Gavillanes Capelo, Raisa Michelle, and Tipán Barros, Boris Genaro. (2021). Environmental education as a strategy to face climate change. *Alteridad Revista de Educación* 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.17163/alt.v16n2.2021.10>

daily reality of children, as well as an increased focus on the right to a healthy environment in relation to education.

A precondition for raising awareness in schools is access to education for girls. However, 17% of indigenous girls do not attend school due to domestic responsibilities.¹¹ Climate change generally causes the domestic workload to increase, which can lead to increased (domestic) child labour. Addressing the root causes of increased domestic responsibilities is thus necessary. For example, lack of water access due to high levels of drought often results in women and young girls putting in increased effort to find potable water. Concrete actions addressing the root causes of drought and lack of water access are vital to ensuring women's and girls' access to education.

Another barrier for girls, especially in rural areas, is the threat of climate change to agriculture. As 35.5% of women in rural areas face poverty, rural girls already face a multitude of challenges.¹² Climate change exacerbates these challenges. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) data, peasant family agriculture in Ecuador led by rural women accounts for more than 60% of food production.¹³ As landslides, heavy rainfall, flooding, and droughts negatively affect food production and economic security, the work for women in rural areas will increase. This also puts girls in rural areas at risk of being forced to work to contribute to familial and community economic security. Increasing climate adaptive and mitigative agricultural knowledge in rural communities is thus an important means of preventing burdens from being shifted to girls in those communities.

Another barrier girls experience in rural areas is access to stable education.¹⁴ Flooding, landslides, and heavy weather events can destroy schools and learning materials and may hinder students from reaching the schools; access to stable education is increasingly threatened. Developing disaster preparedness and response can be a valuable strategy to mitigate the effects of disruptions. Furthermore, better infrastructure can increase accessibility and ensure continued education during extreme weather events.

¹¹ The Borgen Project. (N.d.). 10 facts about girls' education in Ecuador. <https://borgenproject.org/10-facts-about-girls-education-in-ecuador/#:~:text=Thirty%2Done%20percent%20of%20adolescent,the%20Montubio%20population%2C%2033%20percent>.

¹² UN Women LAC. (2022). Amazonian women, leadership and autonomy in the face of Ecuador's climate crisis. <https://lac.unwomen.org/en/stories/noticia/2022/03/mujeres-amazonicas-liderazgo-y-autonomia-ante-la-crisis-climatica-en-ecuador>

¹³ ProAmazonia. (N.d.). Rural Women: Stories of Amazonian Women. <https://www.proamazonia.org/en/testimonial/mujeres-rurales-historias-de-mujeres-amazonicas/>

¹⁴ AVSI. (2022). Bringing education to rural areas in Ecuador. <https://www.avsi.org/en/news-and-press/news/bringing-education-to-rural-areas-in-ecuador>

Existing Gaps and Challenges in Educating Girls to Empower Them For Climate Change Action

The education of women and girls is critical for their future participation in climate change mitigation, adaptation, and action efforts, in particular, because they experience heightened vulnerability to the effects of climate change as a result of intersecting systemic oppressions. However, many systemic challenges exist to female education in Ecuador, including cultural and financial barriers to access and inclusion in education and climate leadership.

Cultural Barriers to Climate Engagement, Education, and Leadership

In Ecuador, cultural barriers significantly challenge women and girls' engagement, education, and leadership in climate initiatives. Patriarchal gender norms restrict their access to education and hinder their ability to assume leadership roles in climate action. Traditional gender roles and expectations may prioritise boys' education over girls', leading to disparities in access and opportunities. Moreover, societal norms and practices may discourage girls from pursuing education beyond certain levels or subjects, perpetuating cycles of limited educational attainment among Ecuadorian women.¹⁵ Additionally, female voices and traditional knowledge systems are often marginalised, particularly for Mestizo, Andean, and Amazonian women, perpetuating a cycle of undervaluation.¹⁶ Furthermore, the prevalence of gender-based violence serves as a deterrent to female participation in climate action, further limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development efforts.¹⁷ Addressing these cultural barriers is imperative for fostering inclusive and effective climate action in Ecuador.

Socio-Economic Barriers to Climate Engagement, Education, and Leadership

In Ecuador, socio-economic barriers hinder women and girls' engagement, education, and leadership in climate initiatives. Limited funding and access to technological education and capacity development create disparities, leaving women and girls without the resources to

¹⁵ Novillo, N. M., Barrionuevo, M. de los Á., Terán, P. C., Eskola, C. M., Moncayo, M. P., & Rameix, N. N. (2019). Diagnóstico de la situación de las mujeres amazónicas. Programa Integral Amazónico de Conservación de Bosques y Producción Sostenible PROAmazonía. <https://www.proamazonia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Diagnostico-de-mujeres-Amazonicas-3.pdf>

¹⁶ Luna, M., Aguilar, L., Gilligan, M., Owren, C., Prebble, M., & Westerman, K. (2015). Women in Environmental Decision Making: Case Studies in Ecuador, Liberia, and the Philippines. The Global Gender Office of IUCN, in collaboration with Conservation International. <https://genderandenvironment.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CI-REPORT.pdf>; Torres, P. (2021). Rural women in the Amazon: Their participation and representation is the key. ProAmazonía. <https://www.proamazonia.org/en/mujeres-rurales-en-la-amazonia-su-participacion-y-representacion-es-la-clave/>

¹⁷ Novillo, N. M., Barrionuevo, M. de los Á., Terán, P. C., Eskola, C. M., Moncayo, M. P., & Rameix, N. N. (2019). Diagnóstico de la situación de las mujeres amazónicas. Programa Integral Amazónico de Conservación de Bosques y Producción Sostenible PROAmazonía. <https://www.proamazonia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Diagnostico-de-mujeres-Amazonicas-3.pdf>

participate actively in climate-related activities.¹⁸ This issue is exacerbated for women and girls living in rural communities, where geographical remoteness and lack of infrastructure in many Amazonian communities, for example, often result in inadequate educational facilities and limited opportunities for formal schooling.¹⁹ Socioeconomic barriers, such as poverty and financial constraints, further restrict access to education for many women and girls in the region.²⁰ Additionally, there is often an inadequate allocation of funds for gender-related climate education and action, which restricts capacity building in the environmental sector and inhibits the adoption of an intersectional approach to climate action.²¹ Moreover, Ecuadorian women and girls face heightened financial insecurity and lack of independence, further impeding their ability to access education and pursue careers beyond traditional gendered roles and sectors. This financial insecurity also limits their capacity to dedicate time to climate action outside their educational and professional responsibilities, perpetuating the cycle of exclusion in climate leadership and engagement.²² Addressing these financial barriers is crucial for empowering women and girls to contribute meaningfully to climate action in Ecuador.

¹⁸ Luna, M., Aguilar, L., Gilligan, M., Owren, C., Prebble, M., & Westerman, K. (2015). Women in Environmental Decision Making: Case Studies in Ecuador, Liberia, and the Philippines. The Global Gender Office of IUCN, in collaboration with Conservation International. <https://genderandenvironment.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CI-REPORT.pdf>

¹⁹ Novillo, N. M., Barrionuevo, M. de los Á., Terán, P. C., Eskola, C. M., Moncayo, M. P., & Rameix, N. N. (2019). Diagnóstico de la situación de las mujeres amazónicas. Programa Integral Amazónico de Conservación de Bosques y Producción Sostenible PROAmazonía. <https://www.proamazonia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Diagnostico-de-mujeres-Amazonicas-3.pdf>

²⁰ Amazonian women, leadership, and autonomy in the face of Ecuador's climate crisis. (2022). UN Women – Americas and the Caribbean. <https://lac.unwomen.org/en/stories/noticia/2022/03/mujeres-amazonicas-liderazgo-y-autonomia-ante-la-crisis-climatica-en-ecuador>

²¹ Luna, M., Aguilar, L., Gilligan, M., Owren, C., Prebble, M., & Westerman, K. (2015). Women in Environmental Decision Making: Case Studies in Ecuador, Liberia, and the Philippines. The Global Gender Office of IUCN, in collaboration with Conservation International. <https://genderandenvironment.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CI-REPORT.pdf>

²² Ibid.

Concrete Measures to Empower Girls Through Education to Address Climate Change

In Ecuador, where environmental vulnerability intersects with socio-economic disparities, ensuring access to quality education for girls is essential for fostering resilience and driving positive environmental action. By equipping girls with the knowledge, skills, and agency to understand and address climate-related issues, Ecuador can harness their potential as agents of change for sustainable development.

Efforts to enhance the availability of education in Ecuador must prioritise infrastructure development and the expansion of school networks. This entails investing in new schools and classrooms, particularly in rural and marginalised areas, to provide girls with conducive learning environments. For example, initiatives such as the "Schools for All" program, implemented in partnership with local NGOs and international organisations, have successfully built new schools and improved educational facilities in remote regions of Ecuador, ensuring that girls have access to quality education.²³

In terms of accessibility, Ecuador must address various barriers that hinder girls' access to education, including discriminatory policies, economic constraints, and cultural norms. Targeted interventions such as scholarships, transportation assistance, and school feeding programs can help alleviate these barriers and ensure that all girls have equal opportunities to pursue education. For instance, the "Education Voucher Program," funded by the Government in collaboration with international donors, provides financial assistance to disadvantaged families, enabling girls from low-income households to attend school and access educational resources.²⁴

Engendering accessible education involves fostering inclusive learning environments that value diversity and promote gender equality. This requires challenging gender stereotypes within schools and communities and integrating gender-sensitive pedagogies that empower girls to participate fully in education. Organisations such as *Girls' Education Challenge* work to promote gender-responsive teaching methodologies and provide training for teachers on creating inclusive classrooms that support the educational needs of girls.

Moreover, adapting educational systems to the specific needs of vulnerable groups is crucial for ensuring inclusivity and equity. Tailored programs on environmental sustainability and climate change education can equip girls with practical skills and knowledge relevant to local contexts, preparing them to address environmental challenges effectively. For example, the

²³ Bautista, M. G. G., Gualán, W. E. S., Medina, P. H., & Moreano, E. G. Z. (2024). Formal Education and Poverty in Ecuador in 2021: An Analysis Based on Scientific Evidence. *Migration Letters*, 21(2), 520-534. Available at: <https://migrationletters.com/index.php/ml/article/view/6201>

²⁴ Guijarro-Garvi, M., Miranda-Escolar, B., Cedeño-Menéndez, Y. T., & Moyano-Pesquera, P. B. (2022). Education as a dimension of human development: A Provincial-level Education Index for Ecuador. *Plos one*, 17(7), e0270932. Available at: <https://repositorio.unican.es/xmlui/handle/10902/26979>

"Climate Change Education Initiative" in Ecuador, led by a coalition of government agencies and environmental NGOs, develops curriculum materials and teacher training programs focused on integrating climate change education into the national education system.²⁵

In parallel, Ecuador must invest in teacher training programs to equip educators with the necessary tools and understanding for effective climate change education. This involves ensuring that teachers are qualified to communicate the importance of climate change education and foster critical thinking and environmental consciousness among students. Additionally, evaluating the effectiveness of policies at national and international levels is crucial to addressing intersectional barriers girls face and promoting gender-responsive approaches to education and climate action.

Disaggregated Data and Information on Vulnerable Girls

²⁵ Carrión-Mero, P., Morante-Carballo, F., Herrera-Franco, G., Jaya-Montalvo, M., Rodríguez, D., Valgas, C. L.-F. de, & Berrezueta, E. (2021). *Community-University Partnership in Water Education and Linkage Process. Study Case: Manglaralto, Santa Elena, Ecuador*. 13(15). <https://doi.org/10.3390/w13151998>

Climate change poses a significant threat to the ways of life, livelihoods, health, safety, and security of women and girls. The UN estimates that 80% of those displaced by climate change are women.²⁶ Climate change continues to widen existing gendered inequalities and thus directly affects women's rights to life, basic needs, and the right to education. Disaggregated data delves into the reality of how the level of impact of girls' education is determined or influenced by the effects of climate change.

Gender Score Data

Deep-seated gender stereotypes and discrimination persist in Ecuadorian society, affecting girls' education. Cultural beliefs about traditional gender roles often prioritise boys' education over girls', leading to lower enrolment and higher dropout rates among girls, especially in rural areas.

Different age groups of girls in Ecuador face distinct challenges. Younger girls may be at risk of early marriage and early pregnancy, while young women may encounter barriers to accessing higher education and decent work.

22% of girls in Ecuador are married or in a union before their 18th birthday, and 4% are married or in a union before the age of 15. In Ecuador, many unions are informal rather than formal marriages.²⁷ Ecuador has the second highest rate of teenage pregnancy in all of Latin America and the Caribbean. 19.6% of births recorded in Ecuador were to mothers under 20 years of age, with 23.4% of said mothers below the age of 20 being from indigenous communities that lack or are further away from basic healthcare services and resources.²⁸ As a result of inadequate access to healthcare services, new born children are at risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, and increased mortality rate whilst increasing the risk of early marriages and ending their journey to acquiring education. According to a study, most girls are driven to early marriages as a result of gender inequality, where girls' rights are believed to be inferior and less than males and girls are seen accepting early marriages to escape violence in their homes.

Vulnerability

Girls from low-income households in Ecuador often lack access to quality education, healthcare, and basic services, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

Not only is women's unemployment rate higher than men's, but women are also less represented at the decision-making level. The labour force participation rate in Ecuador

²⁶ Waheed, Z. (2023). Climate Change's greatest victims are women and girls. *UNICEF South Asia*. <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/blog/climate-changes-greatest-victims-are-women-and-girls>

²⁷ Girls Not Brides. (2020, April). Ecuador. Girls Not Brides. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/ecuador/>

²⁸ Bernardini, S., Honton, G., Irizarry, L., Sanz, J., Castillo, E., & Andrade, C. G. and L. (2021). Preventing teen pregnancies and supporting pregnant teenagers in Ecuador. *Field Exchange* 66, 33. <https://www.enonline.net/fex/66/www.enonline.net/fex/66/preventingteenpregnancies>

illustrates a stark gender gap in which 55% of women participate in the workforce while 78% of men do.²⁹

These and other factors make women, as well as minorities, children and adolescents, more vulnerable because they have fewer resources to cope with the adverse effects of climate change.

Disability

In particular, Girls with disabilities in Ecuador face challenges in accessing inclusive education, healthcare, and social services, leading to higher levels of marginalisation and exclusion. In a 2018 report, the UN indicated that, on average, 1 in 3 children with disabilities at the primary school level are not enrolled in school as compared to 1 in 7 children without disabilities.³⁰

Ecuador currently estimates a total of 472,213 people with disabilities.³¹ Disability in Ecuador is still stigmatised as Persons with Disabilities face many challenges of inclusion, as cultural norms are prevalent in rural areas, where many people still hold onto negative traditional beliefs surrounding persons with disabilities, leading to lower opportunities to defend the right to education.

The Ecuadorian Government has made legislative efforts to improve the treatment and experiences of persons with disabilities, including mandating that companies at least 4% of all staff at companies with more than 25 employees be persons with disabilities, as well as the Organic Law on Disabilities, which aims to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and advocate for social inclusion.³² Despite significant strides, however, most provisions of the Organic Law on Disabilities have not been implemented. As such, it is recommended that the Government increase advocacy and enforce legislation.

Geographic Location

Girls in rural areas of Ecuador face challenges accessing education, healthcare, and other services due to limited infrastructure and resources compared to urban areas. Given that Ecuador is the most populous country in South America, migrant and refugee women and girls in Ecuador face additional barriers to accessing education, healthcare, and protection, often due to their legal status and lack of social support.

²⁹ Carmen de Paz & Miriam Muller. (2018). *Gender Gaps in Ecuador: An Overview*. The World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/365451558612182082/pdf/Gender-Gaps-in-Ecuador-An-Overview.pdf>

³⁰ Inditex Entreculturas. (2023). Disability and education: Let's not leave anyone behind (Ecuador y Bolivia). *Inditex Entreculturas*. <https://www.educargeneraoportunidades.org/en/disability-and-education-lets-not-leave-anyone-behind-ecuador-y-bolivia/>

³¹ University of Notre Dame. (2021). *ND-GAIN Index: Ecuador*. University of Notre Dame. <https://gain-new.crc.nd.edu/country/ecuador>

³² Expat Focus. (2023). *Ecuador—Disability*. Expat Focus. <https://www.expatsfocus.com/ecuador/guide/ecuador-disability>

Ecuador is recognised as particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, ranked 108th out of 182 countries in the 2020 ND-GAIN Index.³³ The World Bank data noted that the country has recently experienced several natural disasters, including epidemic disasters (bacterial and viral diseases), floods, earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic activities, affecting millions. The most dominant events include 46 floods (riverine), 28 earthquakes (ground movement), 37 landslides, and 11 instances of volcanic activity. In the aftermath of these disasters, women and girls are less able to access relief and assistance, further threatening their livelihoods, wellbeing and recovery and creating a vicious cycle of vulnerability to future disasters.



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https://www.instagram.com/brokenchalk_/

³³ Fernanda Zermoglio & MacKenzie Dove. (2021). Climate Risk Country Profile: Ecuador (Climate Risk Country Profiles). World Bank Group. https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/country-profiles/15988-WB_Ecuador%20Country%20Profile-WEB.pdf