

U7+ Intergenerational Roundtables

Part One: Climate Change, Inequities and Intergenerational Justice
Co-hosted by Georgetown University and the University of Cape Town
Convened by Northwestern University and the U7+ Student Leaders Board

Climate change and environmental degradation is a global challenge that presents [serious threats](#) to human health, security and economic stability. Rising temperatures affect all forms of natural capital such as forests, glaciers and ocean ecosystems, which human rely on for resources. Fire, droughts and flood events impact food systems and agricultural productivity. Hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons and overall rising water levels are increasingly threatening human communities and devastating infrastructure and transportation networks.

Social impacts vary widely, but the climate crisis will continue to disproportionately affect [disadvantaged and vulnerable communities](#) through climate displacement, lost livelihoods, food insecurity, and adverse health impact. It is critical for governments and policymakers to put together mitigation and adaptation measures to address these pressing global challenges, with their strong ethical and equity dimensions.

The inequities raised by the climate crisis have a strong intergenerational component.

Since the publication of the first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in 1990, there is growing scientific consensus that climate change will have profound and lasting impacts on coming generations. According to the [Lancet Countdown 2019 Report](#) a child born today will experience a world that is more than four degrees warmer than the pre-industrial average, with climate change impacting human health from infancy to old age. Children and youth are highly vulnerable to disease transmissions, undernutrition from food insecurity, and at risk during extreme weather events. Climate change may also compound vicious [intergenerational cycle of disadvantage](#) that impedes human development. Imagine the lives of children born 10 or 20 years from now. What will their future look like?

The [preamble to the Paris Agreement](#) recognizes the importance of intergenerational equity alongside other ethical and policy considerations:

Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and [intergenerational equity](#)

Discussion Questions:

1. What do we owe to future generations? How should we address trade-offs between economic prosperity in the present and near future and the well-being of future societies?
2. How does the principle of intergenerational equity relate to the other principles enshrined in the Paris Agreement? How can they be creatively realized together?
3. How can we effectively involve the participation of young people and the U7+ alliance in wider conversations about equity and intergenerational justice amid the climate crisis?