

DESIGNING THE FUTURE: INNOVATION, INVESTMENT AND EQUITY



01

ABOUT VOICES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Voices of Sustainability is a thought leadership platform launched by the Zayed Sustainability Prize to explore the challenges and opportunities of the global transition to an inclusive and

prosperous future. Each month, the series hosts the world's thought leaders to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.



02

INTRODUCTION

On 29 October 2025, the Zayed Sustainability Prize aired its 53rd episode of the Voices of Sustainability series, entitled Designing the Future: Innovation, Investment and Equity. Featuring Kate Hampton, Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and newly appointed Jury Member of the

Zayed Sustainability Prize, the episode explored how finance, governance and innovation can be reimagined to deliver a fairer and more sustainable global system.



03

SUMMARY

In a world where more nations spend on debt than education, the global financial system stands at a crossroads. In the 53rd episode of Voices of Sustainability, Kate Hampton explores how global financial systems can evolve to meet today's realities while accelerating climate and social action.

Hampton opens by noting that worldwide financial architecture still reflects outdated geopolitical and economic structures from an earlier era. She argues reform must be both structural and immediate. While governance evolves, existing mechanisms can already redirect capital where it is most needed.

Highlighting that billions of people now live in countries spending more on debt servicing than on health or education, Hampton describes this as "finance flowing in the wrong direction". Tackling this imbalance is both a moral and practical imperative. For CIFF and partners, this means prioritising debt relief, innovating financial instruments linking capital to measurable sustainability and social outcomes, and fostering a new solidarity compact between those with resources and those in greatest need.

The conversation turns to local and youth-led innovation, with philanthropy acting as a vital bridge between global institutions and community leadership. Hampton highlights the Bridgetown Initiative, a transformative proposal from Barbados to drive global financial reforms, enabling climate-vulnerable nations access to faster, fairer finance, demonstrating how smaller nations can spark



It's really important to emphasise that those that are feeling the impacts most fiercely are those that are the least responsible - so we all have a responsibility to make sure that we invest in resilience.

Kate Hampton

Chief Executive Officer
Children's Investment Fund
Foundation

international change. She also praises regional platforms like the Africa Climate Summit, for reframing vulnerability into opportunity, highlighting the continent's wealth of solutions, renewable resources, and emerging green talent.

Emphasising listening as a precondition for equity, Hampton recounts how youth frustration at funding gaps led CIFF to help establish the Youth Climate Justice Fund, a multimillion-pound mechanism supporting youth-driven climate action across regions. This initiative exemplifies what funders achieve by listening and co-designing with young people rather than prescribing from above.

SUMMARY

A key theme is intergenerational responsibility. Hampton stresses that climate change is inseparable from child welfare, urging decision makers to embed intergenerational equity into planning. CIFF's support for the Children and Youth Pavilion at climate negotiations provides young people rare direct engagement with global leaders and fosters mutual understanding. Resilience emerges repeatedly, broadened beyond infrastructure to emotional, social, and economic dimensions. Hampton highlights rising climate anxiety in young people and calls for long-term investment in protective systems. Practical examples include flood-resistant schools, efficient water use, and climate-smart agriculture—integrated solutions that reduce risk, boost livelihoods, and strengthen national economies.

As a new Zayed Sustainability Prize Jury member, Hampton recognises the Prize's vital role in elevating grassroots innovations, translating lived experience into scalable impact, and acting as a key engine for opportunity. By providing funding, visibility and networks, the Prize helps organisations and young pioneers, whether winners or finalists, grow from promise to scale.

Through these insights, Hampton presents a vision of finance rooted in equity and empathy and a system that listens to communities, values the leadership and initiative of the next generation and rewards long-term resilience over short-term gain. She reminds listeners that reforming capital flows is not merely economic; it is about designing a future where prosperity and justice coexist.



04

BIOGRAPHIES

Kate Hampton

Chief Executive Officer
Children's Investment Fund Foundation

Kate Hampton is the Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), the world's largest philanthropy dedicated to improving children's lives and addressing climate change. She has led CIFF since 2016, following her role as Head of Climate, and brings over 25 years of experience in public policy, sustainable finance, and global development.

A Jury member of the Zayed Sustainability Prize, she also chairs the European Climate Foundation and advises the Observer Research Foundation, CCICED, and the WeProtect Global Alliance. A former government and NGO advisor, Kate holds degrees from the London School of Economics and Harvard Kennedy School, where she was a Fulbright scholar. Her contributions have been recognised with an OBE, the UAE's Order of Zayed II, and China's Friendship Award.



05

OUTCOMES



Global finance reform must be accompanied by immediate, equity-driven action to channel capital towards inclusive and climate-resilient growth.



Listening to and meaningfully involving communities and youth are central to designing durable and just solutions.



Intergenerational responsibility should be explicitly embedded in all sustainability policies.



Resilience financing must prioritise long-term, systemic benefits over short-term or siloed solutions.



Platforms like the Zayed Sustainability Prize play a vital role in elevating grassroots innovation and bridging the gap between promising ideas and scalable impact.

Watch the full episode on the Zayed Sustainability Prize's YouTube channel

Follow our social media accounts for updates about upcoming episodes

     [zayedsustainabilityprize](https://www.youtube.com/zayedsustainabilityprize)  [ZSP_ORG](https://t.me/ZSP_ORG)  [ZayedSustainabilityPrize.com](https://www.ZayedSustainabilityPrize.com)