



Press Release

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Children must come first in post-2015 disaster framework – NGO

Plan International calls on global leaders to prioritise disaster education and school safety

LONDON – SCHOOLCHILDREN must be protected from disasters and it is imperative students are prioritised in the post-2015 framework on disaster risk reduction, says child rights organisation Plan International.

As world leaders gather for the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, to discuss the post-2015 framework, Plan is calling for a concerted commitment to building a culture of safety and resilience in the education sector.

According to Roger Yates, Humanitarian Director for Plan International:

“Millions of children are affected by disasters every year, the frequency and ferocity of which is increasing – and when a disaster strikes, children and young people suffer disproportionately.

“One way to prepare communities for a disaster is through young people. It is imperative children are prepared and know what to do in the face of disaster, as they can then pass on the message to their community.

“That’s why Plan has put in place a [Safe Schools Programme](#), in 31 disaster-prone countries across the world, which engages partners in the education sector to promote schools as a platform for children and youth to grow up safely.”

[Worldwide, approximately 1.24 billion students are enrolled in primary and secondary schools](#)¹. [Yet 875 million school children live in areas of high seismic activity](#)², while hundreds of millions more face danger from regular flooding, landslides, extreme winds and fire hazards.

One of the most systematic ways to protect children is to protect their education. Children spend up to 50 per cent of the time they are awake in school, so the risk of needing to be prepared to deal with a disaster during school time is very real.

School premises should also be safe and able to withstand disaster as otherwise buildings can pose a serious risk to children who are going to school. When the 2005 earthquake struck Pakistan, [19,000 children died, most of them in widespread collapses of school buildings](#). At the time, building regulations were not being enforced on public schools.

“If a school is not built and maintained to withstand an earthquake or constructed to tackle a typhoon, it can cause irreplaceable loss to families, communities and countries – not to mention lifelong injuries. It can also have a big impact on a child’s education, as it comes under threat during and after a disaster and often education is one of the first activities abandoned when a disaster occurs,” says Roger Yates.

¹ [UNESCO Education For All Global Monitoring Report](#)

² [School Seismic Activity – Falling Between the Cracks.](#)

“Plan’s Safe School Programme seeks to build a culture of safety among children and their communities in areas at a high risk of natural disasters. A safe school provides a learning environment where children’s education, health, safety and security are ensured in both normal times and during disasters.”

Children are among the most vulnerable in a disaster – typically representing 50 – 60 per cent of those affected – yet are often viewed as powerless victims and excluded from prevention, planning and recovery.

Plan’s work shows that [children’s involvement](#) gives children a sense of control over situations, in which they might otherwise feel helpless.

As the new post-2015 framework comes under discussion, Plan is calling for the protection of school children and students in the education environment to be prioritised. Investing in disaster preparedness can and will save many lives – and this starts from a young age.

ENDS

Senior representatives from Plan will attend the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, from 14-18 March. They are available for interview and comment.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

ABOUT Plan:

*Founded 77 years ago, **Plan** is one of the oldest and largest children’s development organisations in the world. We work in 51 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to promote child rights and lift millions of children out of poverty. Plan is independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations. www.plan-international.org*

ABOUT Plan’s Global Safe Schools Programme:

Plan International currently runs a safe school programme in 31 disaster-prone countries across the world – including the Philippines, Cambodia, Honduras, Liberia, South Sudan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan amongst others - to ensure children are educated about the very real risk of a disaster and how they can prepare for a disaster and mitigate the risks.