

## Summary: Research into Action Brief

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### Research-into-Action Brief series

The series provides concise summaries of academic and grey literature on a range of topics for practitioners working in the fields of child-centred disaster risk reduction (CCDRR), climate change adaptation (CCA), and school safety. This Summary highlights the main messages in the full Research-into-Action Brief on child-centred disaster risk reduction. This summary was prepared as part of an ongoing research that is occurring alongside a five-year CCRR project being implemented by Save the Children Fiji. The project is taking a child-centred approach to strengthening resilience within national and local disaster risk reduction and management policies and processes.

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# Child-centred disaster risk reduction

Children are often perceived as passive or helpless ‘victims’ in times of disasters with limited potential to help safeguard themselves, families, and communities against natural hazards and other shocks and stressors. As a result, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) initiatives often work with adults, and exclude children.

However, children can, and do, play an active role in reducing disaster risks. In the past decade, researchers and practitioners have increasingly focused on placing children at the centre of efforts to reduce disaster risks, including those risks associated with climate change. This practice is called child-centred disaster risk reduction (CCDRR). CCDRR includes:

- Facilitating child participation and protection;
- Acknowledging children’s unique vulnerabilities and abilities;
- Creating opportunities for children to express their views, and analyse their own vulnerabilities and abilities; and
- Creating environments where children can participate in DRR and CCA with other children and adults in their community.

In CCDRR, adults acknowledge that children have unique perspectives, ideas, and knowledge that make meaningful contributions to DRR and CCA. Indeed, research shows that children can help to identify and analyse risks, communicate about risks, and build awareness in their families, schools, and communities about DRR and CCA. Through CCDRR, children can gain knowledge about disasters and climate change, and develop skills in co-operation, communication, and decision-making. Children can also develop a sense of self-efficacy and develop self-esteem from having their views and ideas acknowledged.

CCDRR must involve both children and adults, including parents, teachers, and government officials because dealing with the causes of children’s vulnerability often requires adults to act. Further, while children can and should be supported in playing lead roles in DRR, including CCA, responsibility and accountability for preparedness, mitigation and prevention as well as response lies with adults. Adults should also acknowledge and advocate for children as people with valuable contributions for DRR and CCA to create opportunities for children to use and develop their skills and knowledge. Therefore, CCDRR should aim to balance child-focused initiatives that acknowledge the specific protection, needs and rights of children (DRR **for** children) with strategies that aim to empower children (DRR **with** children).

## Practical Applications

Practitioners can use these recommendations to help promote and implement CCDRR:

**1. Children’s genuine participation is vital for effective CCDRR.** There is often a big difference between ideas about “participation”, and the realities of practice. For instance, participation can be simply activities *for* children, with fixed agendas and designs, that seek to

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educate children. While this kind of activity is an important part of CCDRR, practitioners must also create opportunities for children to express their views and their interpretation of events.

When implementing CCDRR, practitioners need to use participatory tools and facilitation skills to build trust and share decision-making power with children, and between children and adults. Practitioners should focus on creating safe ways for children to participate and express their views, needs, ideas, priorities and ideas.

## **2. Tools for CCDRR should be flexible, engaging and enjoyable.**

Tools for fostering children's participation in CCDRR should involve a mix of oral, visual and written activities that allow children to express their views, experiences and ideas. Children should also be able to adjust the tools as they learn and discuss DRR and CCA with each other, with their families and communities.

A key challenge in implementing CCDRR is having sufficiently flexible tools and frameworks to accommodate the diversity of characteristics that impact children's capacities and vulnerabilities, such as age, gender, beliefs, culture, disability and family structure, and their differing knowledge and strengths, and desire to participate.

**3. Adults and practitioners must recognise children as “agents of change”.** Children's participation requires dramatic shifts in the dominant ways adults perceive children. Acknowledging children's knowledge and skills, their capacities and perspectives, and the wider benefits these have to families and communities are important for effective CCDRR. Indeed, a key challenge when implementing CCDRR is adults' reluctance to transfer power and responsibilities to children.

**4. Practitioners must carefully consider the local cultural, social and political context.** Practitioners will often have to encourage adults and stakeholders to recognise and support of the benefits of CCDRR. When promoting or implementing CCDRR, practitioners need to make sure that the foundations of communities, social relationships and cultural practices that sustain the daily lives of children are not disrupted or undermined.

**5. Evaluation of CCDRR projects is important and further practice-based research is needed.** More understanding is required about which particular initiatives and tools are most effective for reducing the risk of disasters and fostering resilience, particularly in the Pacific. There are numerous resources using different tools and frameworks for use in CCDRR, including 4CA (for example, see Save the Children 2010, Plan International 2010). Research shows the benefits of CCDRR for children and communities. However, there is not much information on how to solve a range of real-life practice problems, such as how to design and deliver CCDRR programs, how to do routine monitoring and evaluation, how to know which programs are most effective, and how to “scale-up” and sustain CCDRR programs over the long-term.

In summary, there are strong reasons for actively including children in DRR and CCA, and children's participation has benefits for families, schools and communities. However, further practice-based research is needed to address the challenges in CCDRR.

## **More information**

All the references cited in this Research-into-Action Brief, can be found in the CCRR and CSS Bibliography at:

[https://www.zotero.org/groups/1857446/ccrr\\_css](https://www.zotero.org/groups/1857446/ccrr_css)

*Find all the references on this topic by searching for “CCDRR.”*

## **Key Readings**

Amri, A., Haynes, K., Bird, D.K. & Ronan, K. (2017), 'Bridging the Divide Between Studies on Disaster Risk Reduction Education and Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction: A Critical Review', *Children's Geographies*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 239-251, DOI: 10.1080/14733285.2017.1358448

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