



Reducing Risks, Enhancing Resilience

Save the Children's approach to Disaster Risk Reduction
and Climate Change Adaptation



Save the Children



Cover

A girl participates in a community disaster risk reduction program, Mekong Delta, Vietnam.

Photo: Save the Children.

Above left

A girl in Sandeshkali, Sunderbans in West Bengal working on an early warning drill.

Photo: SSDC/Save the Children.

Above right

Ummul (girl) 8 years and Abdi (boy) 5 years show their assignment to their teacher at an Alternative Basic Education school for pastoralist children in Somaliland.

Photo: Colin Crowley/Save the Children.

Over page

Children from a village in Bihar, India, have mapped hazards, risks and resources in their village. The information gathered by the Disaster Risk Reduction group is utilized by both the community and authorities responsible for emergency preparedness and response. (right to left: Vikash, Chandini, Bharti, and Asmita.)

Photo: Max Holm, Save the Children.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, disasters have affected more than 4.4 billion people worldwide and killed 1.3 million.¹ The economic and human losses resulting from weather and climate-related disasters have increased five-fold in recent years, rising from approximately US\$20 billion per year in the 1990s to approximately US\$100 billion annually in the first decade of the 21st century.² And, as the impacts of climate change intensify, the frequency, scale and severity of extreme weather events – and their impacts on children and economies – will dramatically increase. The world's poorest people are the most vulnerable to disasters, and children form a disproportionate percentage of those affected. Climate change, population growth and urban migration will exacerbate the risks children face, with Save the Children estimating that at least 175 million children will be affected annually by 2015.³ Reducing risk and building resilience are critical elements of sustainable development. If Save the Children's sector-based programming does not effectively tackle the challenges of climate change and disasters, the sustainability of development outcomes will be undermined. Unaddressed, climate change and disasters hold the potential to stall and reverse progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and trap the most vulnerable in the cycle of poverty.

A holistic approach to our programming is therefore essential as disasters and climate change risk overwhelming the current capacity of both the humanitarian and development systems to respond to the needs of children and their communities.⁴ Integrating robust analysis of disaster and climate risk into development planning and implementation will contribute to safeguarding the sustainability of programs and help communities be better prepared in the face of increasing disaster risks. Children play a critical role in this process; however, they are often sidelined from the decision-making process and defined as passive victims. Save the Children believes that although children are vulnerable, they have the potential to effectively communicate risks and act as agents of change, and they are capable of actively participating in the decision-making processes that will ultimately affect them, their families and the wider community.

Key Concepts

Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is the systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices to minimise vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society; to mitigate and prepare for adverse impacts of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development.⁵

In 1999 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and established the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) to lead and implement the global strategy for disaster reduction. Supported by 168 governments, UNISDR continues to lead efforts under the banner of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), 'Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters'. It is mandated to offer a set of tools and guiding principles for substantially reducing disaster losses, and it calls upon policy makers to understand disasters as socio-economic and political in nature, not as unavoidable natural events.

¹ UNISDR (2012) *Impacts of Disasters Since the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit*

² IMF (2012) *Natural Disasters: Mitigating Impact, Managing Risks*

³ Save the Children UK (2007) *Legacy of Disasters; Children Bear the Brunt of Climate Warming*

⁴ WFP, IFRC, OCHA (2009) *Addressing the Humanitarian Challenges of Climate Change: Regional and National Perspectives – Preliminary Findings from the IASC Regional and National Level Consultations*

⁵ www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology



Save the Children is striving to continue to support the work of UNISDR and contribute to its ongoing efforts to build momentum to address disaster risk. We believe that future priorities and objectives should build on the current successes of the HFA and its three strategic goals, which continue to gain momentum, and also incorporate complex disasters such as the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident of March 2011, climate change, risk reduction in conflict settings, cyclical drought and, perhaps most importantly, complex patterns of overlapping risk. Events such as the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011, the recurring flooding and fires in Australia, and the extreme weather events in the United States highlight that middle- and high-income countries are also vulnerable to severe disasters, and DRR should be seen not just as an issue of concern to low-income countries but as a global issue.

Climate Change Adaptation

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international scientific body that works under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The IPCC defines climate change adaptation (CCA) as "adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climate stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities". For Save the Children, adaptation is the process of helping children and their communities consider the additional risks climate variability and change bring to their lives and livelihoods, and building the knowledge and skills to effectively address these risks while continuing to develop in a harsher climate. Effective adaptation requires incorporating a set of practical measures across programming, policy and advocacy that reduce vulnerabilities, build on existing adaptive capacity and, ultimately, increase the resilience of children and their communities to the negative impacts of climate change.

Climate change is one of the most significant economic, social, development and environmental challenges of our time. There is a clear scientific consensus that the emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are driving climate change, and the evidence is mounting that children and their communities in vulnerable locations are already experiencing its impacts. While it is clearly established that modern climate change is largely a result of human activities, it is impossible to predict with certainty the future impacts and costs of climate change. We can no longer look to the past as an indicator of future climatic trends, and as the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events – such as floods, droughts, storms and wildfires – increase over the coming years, the poorest and most vulnerable will bear the brunt. They are the human face of climate change.

Integrating DRR and CCA into sector-based programming is both a humanitarian and a development priority. It is crucial that we reduce risk where we can. When this is not possible, it is crucial that we build resilience in high-risk areas before disaster strikes, so that the communities we work with are better able to manage the challenges during crises and continue to develop. Save the Children sees DRR and CCA as critical approaches to programming. By their nature, they cut across sectors and inform development and humanitarian action as well as help to bridge the gap between them.

Our Approach

Save the Children seeks to ensure that children's needs and capacities are considered in how people prepare for, react to and recover from disasters and adapt to long-term trends. We work to make this happen at all levels by building partnerships and collaborating with children, communities, civil society, local and national governments, and regional and international organisations.

Comprehensive School Safety

A framework for climate-smart disaster risk reduction, bridging development and humanitarian action in the education sector:

At the core of these child-centred and evidence-based efforts is the recognition of children's rights to survival and protection as well as to education and participation.

The purpose of this framework for *Comprehensive School Safety* is to

- a) bring these efforts into a clear and unified focus in order for education sector partners to work more effectively and
- b) link with similar efforts in all other sectors.

The Goals of Comprehensive School Safety

The goals of Comprehensive School Safety are to:

- Protect children and education workers from death and injury in schools
- Plan for educational continuity in the face of expected hazards
- Safeguard education sector investments
- Strengthen a disaster-resilient citizenry through education.

The Three Pillars of Comprehensive School Safety

Comprehensive School Safety is addressed by education policy and practices aligned with disaster management at national, regional, district and local school site levels. It rests on three pillars:

1. Safe learning facilities
2. School disaster management
3. Risk reduction and resilience education.

Multi-hazard risk assessment is the foundation for planning for Comprehensive School Safety. Ideally, this should be part of educational management information systems at national, subnational and local levels. It is part of a broader analysis of education sector policy and management in order to provide the evidence base for planning and action.



Above left

Children mapping hazards and vulnerabilities as part of a Disaster Risk reduction program in Sunderbans, India.

Photo: Save the Children.

Above right

Children's drawings show people replanting trees to protect from mudslides and storms, Thanh Hoa, Vietnam. Severe floods hit this region, destroying harvests and forcing many people to leave their homes. In the aftermath Save the Children supported this community with education and disaster risk reduction programmes.

Photo: Save the Children.

Theory of Change

Save the Children is committed to inspiring breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. We strive to:

- Be the voice: by advocating and campaigning for better practices and policies to fulfil children's rights and ensure their voices are heard
- Achieve results at scale: by supporting effective implementation of best practices, programs and policies for children, leveraging our knowledge to ensure sustainable impact at scale
- Be the innovator: by delivering greater impact for children through developing and providing evidence-based, replicable breakthrough solutions to the challenges they face
- Build partnerships: by collaborating with children, civil society organisations, communities, governments and the private sector to share knowledge, influence others and build capacity to ensure children's rights are met.

This model guides our global institutional framework and also underscores every aspect of our drive to integrate disaster and climate risk reduction and resilience building into programming across all key sectors.

Child-centred

Child-centred DRR and CCA puts children at the heart of risk reduction and resilience building. It is about focusing on the particular risks children face in particular contexts, and involving their voices and opinions in efforts to build resilience to the challenges of climate change and disasters. It is about early intervention to prevent irreversible harm to children at risk. It understands that children do not form one homogenous group and that their needs and capacities differ across age, gender, geography and socio-economic status.

Child-centred DRR and CCA aim to help ensure every child has their rights met in the context of increasing risk: the rights of access to information, free expression and association, participation, and access to justice. Save the Children believes that the fulfilment of all rights results in policies that better reflect the lived realities of the most vulnerable and more effectively safeguard the rights to life and health in a more hostile world.

The child-centred approach is about directly targeting children, particularly those who are especially vulnerable, excluded and marginalised. It is equally about engagement with support structures and institutions, including households, communities, local and national governments, and international organisations, to minimise adverse impacts and reduce or mitigate the risks that directly affect children's lives.

Risk and Resilience

A risk- and resilience-based approach to program design is central to ensuring effective implementation of DRR and CCA. This approach is cross-disciplinary, helping programs to address risk at multiple levels. It addresses system-level interactions (economic, environmental, political, social) and how they may aggravate current and future risks, but it also focuses on the individual – ensuring they have the necessary tools to minimise the impacts of shocks and stresses, and are also capable of adapting to new realities and changing contexts.

By applying a resilience approach, we are placing emphasis on the risks that exist as opposed to the hazards. Such an approach leads to more effective program design, and on a practical level it assists children, communities, governments and other stakeholders to design interventions that more effectively address potential impacts. Moreover, this approach focuses attention on enhancing the capacity of institutions, communities and individuals to adapt to shifting contexts and manage anticipated as well as unanticipated risks – rather



than merely focusing on vulnerabilities. For example, in Somaliland (Sanaag) and the North Eastern Province of Kenya (Wajir South), a participatory watershed assessment provided decision-makers in communities with maps to build on the land and water productivity of their area. While working with the governance structures in these pastoral and agro-pastoral communities, collective action, trust and partnership was sought in order to subsequently minimise the drought-related conflict incidents. Through discussions about climate impacts, parties can share knowledge and discuss different approaches to sustainable land and water management. Such a resilience-based approach has positive impacts on the health, safety and development of children and their communities. It reduces risks by building the supportive systems (reducing systems risk) as well as the specific risk.

Resilience should not be understood as a fixed state or an outcome. For Save the Children, resilience is a process that constantly evolves to meet changing demands. Resilience is context specific and will change over time as children, communities and institutions evolve. Save the Children is shifting resilience away from the purely theoretical and into the practical. The risk and resilience approach is only useful to us if it can be implemented in practice and make a difference in the lives of children and their caregivers.

Integration

The process of integration is about linking different activities in an appropriate sequence to achieve the greatest impact. For DRR and CCA, it means considering climate and disaster risks and resilience-building options when planning, implementing and monitoring all development and humanitarian activities. Integrating DRR and CCA during the planning stage is essential as this ensures that climate and disaster risks are integral to decision-making and not merely an afterthought in program implementation. Risk and resilience integration is essential for sector-based programs to achieve sustainable outcomes and ensure that responses are tailored to the specific context. Research shows that development programs are more likely to be effective if climate and disaster risk and resilience building are taken into account in the very early stages of the planning cycle.⁶

On the Ground

While the methodologies provide the basis for our interventions, it is important to understand what this means for our programs once they become operational. The majority of Save the Children's DRR and CCA work falls within five categories. These categories are not distinct, and depending on the objectives of a particular project, they must work together to achieve sustainable impact. Save the Children's program portfolio has a strong focus on strengthening multi-level linkages for effective disaster and climate risk reduction, preparedness, response and adaptation. The five categories are:

Early warning: the set of capacities needed to generate and disseminate timely and meaningful warning information, giving people time to respond to a disaster. Early-warning systems work with other DRR interventions to protect and support sustainable development. By responding early, families can protect themselves and their livelihoods, which places them in a much stronger position for recovery. For example, in the Horn of Africa, an early-warning model is being piloted that would use two tools to continuously monitor multiple risks: a seasonal calendar (called Finger on the Pulse) and a map of key risks and resources. This mapping and monitoring exercise involves children, communities and field offices of Somaliland and North Eastern Kenya and allows the communities to

Above left

Children going to school on a raised walkway keeping them above flood waters in Khulna, Bangladesh. Thousands of people were displaced in Shyamnagar Upazila, Satkhira district after Cyclone Aila struck Bangladesh on May 25, 2009, triggering tidal surges and floods. The storm destroyed crops, homes and livestock, affecting more than 350,000 Bangladeshi families.

Photo: GMB Akash/Panos Pictures.

Above right

Naima, 12 attends a religious school in rural Bangladesh. Her school is just one of 100 to receive support from Save the Children with school disaster management and contingency planning aimed at keeping children safe during and after disaster events.

Photo: Menaca Calyaneratne/Save the Children.

⁶ OECD (2009) *Policy Guidance on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation*; UNISDR, UNDP (2012) *Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific: An Institutional and Policy Analysis*



Above left

Students during a Disaster Reduction Drill at a school in Leogane Haiti. This school was built with Save the Children's support using innovative yet simple techniques that make it more hurricane and earthquake-resistant.

Photo: Susan Warner/Save the Children.

Above right

Vokti, five, writing in a notebook in class in rural Bangladesh. The school was built and is currently being supported by Save the Children following the destruction caused by Cyclone Alia.

Photo: GMB Akash/Panos Pictures.



discuss and analyse changes that need to happen to prepare for times of hardship and cumulative vulnerability. It surveys the sectoral trends as well as the underlying causes and the negative coping capacities of all actors.

Preparedness: enhance people's knowledge and capacity to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from disaster. This includes ensuring that communities and local government have response and recovery plans. For example, a Save the Children project in Nepal has worked with communities to develop, and build the capacity of, preparedness and response teams. The project has helped children and the communities to develop child-centred school safety plans, and it has also increased understanding of disaster risks and resilience by integrating DRR in school curriculum. Children have also participated in updating district disaster preparedness and response plans, helping meet their right to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Disaster mitigation: reduce the risks of disasters. Disaster mitigation provides an important basis for disaster management. Communities often cannot prevent the adverse impact of hazards, but they can undertake various strategies and actions to substantially lessen the scale or severity of these hazards. Save the Children works closely with communities and the disaster management agencies of local governments, supporting the development and implementation of DRR action plans and sectoral planning strategies through locally defined disaster mitigation measures. In the Solomon Islands, DRR committees have been established in a number of communities, with the aim of empowering these committees to implement their own DRR action plans. Activities include planting mangroves along shorelines, incorporating safe construction principles into new community structures, and constructing barriers and bridges to protect children and communities from the impacts of king tides and flooding.

Disaster resilience: the ability of a system, community or society to resist, absorb, accommodate and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner. Save the Children works to increase children's and communities' resilience to disasters and climate change by helping to ensure DRR and CCA are integrated into sector-based programming. For example, in Laos, communities where we work have highlighted the need to pursue more disaster-resilient livelihood options. Local economies rely on agriculture, which supports more than 80 per cent of the population. In response, Save the Children has adopted integrated disaster and climate risks and resilience-building strategies into our livelihoods activities to sustainably increase household-level resilience and reduce asset loss and food insecurity.

Adaptation: a process by which strategies to moderate, cope with and take advantage of the consequences of climatic events are enhanced, developed and implemented. For Save the Children, adaptation is about helping children and their communities survive and thrive in a harsher climate. Our goal is to increase knowledge and understanding of the implications climate change has for development, build capacity to plan for and manage likely impacts, and catalyse 'no regrets' adaptive actions (activities that reduce the risks of current climate variability while increasing resilience to future changes). For example, in Vietnam, Save the Children is working with children and their communities in climate-vulnerable locations to increase understanding of climate change and integrate climate risks and adaptation actions into local planning processes. For adaptive capacity to be sustainable, communities require engagement from policy makers, access to information for decision-making, and resources for implementation.



How Save the Children Reduces Risk

National and International Policy

We need to ensure that government plans take into account the needs of children in disasters and that children's voices are heard in the formation of policies. Governments must guarantee the fulfilment of every child's rights to free expression and association, participation, and access to justice and information at national, regional and international levels. The HFA framework aims to guide states, organisations and institutions in their approach to designing DRR programs. However, as children are often the group most affected by disasters, a framework that does not include their unique set of circumstances is falling short of its main aim: to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters by achieving substantive reduction of disaster losses by 2015. Children cannot simply become an afterthought, and they should play a central role in the post-HFA framework.

Institutional Capacity and Strengthening

If we wish to integrate and implement effective policies that address children's needs and capacities in DRR and CCA, we must ensure that institutional capacity and an enabling policy framework exist. To sustainably build resilience at the community level, policy change is required at national and international levels. A core part of Save the Children's work for children is advocating for national policies to reflect the lived realities of communities in climate- and disaster-vulnerable locations. National-level policy change can, in turn, have an impact on international agreements and processes. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Save the Children signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Security. The purpose of the MoU is to support the protection and rescue system in BiH. It aims to improve prevention and enhance the readiness of relevant institutions in BiH to respond to disasters, with special focus on the adequate protection of children.

Local Government and Partners Capacity Building

One element that is integral to effective resilience building is ensuring that crucial agencies at the local level – both government and non-government – have the necessary skills and capacities to protect children and fulfil their rights. Building DRR and CCA understanding and capacity in local institutions will help improve development outcomes, reduce the risks posed by disasters and climate change, and help build broad community resilience. Local government and partners should be supported in their efforts to develop DRR and CCA activities at the local level and in their efforts to incorporate the views and priorities of communities and children. Save the Children works closely with partners in all our DRR and CCA projects and programs to ensure sustainability and to support government in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. In Peru, under the Apoyo a la Reducción de Riesgos en barrios de Lima project, Save the Children has seconded 75 per cent of the time of a Save the Children staff member with risk reduction expertise to the municipality of Villa El Salvador (VES), on the outskirts of Lima, to provide both mentoring and capacity building. The remaining 25 per cent of the staff member's time is spent acting as a liaison to the metropolitan and national levels of government. The project helps ensure that the local government has the capacity to take on elements of this pilot project and expand them to other neighbourhoods in VES and to other districts across Lima.

Above left

Save the Children has distributed over 600 disaster hoods for children to wear in the event of another emergency, protecting them from heavy blows by falling debris and from possible fires. School children in Japan participate in regular emergency preparedness drills, where children go through the steps they would take in an emergency, such as the frequent earthquakes that hit the country.

Photo: Save the Children.

Above right

School Children participating in a CPR contest called "Save a friend's life in a storm" in Vietnam. Such emergency preparedness exercises are crucial in ensuring that children are prepared and know what to do in the event of a disaster.

Photo: Save the Children.

Children's Charter

The Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction was developed for children, by children in 2010-11. More than 600 children from across the world took part in the initial development, with more than 1000 children endorsing and upholding the charter as part of a follow-up consultation in 2012. Save the Children, together with Plan, UNICEF and World Vision, has committed to upholding the children's five identified priorities for DRR in all our work, as well as supporting our partner organisations to do the same. A further 300+ individuals, including representatives from 26 governments, have pledged to work to uphold these priorities in their day-to-day activities. The priorities are:

- Schools must be safe and education must not be interrupted.
- Child protection must be a priority before, during and after a disaster.
- Children have the right to participate and to access the information they need.
- Community infrastructure must be safe, and relief and reconstruction must help reduce future risk.
- Disaster risk reduction must reach the most vulnerable.



Above left

Children draw maps of their village in the Irrawaddy Delta, Myanmar (Burma). Save the Children is helping children identify the dangerous areas and safer places if there is another cyclone.

Photo: Tina Salsbury.

Above right

Children and adults learn side by side in a Save the Children PSNP supported school in Ethiopia. This school is part of a project called the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) which provides monthly food in return for 5 days work, mother and child health, education support, disaster risk reduction and WASH activities.

Photographer: Cat Carter/Save the Children.



The Community and the Role of Children

When communities, families and children are empowered to mitigate identified risks of disasters and understand climate change impacts, this can help build individual and community resilience. Save the Children works directly with children to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in discussions and decisions where they are directly affected. We aim to inspire direct action from children on the issues that matter to them. We also work with their families, women, community leaders and others to draw on their existing knowledge, increase understanding and access to information, and create safer environments for all. This helps avoid fragmenting community structures and means that all participants can be actively engaged and take full ownership of the process of resilience building. Children, while immensely capable, cannot generate lasting change on their own. They need to be supported by the community and institutional structures that are charged with ensuring their welfare. When these structures are more resilient to the impacts of disasters and climate change, children will be better protected. When these structures operate in a child-centred manner, children become a respected part of decision-making processes, and their unique perspective is taken into account in the planning and implementation of actions designed to increase resilience.

If a project takes into account the full range of a community's aspirations, needs and capacities, and includes analysis of the full range of hazards it faces, it is more likely to lead to community ownership of activities and to more sustainable outcomes. For example, in Bangladesh, children have used participatory tools to undertake hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessments of their communities. The children consulted with their elders to gain a better understanding of the disaster history of the area. Armed with this information, and with the support of local agencies, the children arranged validation workshops with community leaders to test their assumptions about capacities and vulnerabilities, and proceeded to lead the development of community risk reduction action plans that have strong community ownership.

Looking Ahead

Save the Children continues to make DRR and CCA a priority. Over the past seven years we have implemented DRR and CCA programs in over 45 countries. Save the Children has actively sought to integrate risk reduction and resilience building into all of our sector-based programming, including education, child rights governance, child protection, livelihoods, health, and emergency response. All of our programs aim to benefit children and support their specific needs, but we understand that project and program interventions should work at multiple levels, thus work across the community, local government and civil society, national legislation and regional international policy forums are seen as primordial for the effective implementation of our work. Save the Children believes that the risk and resilience approach that we have adopted will contribute to the sustainability of project outcomes in an increasingly complex and increasingly hazard-prone world.



Save the Children