



## The Resilient Future We Want:

# Children and Disaster Risk Reduction in Post 2015

**“Children are not just a vulnerable group, but can play vital roles in their communities to prepare for future disasters”**

Margareta Wahlström, UN Special Representative on DRR, July 2012<sup>1</sup>

**Just as you have journeyed to Geneva this May to influence disaster risk reduction and post HFA processes, 10 children and young people from 5 countries are also bringing their voices to the negotiation table – representing the views of the many children living in communities at risk on the resilient future they want adults to prioritize today.**

### Why Children?

In 2012 it was estimated that in the Sahel region of Sub-Saharan Africa, over one million children faced severe and life-threatening malnutrition during the drought and food crisis. In the same year in the Philippines, over 1.6 million children were affected by Typhoon Bopha. Moreover, with the projected impacts of climate change, these numbers are likely to increase - it is estimated that there are already 756 million children living in the ten countries that are most vulnerable to climate change.<sup>2</sup>

Children are therefore key stakeholders in disaster risk reduction (DRR) - not only do they face considerable and specific risks but they are also essential contributors to successful DRR policy and programmes.

### Why now?

2013 marks an important moment in international policy decisions that will ensure children are central to DRR strategies, with several relevant frameworks being negotiated by 2015. Collectively these processes are known as ‘post 2015’. By 2015, a new framework to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is likely to be agreed, based around sustainability and ‘sustainable development goals’ (SDGs). Building resilience to disaster risk as well as to climate change and conflict was recognized as a significant gap in the existing MDG framework and has already been identified as a key area for these new discussions<sup>3</sup>. Also in 2015, UNFCCC negotiations on climate change (which include a stream on adaptation and disaster risk) are anticipated to conclude with a new globally binding deal.

Notably, the 2013 Global Platform is also key in the development of a successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), that runs until 2015, which will be vital in promoting and implementing disaster risk reduction and resilience building for the most vulnerable now and far into the future- and consequently for children. 2013 to 2015 therefore represents a key moment for progress. It is important to capitalise on this to ensure that we build a resilient future for children.

## The Challenge and The Opportunity

How can we ensure that these 'post 2015' mechanisms tackle the multiple and increasing risks faced by children? And what must we prioritise to firstly, better protect girls and boys in a world of increasing shocks and stress, and secondly, to better enable the vital roles that children play in disaster risk reduction and building resilience?

The post 2015 processes will determine the future for today's children and generations to come. Now is the time to take action to ensure the framework for a safer and more resilient future is fair, more inclusive and more effective. We call on all Global Platform delegates to help put in place a legacy of disaster resilience that

will truly benefit those set to face a more disaster prone future.

This brief identifies five key comprehensive and complementary priorities- ensuring all children count, setting targets, sex and age disaggregation, integration of DRR into development, and participation- which are vital to consider to ensure that DRR and resilience building in post 2015 discussions benefits and includes children.

## 2. Key Priorities for Children

### i) Making sure *all* children count

***"I think the Haitian government must hear the voices of children, help the children, particularly homeless children, creating shelters for children, building hospitals so that children can receive the health care services they need."***

*Girl, 17 from Haiti*

Disasters exacerbate existing inequalities. Disaster impacts can vary according to the sex and age of the child, their socio-economic situation and the level of

## The Children's Charter on Disaster Risk Reduction

The Children's Charter for DRR (the 'Charter'), which identifies children's priorities for risk reduction, was launched at the Global Platform in 2011 by partners of the Children in a Changing Climate Coalition (Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision). The Charter was developed through consultations with over 600 girls and boys in 21 high-risk countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and identifies five key priorities for DRR which is inclusive of children:

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

Following its launch, the Charter attracted high profile support. Currently over 200 representatives from government to staff from NGOs and the UN have pledged their support to the realisation of the Charter's priorities.

The Charter provides a clear mandate from children on priorities for DRR. In 2012/2013, follow up research consulted more than 1200 children in 17 countries, across Africa, Asia and Latin America. These consultations focused on how the Charter priorities can be achieved - exploring enabling factors and challenges in implementation. This constitutes important evidence that can better inform post 2015 decision making.

their exposure to hazards. Impacts on the most vulnerable children can include death, injury, illness, separation from families, interruption to education as well as child protection risks such as violence and abuse, child labour and trafficking – all of which have long term impact on their lives.

In order to ensure equity, those most vulnerable to disasters and other shocks, must be specifically targeted, empowered and protected. This particularly includes marginalized and hard-to-reach children – such as orphans, street and working children, children with disability, children out-of-school and from ethnic minorities, as well as girls. In the recent research conducted by Children in a Changing Climate, many children consulted cited a strong concern that DRR must reach the most vulnerable.

Child sensitive DRR policies that protect and empower vulnerable girls and boys from disaster risks must be an important building block for post-2015 processes if they are to deliver outcomes on inequity and help facilitate all children to fulfill their potential.

## ii) Setting Targets and Delivering

***“When it is a normal day like today, no rain, no storm, the local government just don’t care, they disappear, up until when there is an emergency, when things get bad, then they are back again.”***

*Edwin, adolescent boy from El Salvador*

Disaster risk reduction is the responsibility of states. The creation of the post 2015 landscape presents the opportunity for strong leadership by states. In order for the rights of girls and boys as well as women and men to be upheld and their wellbeing protected from disasters, as duty bearers many states must improve transparency, accountability and knowledge sharing in the run up and within post 2015.

Measurable targets need to be set to strengthen the system of DRR reporting and accountability at global and national level. Currently, the HFA is not legally binding- the primary tool for reporting at a national government level is self-assessment. This has meant limited consultations with civil society and vulnerable groups have taken place to date. For a new post HFA framework, more transparent and participatory systems for accountability must be supported – which notably, as discussed further below, must provide the opportunities for children and youth to also contribute their views.

## iii) Unpacking Who is at Risk: Sex and Age Disaggregation

***“We need help knowing where we can get help. Girls are different from boys, we have different health problems.”***

*Sheila, 16 from Philippines, affected by 2009’s Ondoy Typhoon*

Improved mechanisms for disaster risk management data collection and reporting which account for differentiated impact of disasters by sex and age must be a priority for all post 2015 frameworks.

For example, the needs of adolescent girls before, during and after disasters are very different to those of under-five boys. This means that policy and programmes responding to each of their needs must be understood and designed appropriately.

Strengthening national and sub-national systems to better document sex and age disaggregated risks and damage and losses will help deliver on such outcomes. This can also provide a basis for improved accountability and programming for DRR, particularly for vulnerable children and women.

Adaptive and appropriate DRR policies and programmes will also reinforce more effective inclusion and address inequality challenges, as well as strengthen accountability to all vulnerable and disaster impacted groups.

Donors’ and national governments’ investment and commitment to disaggregated data and knowledge will ensure more informed DRR decision making and the delivery of programmes that are appropriate for all children, delivering better outcomes for all.

## iv) Integration: Ensuring Basic Services Reduce Risk

***“The first thing that needs to be ensured is the protection of children. Otherwise there will be no education or anything else.”***

*Moges, boy from Ethiopia<sup>4</sup>*

If the post-2015 framework is to address disaster risk and strengthen resilience, action must take place not only in the humanitarian sphere but also in the sphere of long-term development. Post-2015 discussions

provide an opportunity to embed risk management and resilience within global, national and local development strategies to ensure that multi-hazard risks faced by girls and boys can be reduced in the most effective way. Tackling crises such as severe malnutrition within the Sahel; reduced school enrolment after recurring local disasters in Bolivia, Indonesia, Nepal and Vietnam<sup>5</sup>; and trauma and displacement experienced by children in the Horn of Africa – all require a comprehensive and systems approach.

Basic social services need to be risk-informed, work together and link with civil society to support communities to enable them to adapt to changing conditions.

Basic social services that meet children's rights – such as education, health and protection – therefore have a key role to play in reducing risk and building resilience. Government's core public sectors have the potential to provide this; however, government potential in many cases now needs to be capitalized and strengthened for more effective resilience building for all children.

## v) Participation: Involving and Including Children

***"I believe that children play a vital role in achieving the goals of DRR. In our municipality, the youth don't just sit back and wait for what the adults will say but we really do something for the environment and we participate actively in issues affecting the youth and our community, especially in reducing damages inflicted by disasters."***

*Andre, 16, from Philippines<sup>6</sup>*

A post 2015 framework will have a fundamental impact on the lives and futures of children everywhere. According to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have a right to participate in decisions affecting them, and post 2015 and DRR contexts are no exception. Disasters and disaster risk affect children's lives and will only continue to do so more in the future as risks such as climate change intensify. Disaster management and climate adaptation are therefore issues of inter-generational justice—decisions made now will affect the future of children and generations to come. It is only right therefore that

decision making within the post HFA process should include the active participation and agency of children and young people.

The increased participation of children and young people at regional and national level dialogues on DRR evident in 2012 was a welcome development towards this. Moreover, the proposal for a youth and children's forum on DRR in Japan in 2015 sends a strong message about the importance of consulting and involving children and young people in DRR policy and decision-making. Children can make important contributions and can articulate the risks they face to help shape effective DRR policy.

Beyond the post-HFA process, all other post-2015 processes must also be informed by more opportunities for children to be consulted at regional, national and local levels the help inform and build the resilient future that children want.

## 3. Conclusion

***"These are not just risks. They represent real consequences...Lack of action on climate change threatens to make the world our children inherit a completely different world than we are living in today."***

*Dr Jim Yong Kim, President of World Bank, March 2013<sup>7</sup>*

We call on all 2013 Global Platform delegates to take action on these priorities to ensure that decisions being made now will safeguard and protect children everywhere from disaster risk, now and in to the future beyond 2015. The wellbeing of future generations will strongly be determined by decisions being made for 'a resilient planet and for resilient people' at this Global Platform. Since HFA's launch in 2005, many children have benefited from the reductions in loss of lives and damages as a result of successful DRR implementation. However regrettably too many others had their lives directly affected by the impacts of disasters. To ensure today's children and future generations are not left behind we must take concrete action to endorse and invest in their role to build a more resilient future for all now and beyond 2015.

## References

<sup>1</sup> 'Children ask to be heard on post-HFA'

<sup>2</sup> 'Climate Proof Children' UNICEF UK, 2011

<sup>3</sup> UN SDG Platform

[www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549](http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549)

<sup>4</sup> 'Towards the Resilient Future Children Want', Bild and

Ibrahim Children in a Changing Climate 2013

<http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/home.htm>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction: Summary and Main Findings

<sup>6</sup> Global Network Global Platform 2011 Blogs

<http://www.globalnetwork-dr.org/global-platform-2011/conference-blog/entry/andre-is-16-and-from-san-francisco-in-camotes-philippines.html>

<sup>7</sup>World Bank: climate change hurting global economy

<http://www.pina.com.fj/?p=pacnews&m=read&o=3029291615147df080a7d9843ba8ee>



## Further Reading

At the Global Platform 2013, Children in A Changing Climate will release a new research report '**Towards the Resilient Future Children Want**'. The report looks at progress on the Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction and case studies of good practice and profiles the views of children about achieving DRR that delivers for children. The report provides important evidence on children and DRR to help inform post-2015 discussions.

The report will be available at the Global Platform and on [www.childreninachangingclimate.org](http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org)

