



Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction  
June 16-19, 2009  
Save the Children Statement

Mr. Chairman, esteemed delegates,

Save the Children has prioritized Disaster Risk Reduction. We currently have DRR programmes in 30 countries and are expanding this work. In addition, we are incorporating DRR into programme planning worldwide so that it becomes standard practice at all levels, from the local through to the global. Our experience shows that disasters affect the poorest communities and the most vulnerable people the hardest. Children bear the brunt: they may not know when to flee or where to go; children separated from their parents and families are exposed to even greater danger; children may not understand what is happening. In most disasters, more than half of those who die are children. Yet children's immediate and long term physical and emotional needs are often overlooked in efforts to prepare for and respond to disasters.

One of the ways to remedy this is to **recognise the important role children can play in disaster risk reduction**. Donors, national governments and civil society organizations must implement and support child-centered disaster risk reduction activities. Child Centred DRR recognises the risks that hazards pose to children above and beyond that of adults and places children at the center of all DRR planning and considerations at all levels, through institution strengthening, and with local partners and communities and especially with children themselves. Save the Children has pioneered child-centered DRR programmes and proven that involving children in DRR means they are better informed, better able to help their families, and less afraid of the unknown consequences. Together with governments, communities and children in disaster-prone areas of Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Nicaragua and elsewhere, we have developed early warning systems, reinforced schools and helped children to assess the risks they face, draw up emergency preparedness plans and maps, participate in drills and evacuation simulation activities, and raise awareness of the risks among their peers and adults in their community.

Significant opportunities arise through school based programs to promote a culture of safety by introducing DRR as a subject within the curriculum or integrating DRR topics into existing subjects. However it is equally critical while educating children about DRR that the very environment in which they are learning does not pose a physical threat. School design and placement must take into consideration natural hazards at the time of planning and construction. **Donors must allow for sufficient funding for risk assessments and adequate design and construction costs to ensure that a school is safe before agreeing to fund such projects.** Funding should also be prioritized for mitigation activities which allow for the retrofitting of school buildings currently in use around the world which do not meet the necessary standards for safety. At the same time, it must also be recognized that the most vulnerable children may not be in school and greater focus should be placed



on community based DRR activities such as social protection and livelihoods resilience that reduce underlying risk factors.

As a way of protecting children's rights and putting them at the centre of DRR and climate change adaptation efforts, **National Emergency Preparedness Plans, National Adaptation Plans of Action and other such initiatives put in place by governments should directly address children's needs.** Children make up on average 50% of those affected by a disaster. However, their specific needs are rarely addressed or incorporated into national preparedness and response plans.

Finally, given Disaster Risk Reduction's importance in reducing the impacts of disaster and protecting children, donors must substantially increase their financial support to these activities, ensuring that child centered DRR efforts are adequately funded. **Save the Children urges donors to commit the equivalent of an additional 10% of the funding currently spent on disaster response for DRR.** This funding should be additional and not diverted away from existing development or humanitarian aid budgets and should be reported on transparently. Risk reduction should also be mainstreamed into all development and humanitarian activities.

Save the Children is committed to working with ISDR partners, governments, donors, communities and children themselves to ensure that the needs of children are adequately addressed in preparing for, reacting to, and recovering from disasters.

Thank you.