

## **Statement by Plan International for the 2009 Global Platform**

Plan International's work with children on risk reduction is important globally. This has been underlined by 2 major international reports<sup>1</sup> published in the last month and is firmly on the agenda at the UNISDR Global Platform 2009.

Plan's work has concentrated on helping children and young people to understand more fully the causes and effects of disasters and what they can do to prevent and be prepared for them. Protecting children and helping their development is our mandate. Furthermore, children in developing countries have contributed least to the causes of disasters but are worst affected by them. Plan's work with these children offers practical answers to difficult questions about inter-generational justice and reducing poverty. There are 3 main reasons why involving children is important.

1. Our work is showing that children and young people can be effective leaders of change. They are not as fatalistic about disasters as adults. They challenge complacency by speaking their minds, producing fresh ways of thinking and a new enthusiasm. "They see things we don't see and say things we won't say"
2. They are often better educated than their parents and more open to new ideas. They become ambassadors for positive change in the home and global communities in which they live, learn, play and socialise.
3. Focusing investment on children and young people helps us achieve local and global development goals, from the MDGs to Kyoto targets and particularly the Hyogo priorities that are being discussed at this conference.

Engaging the next generation creates momentum for the future. As a Filipino mayor said recently, "It is important that a new generation of leaders evolves who have a vision of thinking about disaster risk reduction".

To paraphrase the summary of the recent climate change report, prioritising the education and the agency of young people is an essential feature in any society's capacity to manage risk and develop sustainably.

"The threats that climate change brings emphasise the need to recognize the wide range of risks inherent in development. It is not about 'mainstreaming risk into' development but rather recognizing that development is risk management. Good development is about unpacking that risk, making it visible and transparent, and ensuring that all households, and all societies, especially their children, have sufficient information to take decisions on how much risk they will accept and how they will manage it."

Informed and motivated citizens will ensure good governance for managing risks, and good governance will thrive on the input of proactive citizens, including children.

The conclusions of these 2 major global reports about climate change and disasters confirm that Plan's risk reduction work should be extended.

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<sup>1</sup> UNISDR Global Assessment Report 2009. And the report of the Commission on Climate Change and Development

Development efforts are increasingly at risk. Unless we change our ways, children's rights to protection and development will continue to be compromised, sometimes catastrophically. Thus Ban Ki-moon's foreword for the 2009 UNISDR GAR report calls for "... a radical shift in development practices and a major new emphasis on resilience and disaster planning".

The report concludes by saying the improvements in risk reduction governance are the top priority and "investing today to strengthen capacities is essential **if** future generations are to enjoy a safer tomorrow". But the "if" in this statement shows that we need to do better. Plan's work demonstrates that focusing investment **in** future generations – namely today's children - is a much less tentative and uncertain approach.

Helping children to learn and be able to use this knowledge is an effective and predictable low-risk route to a safer tomorrow. **Well informed and motivated citizens will ensure better governance for managing all the risks a society faces, and good governance thrives on the input of proactive citizens, including young people and children.**

#### **Plan at the Global Platform:**

Plan's goals for the Global Platform (GP) centre on education and governance. Our aim is to show that although prioritizing education is a good investment, the best returns only appear when we combine education with programmes that support the active citizenship of young people.

Rhee, a 15 year-old boy from the Philippines (from a Plan PU) will be at the GP in Geneva to explain what this citizenship has meant for him, his friends and his community. He learnt about disaster risks at school, became concerned about his school's risky location at the foot of steep hillside and then orchestrated a campaign that eventually convinced the government to relocate his school out of the path of a potential landslide.

Plan has organized a 'Special Event' at lunchtime on the first day of the GP to showcase Rhee's story. We are backing him up by publishing a report of a new survey about children and disasters, showing a film with similar experience from other countries, and a senior UNESCO official will make a presentation to explain how other initiatives in Indonesia complement Plan's approach. This event is jointly organized by Plan, UNICEF, World Vision and Save the Children. Rhee will be at the GP during the conference week to reinforce the connection between education, citizenship and better governance of risk management.

On Thursday Rhee is a panelist together with Plan International CEO Nigel Chapman on a 'High-level roundtable on education and health'.

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