



# Children's Charter

## an action plan for disaster risk reduction for children by children

The **Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction** (DRR) has been developed through consultations with more than 600 children in 21 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.<sup>1</sup>

Children were asked about the impacts of disasters on their lives, the networks that exist in their communities to tackle disasters and their priorities for DRR going forward.

The following abbreviated version of the charter presents five points selected based on the priorities identified by children themselves, grouped together according to the most common themes.

The aim of this charter is to raise awareness of the need for a child-centred approach to DRR and for stronger commitment from governments, donors and agencies to take appropriate steps to protect children and utilise their energy and knowledge to engage in DRR and climate change adaptation.

The full version of the Charter and an action plan will be published by August 2011.<sup>2</sup>

### 1) Schools must be safe and education must not be interrupted

*"I felt unhappy when I saw the school destroyed by the storm. I did not go to school because the school was destroyed. It happened at night and in the morning my friend and I went to school and found it had been destroyed."* child from Laos

### 2.) Child protection must be a priority before, during and after a disaster

*"We do not feel protected by anyone in our community"* child from Mozambique. In India, children suggested training in life-skills which they feel would *"enable them to protect themselves from risks and troubles"* and that they be provided special care when they are traumatised by disasters.

### 3.) Children have the right to participate and to access the information they need

*"I am part of the Emergency Committee that has been created in the community. Our goal is to reduce the disaster risk by implementing the principles of the Community Emergency Plan."* child from Dominican Republic.

### 4.) Community infrastructure must be safe, and relief and reconstruction must help reduce future risk.

*"Build bridges because every year children miss school in the rainy season when they have to cross gullies, rivers and water channels huge enough to drown them."* child from Lesotho

### 5.) Disaster Risk Reduction must reach the most vulnerable

*"In my area, there were three children about 4-5 years old. Once they went on the river dyke to avoid the flood water which could make them wet on the street, but they slipped and fell in the river and were drowned because they could not swim."* child from Philippines

### Children's Charter Pledge

By signing up to the pledge below, you can show your support to make this important **Children's Charter** a reality to improve the situation for children around the world.

**"I/We pledge to prioritise and include children in DRR programming. I/We will report on progress at the Global Platform in 2013."**

For more information and to sign up to the Children's Charter please visit our website [www.childreninachangingclimate.org](http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org).



## 1.) Schools must be safe and education must not be interrupted

Education was the most commonly occurring theme and prioritised by all children during the consultations. Children want access to information and training in DRR, they want DRR and climate change to be included in the curriculum and for their schools to be safe and built on higher ground. *"We want to learn about DRR through outdoor activities; you can find truth from practice"* (child from China). They also want their learning materials to be protected and for safe play areas to be identified before a disaster so they can continue as normal a life as possible. If safe play areas are not identified before a disaster, children report that their movement is restricted and they end up either staying in their homes or playing in unsafe environments such as rubbish dumps or flood waters.

## 2.) Child protection must be a priority before, during and after a disaster

The consultations raised a number of child protection issues which deeply affect children's security and sense of well-being. Children want protection from harmful behaviours and practices and state that after a disaster, especially if they are forced to move away from their homes as a result, they feel insecure, at risk and unsafe. *"We left our houses to come here when the floods happened. We live in tents; we do not feel safe here"* (child from Mozambique). Children also report increased child-trafficking, child labour and dropping out of school as a result of disasters. Clearly, children's psycho-social well-being as well as their physical security is being routinely affected by disasters, and the 'normal channels' are insufficient to protect children.

## 3.) Children have the right to participate and to access the information they need

Children are ready and willing to participate in measures to tackle disaster risks and climate change – they want to help disseminate key messages and protect their communities as well as themselves.

Whilst some children acknowledge that measures have been taken to disseminate awareness and information through the radio, village gatherings and school visits, the majority of children feel completely cut off from any information regarding disasters. Children expect and are asking for help to raise their awareness and level of preparedness. Rather than children feeling that *"adults do not listen to what we say"* (child from Mozambique) children need to be given the opportunity as citizens in their own right to contribute and engage in DRR activities within their communities.

## 4.) Community infrastructure must be safe, and relief and reconstruction must help reduce future risk

Children are sensitive to the continual erosion of development in their communities. For instance, to enable continued access to health care and thereby to reduce illness during a disaster, children highlighted the importance of safe hospitals and health centres. They also identified the need to maintain access through improved roads and bridges as when these are damaged and not repaired, children are unable to travel safely to school and are often forced to stay at home. Children also report that in times of disaster, a range of services are cut off and reconstruction efforts are often insufficient in bringing them back to a reasonable standard. Children have a strong awareness of the need to clean up and care for the environment and the way in which unsafe and dirty environments are impacting them. Finally, they understand safeguarding livelihoods will help them remain children - *"The dam water can be used for irrigation and this will help us get food and learn better."* (child from Kenya)

## 5.) Disaster Risk Reduction must reach the most vulnerable people

Children recognise that people are affected differently by disasters. They felt that some people are more vulnerable than others and require special attention; yet such groups are often ignored and isolated. The children identified a range of factors including disability, age, gender, social status and proximity (specifically communities living in remote locations) as determining levels of inclusion. *"To me, there is a big difference because many disabled children are not treated properly by providing them the necessary information since they are not being taken into account due to the fact of being disabled."* (child from the Philippines). The children also felt that orphans and young children below the age of five needed particular attention.

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1. The consultations were conducted: by **Save the Children** in Cambodia, China, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Ethiopia, India, Laos, Mozambique, Philippines and Vanuatu; by **World Vision** in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mexico, Nicaragua, Philippines, Tanzania and Vietnam; and by **Plan** in Indonesia
  2. Updates will be available at [www.childreninachangingclimate.org](http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org)