



**Child-Centred  
Disaster Risk  
Reduction**

Building resilience  
through participation  
Lessons from Plan International

## About Plan

Founded over 70 years ago, Plan International is one of the largest child centred community development organisations, working in 62 countries on projects and initiatives that address the causes of poverty and its consequences for children's lives. Plan works with children, their families and communities to build a world where children are safe, healthy and capable of realising their full potential.

Plan's approach to sustainable development takes place through our child centred community development programme framework, based on a rights-based approach, guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our programme interventions are focused on: health; education; habitat; livelihoods; disaster risk reduction and emergency response; and building relationships between the developing and developed countries through development education and advocacy.

Published by  
Plan UK, Finsgate, 5-7 Cranwood Street, London EC1V 9LH

This publication is also available online at [www.plan-uk.org](http://www.plan-uk.org)

First published 2010 – Text and photos © Plan UK 2010

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## Introduction

This publication provides an overview of Plan's child-centred disaster risk reduction work. It presents the results and recommendations of a five-year programme and should be essential reading for anyone concerned about reducing the impacts of disasters and particularly valuable for development and humanitarian practitioners, donors and policy makers. It includes a series of case studies illustrating how child-centred DRR supports the delivery of the Hyogo Framework's Priorities for Action, as well as the realisation of children's rights to education, health and participation within disaster risk contexts.

The main report was written by Laetitia Antonowicz, Allison Anderson and Louise Wetheridge, Education for Change Ltd, as part of Plan UK's final evaluation of its child centred DRR work funded by the UK government (DFID). The case studies were gathered from Plan programme countries and edited by Elena Ahmed, Kelly Hawrylyshyn and Nick Hall.

The findings presented here are primarily the result of the achievements of thousands of children committed to building the resilience of their communities in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Indonesia, Philippines, and Sierra Leone. Many of them stepped confidently well beyond the confines of their families, schools and communities to urge governments and international agencies to prioritise the needs and views of young people. Plan was privileged and humbled to support their initiative and enthusiasm.

# Plan International's Child-Centred DRR Programme

Disasters threaten the lives, the rights and the needs of millions of children around the world. In the coming years, children's vulnerability to disasters is expected to increase as the frequency and intensity of natural hazards rises.<sup>1</sup> Building resilience in children and communities and reducing their vulnerability to disasters has, therefore, become ever more imperative.

The international principle of prioritising the most vulnerable and ensuring their participation in disaster management has not effectively been realised with respect to children. Experience from the humanitarian and development fields shows that unless the needs of children are catered for specifically, efforts to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction will continue to fall short. As a result, Plan has taken a lead role in developing a distinctive rights-based approach to Disaster Risk Reduction that proposes a shift from children as passive victims to children as agents of change for their own well-being and the development of their communities.

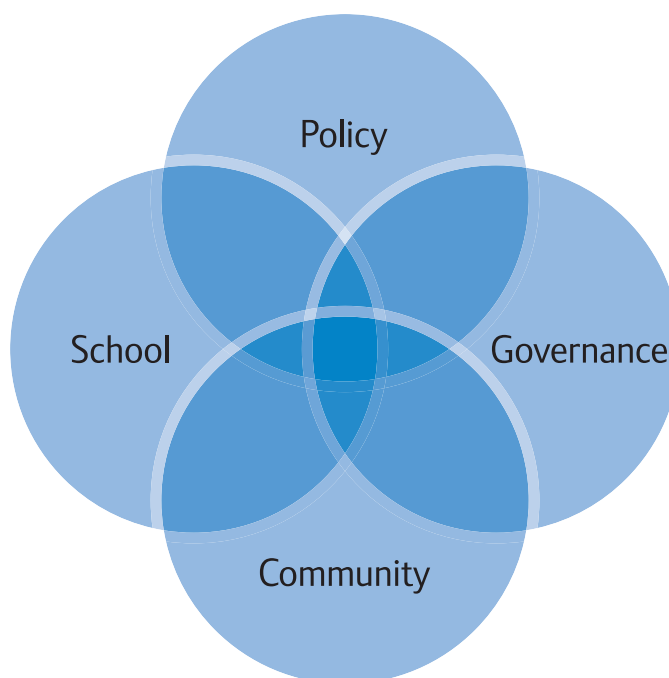
With 2.2 billion young people under the age of 18 worldwide, such an approach has tremendous potential to reduce vulnerability, build resilience and contribute to the well-being of children, communities and to sustainable development.

**“Disaster Risk Reduction is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster. It aims to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities to disaster as well as dealing with the environmental and other hazards that trigger them.”<sup>2</sup>**

## What is Child-centred Disaster Risk Reduction?

Child-centred Disaster Risk Reduction is an innovative approach to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) that fosters the agency of children and youth, in groups and as individuals, to work towards making their lives safer and their communities more resilient to disasters. It is empowering for children, and respectful of their views and rights as well as their vulnerabilities.

Child-centred DRR is a flexible rights-based approach combining child-focused (**for** children) and child-led (**by** children) activities with interventions geared towards bringing about change in community, local and national duty bearers. It applies strategies such as awareness raising, capacity building, group formation, institutional development, research and influencing and advocacy across a range of arenas.



<sup>1</sup> Webster, Ginnetti, Walker, Coppard, Kent (2008) *The Humanitarian Costs Of Climate Change*. Feinstein International Center.

<sup>2</sup> Twigg, J. (2007) *Characteristics of a Disaster-resilient Community: A Guidance Note*.

Child-centred DRR contributes to the five priorities of the **Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)**, the 10 year strategy developed during the 2005 Hyogo World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, signed by 168 countries.

#### ROLE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE HFA AIMS:<sup>3</sup>

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation – **promoting and supporting children’s rights**.
2. **Involve children and young people to** identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.
3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels, **because children are our future**.
4. **Involve children and young people to** reduce the underlying risk factors.
5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels, particularly at community level, **concentrating on children and young people**.
6. In their approach to disaster risk reduction, States, regional and international organisations and other actors concerned should take into consideration the key activities listed under each of these five priorities and should implement them, as appropriate, to their own circumstances and capacities.

Source: [www.plan-uk.org/pdfs/childrenindrr.pdf](http://www.plan-uk.org/pdfs/childrenindrr.pdf)

Child-centred DRR also embraces the four principles of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**: (i) non-discrimination, (ii) the best interests of the child, (iii) the right to life, survival and development, and (iv) the view of the child. See case studies 11–14.

## Learning from experience

Plan International UK explored the dimensions and potential of Child-centred DRR in six countries between 2005 and 2010: El Salvador, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Ecuador, Cambodia, and Indonesia. This work was supported by a grant from DFID and the approach was further explored in Bangladesh and the Dominican Republic with European Union DIPECHO funding.

#### THE PROGRAMME’S THEORY OF CHANGE

**“Young citizens have the right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and thus they have the right to participate in the governance of DRR ‘services’. Their participation results in better decisions, higher quality services, greater access to those services, and better development outcomes as a result of those services.”**

Programme activities to operationalise the Theory of Change included:

- Working with children and youth groups to build awareness about risks and develop their capacities through participatory Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (HVCAs), risk mapping and training on disaster preparedness, prevention and mitigation;
- Reducing vulnerabilities by providing small grants to children’s groups to support children’s awareness-raising, and small scale risk reduction interventions

<sup>3</sup> See case studies 1–10

- Engaging children in producing videos, radio programmes and street theatre performances to raise community awareness of risks and influence local duty bearers to prioritise risk reduction;
- Raising the awareness and strengthening the capacities of adults, education practitioners, communities, media and local government for better management of DRR, risk management and child-centred contingency planning and disaster preparedness;
- Developing DRR curricula and teacher training modules on DRR;
- Working with Ministries of Education and national DRR agencies to develop school safety manuals;
- Influencing government to include children's participation in DRR governance structures and decision-making processes;
- Creating opportunities at national and global levels for young people to express their views and concerns on DRR and climate change adaptation;
- Contributing to networks and alliances on DRR, Climate Change Adaptation, Education in Emergencies and Child Rights;
- Building partnerships with research institutions to document Child-centred DRR practices and impact.

Key elements of the Child-centred DRR approach at the community level are presented in the diagram below (CYP = Children and Young People):



Through the programme, Plan International UK developed a strong research partnership with the UK's Institute for Development Studies. This led to the creation of the **Children in a Changing Climate**<sup>4</sup> coalition, which has generated greater collaboration for the gathering of evidence to inform advocacy promoting children's rights to protection and participation in a changing climate. UNICEF, Save the Children and World Vision have joined the coalition.

<sup>4</sup> [www.childreninachangingclimate.org](http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org)

## Results

### Children's knowledge of risks and DRR skills has increased

**“I didn't know what to do in case of a disaster and now I feel more confident to face the risks in our community.”**

**Emergency Committee child, Petapa, El Salvador**

Through training and community activities, children demonstrate increased understanding of different types of risks and hazards and learn how their environment is changing over time. In **Ecuador**, children have conducted hazard, vulnerability and capacity mapping exercises and have learned from adults about the history of local disasters, and the indigenous knowledge that was useful in coping with them.

Children have learned how to protect themselves and their community when disasters threaten by setting up and monitoring early warning systems and by participating in emergency and evacuation drills. Their DRR knowledge has spread throughout the community to other children and adults.

In **the Philippines**, children learned how to reduce their vulnerability to disasters through education and training in early warning systems. They gained knowledge on the use of rain gauges, disaster simulation and drills as well as learning first aid, swimming and water safety. Children shared their new knowledge through theatre and music performances, thus delivering information to their communities about potential hazards and practical solutions to minimise risks. These efforts saved lives. In 2006, after three days of continuous rain in Liloan and San Francisco villages, children and adults used the knowledge they had gained to evacuate before landslides covered their homes.

**“It is very interesting because children learn by doing and they take the responsibility back to their homes.”**

**Mayor of Potonico, municipality of Chalatenango, El Salvador**

### Children are taking action to reduce risks in their communities and their schools

**“We welcome what the children do. They pick up on things that we don't see. The children are aware and take action.”**

**Elder, Falaba, Moyamba District, Sierra Leone**

One successful method promoted by Plan International's Child-centred DRR work is providing seed grants to children's groups to conduct their own small scale prevention, mitigation or adaptation projects. Leading these projects provides children with the resources and empowerment to manage activities and budgets that they initiated. In addition, the results of these projects can also prove to adults that children's participation in DRR can indeed lead to greater community resilience. See case study 7.

In **El Salvador**, children of Potonico, in the municipality of Chalatenango, organised a cleaning campaign during the rainy season to reduce the threat of mosquito-borne illnesses such as dengue fever and malaria. With support from local health workers they went from house-to-house to raise awareness of the danger of stagnant water where mosquitoes breed and helped to clean up back yards. As a result, Potonico reported a drop in cases of dengue fever compared with neighbouring communities. See case study 9.



In **the Philippines**, a students' organisation led a local campaign that resulted in the relocation of their school in Santa Paz, in the province of Southern Leyte, following a landslide risk assessment by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, which had declared the area at extremely high risk. See case study 4.

**“With the new school, I no longer worry when there is heavy downpour and I can now concentrate on my lessons. The challenges we encountered in the transfer of our school changed our lives as children. It made us more aware of our rights, our voice and our power.”**

**Rhee, 15 year old boy, the Philippines**

## Children have greater capacity to contribute to disaster response

Children involved in the programme demonstrated their capacity to contribute to disaster response. In **El Salvador**, when Tropical Storm Ida struck in November 2009 young people of Cerco de Piedra, who had been trained in civil protection through Plan's Child-centred DRR programme were actively involved through their established groups responsible for monitoring early warning systems, first aid and evacuation. When the water levels rose, community members were evacuated into shelters with the help of young people. See case study 10.

**“It is important to call attention to the work of the youths at Cerco de Piedra. When Plan arrived at the site, all families had already been evacuated to a safe place, were being fed, and aid was being distributed in an orderly fashion.”**

**Celina Rosales, Plan El Salvador**

## Children's school environment is safer

Interventions in the education sector provide opportunities for scale-up and the institutionalisation of change. Plan's advocacy, awareness-raising activities and technical support to Ministries of Education throughout the programme led to risk reduction being built into the fabric of education systems in several countries, sustaining child safety and improving the quality of education.

In **Indonesia**, Plan, in partnership with the Consortium for Disaster Education, has successfully advocated for mainstreaming DRR into the education system and contributed to the UNISDR's Safer Schools Campaign. The Ministry of Education benefited from training from the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies. As a result of these efforts, the Ministry sent a circulation letter to all heads of provinces and districts in Indonesia stipulating that DRR be mainstreamed in all schools.

**“The people in Indonesia should be aware that they live in a country prone to many disasters such as earthquake, tsunami, volcano eruption, landslide, etc. The most effective way to minimise risks is by educating the children and by introducing disaster risk reduction in schools since the beginning, even from early childhood, and by involving them in DRR activities.”**

**Head of the Indonesia Association for School Curriculum Development**

In **El Salvador**, Plan supported the Ministry of Education in the development and roll out the School Protection Plan that provides guidelines for disaster management as part of school governance, safety of facilities and curricula. Disseminated in over 5,000 schools throughout the country, School Protection Plans were adopted by 67% of schools nationally within one year.

## Children are more involved in DRR governance structures

**“It is incredible what children can do, their capacity to see risks and propose solutions.”**

**Head of Training of the Civil Protection Office, El Salvador**

The programme contributed to the establishment of active children and young people’s groups engaged in promoting DRR at school level. The programme also helped to secure a role for children in DRR governance structures at local government level. In **Bangladesh** for example, through the provision in the National Standing Order on Disasters, Union Disaster Management Committees, which had never before included children’s representatives in programme areas, now have young people as full-time members. In **the Philippines** children’s DRR groups have been actively represented in Barangay councils in Southern Leyte. In **El Salvador** a national ordinance is set to be passed to formalise children’s participation in DRR structures at municipal level. As a result, interested children are able to take part in decision-making processes on matters that affect them. See case studies 1 and 2.

Plan’s work has also been instrumental in highlighting the value of having children’s voices heard at global events such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Global Platform and the Conferences of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. See case study 14.

The programme contributed to securing UNISDR’s endorsement of children’s critical role in DRR decision making.

**“Children were also seen as strong agents for change who should be involved in the decision-making process.”**

**Sir John Holmes, UNISDR Global Platform Chair, 2009<sup>5</sup>**

The programme also advocated successfully for the integration of children’s voices in civil society’s assessment of progress towards HFA implementation at local level that was undertaken by the Global Network for Disaster Risk Reduction: *Views from the Frontline*.<sup>6</sup>

## Communities are better prepared for natural hazards

The Child-centred DRR approach resulted in communities being better prepared for natural hazards. In **Bangladesh and Indonesia** there is evidence of household preparedness taking place including storing more food and water above floor level in case of floods. In **El Salvador and the Philippines** there is evidence of evacuation routes being better sign-posted. In the **Dominican Republic and Cambodia** there is evidence that community/municipal level DRR committees have been revived, skilled and strengthened with DRR plans in place. See case study 10.

**“We don’t have planning for pre-disaster. Honestly, it’s a new idea for us. We just concentrate on emergency response. Plan is the one that brought the idea of DRR to us when we attended a workshop they organised in Wailiti.”**

**Development Planning Board Officer in Sikka, Indonesia**

<sup>5</sup> *Outcome Document: Chair’s Summary of the Second Session Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction* (2009). [http://www.preventionweb.net/files/10750\\_GP09ChairsSummary.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/10750_GP09ChairsSummary.pdf), p.3.

<sup>6</sup> See: [http://www.plan-uk.org/pdfs/Children\\_on\\_the\\_Frontline\\_GP\\_report.pdf](http://www.plan-uk.org/pdfs/Children_on_the_Frontline_GP_report.pdf)

## Why is Child-centred Disaster Risk Reduction valuable?

Child-centred DRR is a valuable approach for organisations with limited resources working on the complexity and challenges of building community resilience to disaster risks.

### The value-added of working with children

**Children are a vulnerable group.** Children are too often overlooked in DRR programming and policy interventions despite the fact that they make up between 50% and 70% of the population of most countries at-risk of natural hazards. Organisations working on reducing vulnerability can maximise the impact of their interventions by building the capacity of the largest proportion of the population, and the largest cohort of those on the frontline of disasters – children.<sup>7</sup>

**Children have a unique and holistic perception of risks.** Children have a comprehensive approach to perceiving risks, encompassing natural hazards, personal safety and social and economic threats. Their perception influences their behaviour and determines their readiness to mobilise for action in a range of disaster and development arenas. They often have a longer term perspective of risks than adults, who are primarily concerned with meeting day-to-day needs, in particular with regard to the environment. They have regularly identified immediate risks in their communities (such as road security, unsecured electric cables or child abuse), and social risks such as teenage pregnancy and domestic violence – which may be overlooked by adults.

**Children are effective risk communicators.** Plan's DRR programme has evidenced that children have the capacity to communicate effectively on risk and risk reduction with their parents, siblings and peers and through informal communication networks. With appropriate support, children can effectively communicate risks to the wider community and larger audiences. Children hold a pivotal position in many communities for addressing the impacts of climate change, for example, through their increasing access to information from school, the media and ICTs. Children are enthusiastic innovators of risk communication tools. They can inform others on disaster prevention and vulnerability reduction, through creative messaging and media such as participatory video, theatre, radio programmes, songs and informative murals. See case studies 5 and 6.

In **Indonesia**, children shared their perception of risks through participatory video. A video made by children featured the drought in Kolisia Village, surprising adults of neighbouring communities who were unaware of the increasing levels of malnutrition in the village. Adults recognised the importance of the message children could bring to policy makers. Kolisia village representatives felt the participation of villagers in the video contributed to making their voices heard. They also acknowledged how the video demonstrated that some of the factors leading to drought and malnutrition were the result of human behaviour, an understanding which could help community members to address increasing vulnerabilities affecting children's well-being.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *A right to participate: Securing children's role in climate change adaptation* (2008) Children in a Changing Climate [www.childreninachangingclimate.org](http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org)

<sup>8</sup> From Haynes, K., Mangada, L., Akhmady, S., Roquino, F. (2010) *Developing innovative participatory tools to promote child and youth-centered disaster risk reduction. Research Report.*

**Empowered children are innovative agents of change.** Children often have creative means and ambitious strategies to bring about change. They tend to be less constrained by social norms and fatalistic attitudes common among their parents. The programme provided a wealth of examples of children's actions resulting in long-lasting change once taken up by adults. In **El Salvador**, children promoted improved waste management to reduce floods risks through garbage and plastic collection. In the community of El Ciprés, children mobilised adults to build containers for garbage dumps and secured the municipality's agreement to provide weekly garbage collection services.

**Children can maximise the adaptive capacity needed to address climate change.** Children's holistic awareness of risks gives them a sound understanding of the consequences of climate change on local livelihoods, and on their right to survival, development and protection. Harnessing children's adaptive capacity offers a strong potential for addressing environmental issues. Equipped with relevant knowledge and skills, young people can make informed decisions about how to adapt individual lives and livelihoods as well as ecological, social or economic systems in a changing environment.

In **the Philippines**, children from the Camotes Islands have worked together to restore degraded mangrove ecosystems by assembling teams to collect and replant tree saplings in sanctuaries with the establishment of protective barriers. They combined local knowledge with a range of expert resources to raise awareness of the multiple benefits of mangrove restoration. The benefits include livelihood gains through provision of aquatic spawning grounds, maintaining biodiversity, protection from typhoons, rising sea levels, wind and surge risks. Young people drew in community members and succeeded in mobilising constituencies to ensure the greater protection of their ecosystems. See case study 8.

**Children can change behaviours for more sustained development.** As well as building a culture of safety and resilience and supporting children to take part in disaster management, Child-centred DRR can play a role in empowering young people to make informed choices and develop behaviour that reorient society towards more sustainable practices for sustainable development, which reduces local vulnerability and increases resilience.

**Children are the leaders and decision makers of tomorrow.** Child-centred DRR takes a long term perspective when investing in children's behaviour change. With children involved in DRR governance structures today, a generation of young people can be better prepared for the disasters of tomorrow.

**“It is important that a new generation of leaders evolves who have a vision of thinking about DRR.”**

**Mayor of Saint Bernard, Philippines**

In **El Salvador**, Wilber, from the Alvarez community in the municipality of Santa Tecla, La Libertad, had been the leader of his school's civil protection committee since 2006 and participated in Plan Child-centred DRR activities. When Wilber turned 18, he was asked to become a member of his community's development association (ADESCO), and was then elected president of the association. During his mandate, he managed to achieve the formal legalisation of the Alvarez ADESCO, enabling it to access public funds from local government and to establish a Civil Protection Committee that would be recognised within the National Civil Protection framework. Since 2009, Wilber has been leading his ADESCO in the development of disaster management plans with municipal authorities, involving the active participation of children. See case study 1.

## Child-centred DRR promotes and realises a range of children's rights

Although the “right to safety” with regards to disasters is not directly articulated in international or regional human rights instruments, DRR can contribute to the realisation of a range of rights, in particular when focusing on children.

**Child-centred DRR is a rights-based approach**, working with rights-holders (children and their families) and duty bearers (parents, communities, governments, service providers) to reinforce their capacities to provide for the well-being of all children. The child-centred approach recognises children as key actors in their own development and that of their communities, and supports their empowerment to this end. It also aims to strengthen governance structures and to reinforce accountability mechanisms, information flows and transparency between governments and children as a vulnerable group. The child-centred approach is non-discriminatory and enables girls and boys of all ages, from diverse abilities and backgrounds, to engage positively in issues that matter to them.

**Child-centred DRR addresses a range of rights.** It is a valuable entry point for programmes aiming to promote sustainable development and those promoting the realisation of children's rights.

- **Right to life:** In line with Article 6 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Child-centred DRR works towards securing safer communities for children and the reduction of disaster risks that may affect their lives.
- **Right to education:** Child-centred DRR contributes to the realisation of Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC on the right to education by providing safer learning spaces for children, by minimising the disruption of schooling during emergency situations, by engaging children in learning new knowledge and skills, including technical knowledge and life skills, and by developing respect for the natural environment. See case study 11.
- **Right to health:** Child-centred DRR specifically addresses Article 24 of the UNCRC, by increasing knowledge and promoting behaviour change in support of better hygiene, environmental sanitation and the prevention of diseases and accidents. See case study 11.
- **Right to participation:** Child-centred DRR supports the realisation of Article 12 of the UNCRC on the right of girls and boys to express their views on matters that affect them. This is realised by creating opportunities at local level for children's participation in DRR structures in schools and in communities, but also at national and global levels and by fostering opportunities for adults and children to exchange and contribute their views through intergenerational and cross-cultural dialogue. Child-centred DRR also contributes to realising children's rights to information and to freedom of expression (Article 13 of the UNCRC) by supporting children's efforts to seek, receive and impart information on natural hazards, climate change and disaster risks more broadly. See case study 14.

## How to implement Child-centred Disaster Risk Reduction?

There is no one particular way of working on Child-centred DRR. Different agencies will approach it differently depending on their mandate, resources, organisational culture, areas of interventions and networks. DRR is a challenging field that needs to be tackled realistically while acknowledging the complexity of operational environments and the diversity of people's views and interests vis-à-vis external interventions. Based on Plan's experience, below are some elements to be taken into consideration when engaging with Child-centred DRR.

### Understanding the context

DRR is a complex approach that aims to reduce vulnerabilities to risks within the broad context of sustainable development. Understanding the social, political, cultural, environmental and economic environments in which children and communities evolve is critical to an appreciation of the breadth and depth of vulnerabilities to disaster risks and how they affect different groups of children (e.g.: girls, boys, adolescents, infants) within heterogeneous communities. How changing risks may aggravate the vulnerabilities of different groups of children also needs to be understood.

#### Key steps:

- Conduct a rights-based situation analysis and a power analysis;
- Analyse where and how decision making for DRR takes place, paying particular attention to how decentralisation processes play out in the devolution of and responsibility for DRR policy decisions and resource allocations;
- Map DRR actors at national, local and community level, identifying DRR structures, service providers, youth organisations, relevant CBOs and NGOs and specialised agencies;
- Identify DRR and developmental interventions in place, targeting specific vulnerabilities.

Children's views of risks tend to encompass social, economic, environmental and political risks. While an "all risks" approach to analysis is essential to identify and reduce complex root causes of vulnerability and to build resilience, it has implications for programming and for the relationship between beneficiary communities and development agencies. It is important to identify what are the priority areas for children and communities and how these map out against expert and scientific knowledge available.

#### Key steps:

- Discuss expectations and provide clear information to beneficiary communities of what Child-centred DRR aims to achieve and through what means;
- Determine what risks and types of vulnerability the agency has the capacity and resources to address meaningfully, and identify partners who can support work to tackle other identified risks.

## Working with children

Working with children has a real added value as outlined in the previous section. Children can be effective agents of change for DRR. Once properly supported and empowered, they can mobilise action at local, national and global levels.

### CHILDREN CAN POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO DRR THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ROLES:<sup>9</sup>

- As analysers of risk and risk reduction activities;
- As designers and implementers of DRR interventions at community level;
- As communicators of risks and risk management options (especially communications with parents, adults or those outside the community);
- As mobilisers of resources and action for community based resilience;
- As constructors of social networks and capital;
- As monitors of progress in implementing disaster reduction activities in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action.

### Key steps:

- Engage with different groups of children and their networks to ensure equal opportunity for all children to voice concerns and to participate. Include existing groups at sub-national and national levels to guarantee greater sustainability of interventions, for example, youth associations, students' unions, sports, arts and leisure clubs, youth volunteer associations, youth media clubs, children's parliaments, etc;
- Tackle vulnerabilities and exclusion through working with all children, including the most marginalised and vulnerable, while being aware of the potential burden of participation on certain groups. Customise engagement with children in different age groups and genders: their knowledge, needs, capacities and protection requirements will be different;
- Trust children and involve them at all stages of the interventions. Children can bring about change when properly supported. They can also be active contributors to governance accountability mechanisms assessing local government budgets and delivery of public services;
- Harness children's creative potential to reduce disaster risks by encouraging their involvement in new media such as participatory videos, community radio programmes and performing arts;
- Train facilitators on DRR, Climate Change Adaptation concepts and on child participation. Working with young people on DRR and vulnerability reduction is not without challenges. The quality of the facilitation will significantly affect the quality of the intervention process, the outcomes led by children, and the overall experience of children.

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from Tanner TM et al. (2009) *Children's participation in community-based disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change*. Participatory Learning and Action 60, 54-64

## Working with duty bearers

The nature of Child-centred DRR work calls for engagement with a wide range of duty bearers in communities and nationally. Parents, community leaders, educators, local government, line ministries and their decentralised entities, specialised agencies, media and civil society groups all have statutory or moral obligations towards children, their future and DRR. Securing the active support of adults in creating an enabling environment for children's participation is critical.

### Key steps:

- Promote dialogue between duty bearers and children for intergenerational learning, and to promote greater accountability and active citizenship;
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms between duty bearers and children by improving information flows and exchange, thus enhancing transparency and contributing to capacity development;
- Identify, support and cultivate adult champions holding powerful positions or with high credibility who can help create a conducive environment for children's participation and citizenship;
- Cultivate government commitment through engagement with government institutions. Political will is critical to making changes and moving forward legislative commitments, which in turn is critical to minimising the effect of changes in government or shifts in political priority ;
- Develop a clear advocacy strategy with specific objectives and key messages for targeted audiences.

Duty bearers with responsibility for education are key agents in Child-centred DRR work. A central function of education is to foster learning about new subjects, including disaster risk reduction and preparedness. Education staff need knowledge of and ability to distinguish between certainties, uncertainties, risks and consequences of environmental degradation, disasters and climate change. They also need to develop strategies for prevention, preparedness and response practices that contribute to building resilience and sustainability. Teaching and learning on these fronts can draw on both scientific and indigenous knowledge for successful mitigation and adaptation. Engagement with formal and non-formal education systems and institutions is therefore critical for working on Child-centred DRR.

### Key steps:

- Engage with schools and education authorities at local and national level: education has a strong potential for community mobilisation, reaching out to a large number of children, increasing knowledge and life skills, and bringing about institutionalised change;
- Support traditional knowledge transfer mechanisms between adults and children by creating opportunities for intergenerational dialogue and by identifying traditional forums and approaches where adults transmit knowledge or know-how to younger generations.



## Working with partners

Strengthening civil society and collaborative initiatives through networks and partnerships can enhance sustainability and lessen political risk as well as generate a stronger voice and greater impact on DRR decision making.

### Key steps:

- Mainstream DRR interventions across sectors (education, health, governance, environment, food security);
- Explore, develop and cultivate strategic partnerships with specialised organisations working with specific groups (children with disabilities, women and girls, indigenous people), in specific sectors (health, education, livelihoods) or with specific expertise (research, media);
- Leverage existing legislation and/or a history of community and civil society mobilisation in support of children's rights, human empowerment and participatory development;
- Join and contribute to global, national and local networks active in DRR, children's rights, education in emergencies and children in a changing climate.

### ENABLING FACTORS CONDUCIVE FOR CHILD-CENTRED DRR

- Adult champions for children's rights and participation
- Political will
- Disaster management legislation and national structures that recognise and respect children
- Civil Society commitment and active networks
- History of disasters and windows of opportunity created by disasters
- Availability of disaster management funds and technical capacity
- Community access to appropriate and relevant information
- Community social cohesion
- National agenda for children's rights

## In conclusion

As well as building a culture of safety and resilience and supporting children to help prevent and minimise disaster impacts, the long-term perspective of Child-centred DRR work empowers young people to make informed choices and develop behaviour that re-orientates societies towards more sustainable practices for development in the future. Prioritising the education and the agency of young people is an essential feature of any society's capacity to manage risk and develop sustainably. After all, we did not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrowed it from our children.

## Useful resources

- Children in a Changing Climate (2010) *Child centred disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation: Roles of Gender and Culture in Indonesia*
- Children in a Changing Climate (2010: second edition) *A Right to Participate: Securing children's role in climate change adaptation*
- Children in a Changing Climate (2010) *Climate Change, Children and Youth in Cambodia: Successes, challenges and policy implications* Policy Brief
- Mitchell, T *et al* (2008) 'The Roles of Children and Youth in Communicating Disaster Risk' in *Children Youth and Environments* 18:1
- Mitchell, T *et al* (2009) *Children as Agents of Change for Disaster Risk Reduction: Lessons from El Salvador and the Philippines*
- Plan and World Vision (2009) *Children on the Frontline: Children and young people in disaster risk reduction*
- Plan (2009) *Global Warning: Children's right to be heard in global climate change negotiations*
- Plan (2010) *Children in a Changing Climate: Lessons from Research and Practice IDS In Focus Policy Briefing* 13
- Plan (2010) *Children as agents of change: Lessons learnt from child-centred disaster risk reduction work in Sikka, Rembang, Jakarta and Bogor 2007-2010*
- Polack, E (2010) *Child rights and climate change adaptation: Voices from Kenya and Cambodia*
- Strengthening Climate Resilience (2010) *Climate Smart Disaster Risk Management*
- Tanner, T *et al* (2009) 'Children's multiple modes of participation in community based disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change' in *Participatory Learning and Action* 60
- Tanner, T (2010) 'Shifting the Narrative: Child-led Responses to Climate Change and Disasters in El Salvador and the Philippines' in *Children & Society Volume* 24
- Twigg, J (2010: second edition) *Characteristics of a Disaster Resilient Community*

### Websites for more information and access to resources

- Plan UK: <http://www.plan-uk.org/action/issues/reducingchildrensvulnerability/>
- Children in a Changing Climate: [www.childreninachangingclimate.org/](http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/)

For organisations and individuals interested in implementing the Child-centred DRR approach, Plan has developed a Toolkit with guidelines on: Training Children on DRR Through the Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment; Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating Child-Centred DRR Programmes; Advocacy with Children on DRR; and Action Planning with Children on DRR. See: [www.plan-uk.org](http://www.plan-uk.org)



**Plan**

# **Plan International's Child-Centred DRR approach**

## **CASE STUDIES**

## Case Study 1: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (1) – Governance

### EL SALVADOR SCHOOLBOY BECOMES DRR COMMUNITY LEADER

The first priority area of the Hyogo Framework for Action states that in order for DRR to be applicable to all sections of society, authorities must assess the **human resource capacities** available at all levels. This must include children and young people as they have their own unique experiences, concerns and capabilities to share. Through Plan's DRR work we have observed that children can play a powerful role in mobilising others in support of realising DRR as a local and national priority. In El Salvador, for example, one teenager's election onto a local community development association achieved unexpected advances through his successful effort to secure decision-making power and resources for the implementation of DRR planning in his constituency.

Wilber, at 15, was elected by his peers to lead his school's (Centro Escolar Amigos del Volcan) civil protection, disaster prevention and mitigation committee in the community of Alvarez, in the municipality of Santa Tecla – an area vulnerable to seasonal landslides, floods and also earthquakes. The committee is led by children who raise awareness about disaster risk reduction in their community and also undertake projects to reduce disaster risks. Their DRR interventions have included promoting improved waste and environmental management, repairing the roof of their local health centre after it was destroyed by a hurricane, facilitating training in first aid and introducing rain water harvesting in order to provide access to potable water in a sustainable manner for the local health centre. These were issues the children identified as critical to improving their communities' resilience to disaster risks.

Based on the strong example set by the children, adults invited Wilber to join the community development association, known as the ADESCO, soon after he turned 18. Wilber accepted the role and became their youngest member. By August of that year, the ADESCO members voted for him to become their leader.



## Case Study 1: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (1) – Governance

As President of the ADESCO Wilber achieved in a short space of time what many had previously thought impossible; he managed to get the ADESCO formally legalised, only days before he graduated from high school. This meant that, for the first time, it was possible for the ADESCO to receive funds from the local government and to also set up its own community based Civil Protection Committee. With this formal recognition, the ADESCO gained decision-making power over how it would support community-based disaster risk reduction.

“We started some projects based on the problems we identified in our community,” explained Wilber. “For example, we discussed how the lack of water is a big problem and that it’s likely to get worse in the future so we approached different organisations that could help us solve this. We succeeded in getting the Salvadorean Environmental Fund (FONAES) to sponsor a programme which gave rainwater collection systems to every house so now people don’t need to fetch water from a shared collection tank, they all have access to water in their own homes. This is much better for children because it’s reduced the spread of germs and contamination, so gastro-intestinal diseases have now significantly reduced.”

Since 2009 Wilber has led the ADESCO to develop disaster management plans with municipal authorities, including the active participation of children. Together they worked to finalise the rainy season contingency plan. The children’s group also organised public lighting to improve safety in their community.

Through empowering children, their credibility and status among adults increases, alongside their enthusiasm to be active citizens. As illustrated by the case of Wilber, it also increases the willingness of local governments to engage children in disaster risk reduction activities. The Head of Training at the Department for Civil Protection echoed this: “It is incredible what children can do, their capacity to see risks and propose solutions.” Furthermore, empowering young people is a cost effective approach to strengthen the work of the leaders of tomorrow.

In El Salvador an ordinance is set to be passed to formalise children’s participation in DRR structures at municipal level to further allow for children’s involvement in decision-making.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE CHILD PARTICIPATION IN HFA PRIORITY AREA 1

Policy-makers and practitioners at national and local levels should work to ensure that:

- Local and national government policies, programmes, legislation, regulations and codes are developed with the participation of children and young people, communities and civil society and promote the rights of all children before, during and after disasters.
- Children and young people and community DRR groups understand relevant DRR legislation, regulations and procedures and are aware of their rights and the obligation of duty holders. They lobby external agencies on DRR plans, priorities and actions.
- Children and young people have opportunities to express their views on DRR in fora at the community, local, national and global levels.
- Children and young people are formally recognised in DRR structures that enforce disaster resilience at all levels.

## Case Study 2: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (1) – Governance

### CHILDREN OFFICIALLY JOIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Hyogo Framework for Action's first priority area on governance promotes **community participation in disaster risk reduction through the adoption of specific policies, the promotion of networking, the strategic management of volunteer resources, the attribution of roles and responsibilities, and the delegation and provision of the necessary authority and resources.**

By promoting children's participation in governance structures, DRR plans can benefit from children's wider perspective of risk which increases communities' resilience to disaster. In Bangladesh, children were granted their right to participate nationwide in Union Disaster Management Committees ever since a group of children in northern Bangladesh's Hatibandha sub-district proved their valuable contribution to DRR at community level.

Plan Bangladesh, together with local partner POPI, supported children's groups in 10 *union parishads* (local councils) of Hatibandha, covering 62 communities and a total population of over 203,000. With the area bordering the Tista river, each year from July to October parts of the sub-district become submerged in flood water during the monsoon. Many families are forced to move to higher ground, disrupting their lives and their children's schooling. Children also lose safe places in which to play and can be subject to disease and hunger as their parents' livelihoods become affected.

Each community's child-led DRR group, with members ranging from 8-17 years, were facilitated to conduct an analysis of the hazards, risks and vulnerabilities faced in their communities. By doing this exercise the children noted that their families usually respond to flooding only when it is imminent, by which time it is usually too late. They subsequently developed a DRR action plan comprising of their recommendations for managing and mitigating the prioritised risks affecting their wellbeing.



## Case Study 2: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (1) – Governance

As a first step, children went door to door to advise community members about the importance of disaster preparedness. They warned them of impending hazards and encouraged them to prepare by storing items such as dry food, firewood, portable stoves, first aid materials, candles and carbolic soap to keep away snakes during floods. This proved to be effective, with many families since reporting that they have started to store items on the roof of their homes.

As an example of children's capacity to promote forward thinking, one of their key recommendations was the establishment of a savings "piggy bank" for each household. Children explained to villagers that this would enable families to buy rice during flooding to stave off hunger, especially as agricultural output is often affected when floodwater destroys crops, adversely affecting the majority of families who rely on subsistence farming. The children also wanted the savings to be used to minimise disruption to their education, noting that one of the effects of disaster is that they can be forced to withdraw from school to assist their parents with income generation activities. Savings were also used to replace books and other necessary items for school, an idea that stemmed from children's past experience of floods. Nasima, a 12 year old member of the children's organisation in Hatibhanda's Uttar Parulia village, recounted how the Tista river had destroyed her school books once before: "I returned home to find my books damaged. My father did not have the money to buy me new ones so I struggled with classes for the rest of the year."

The children impressed local authorities with their skills, especially in effectively communicating DRR risks. One Bangladeshi elder from Holdibari commented, "People are busy and usually don't pay attention but when children go door to door, we take preparedness a lot more seriously." The children shared their contingency planning with the Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMC), a government administrative body tasked to deal with disasters at community level, who were persuaded to integrate some of the children's recommendations into their DRR plans. One UDMC member commended children for the contribution they made: "Children are very good at raising awareness which is a really important task."

The valuable agency of children to effect behavioural change in their constituencies led to one UDMC spontaneously asking four children to join its committee. Within a short timeframe, the nine remaining UDMCs in Hatibandha followed suit. Since then, Bangladesh's national Standing Order on Disasters has called for the formal participation of children in all Union Disaster Management Committees across the country, which is quite an achievement for a society where children's participation is culturally not encouraged. It is also indicative of the true value that children can bring to DRR.

**This case study is available in video format, see: Flood Children of Holdibari:**  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu6FWmBp-VY>

## Case Study 3: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (2) – Risk Assessment

### CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE BEGINS WITH ASSESSING RISKS

The Hyogo Framework for Action's second priority area focuses on increasing the knowledge of short and long-term hazards and vulnerabilities as the starting point for reducing disaster risk and for promoting resilience to disaster. Child-centred DRR employs the use of Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (HVCAs) using child-friendly participatory methods as the very backbone of its approach. HVCA provides children with the opportunity to share their unique perspectives on the risks they face in their communities and in relation to their own wellbeing. It gives children the impetus and resources to address these in order to strengthen their communities' resilience and to better protect themselves.

Children are widely regarded as helpless victims of disaster, an image perpetuated by the way the media portrays children affected by emergencies. These common stereotypical views about children as victims means that the value of involving them in planning to prevent and minimise the effects of disasters is frequently overlooked. HVCA exercises with children have proven that when children and young people are involved, they are able to identify and act on issues that adults may otherwise ignore due to other priorities, such as lack of time, a general sense of apathy, or a fatalistic attitude to disaster.

Moyna, a 16 year old girl from Bangladesh's Madhya Shingmari village in northern Bangladesh, explained how after her children's group conducted their risk assessment, they faced some resistance from community members for implementing the DRR action plan they drew up after conducting their HVCA: "Our priority risk was that of houses being destroyed by a tornado," she said. "In order to keep houses strong, we discussed the need to tie down the roofs. This prevents them from being blown away." The children went from house to house to explain this to villagers but some initially resisted the children's advice. "One woman told us that if





## Case Study 3: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (2) – Risk Assessment

her house broke, it was God’s will and we should not intervene.” However, by being able to clearly articulate the findings of their risk assessment the children were able to convince other community members to make the necessary changes to protect their homes.

The HVCA process can also provide a mechanism for children to work in partnership with adults and local government. In Bangladesh, children’s HVCA exercises were conducted in parallel with the work of local disaster management committees aiming to ensure children’s views were integrated in local DRR plans. And in the Philippines, children in Teguis village on the Camotes Island of Cebu province worked together with their village council to improve road safety outside their school, address the issue of smoking, and the degradation of mangrove plantations – all local hazards they identified during their risk assessment.

The value children add to the risk assessment processes is their holistic view of hazards and vulnerabilities. The Hyogo Framework for Action states that reducing disaster risk relies on addressing physical, environmental, economic and social risks, yet it is the latter category that adults often fail to address adequately – and which often represent the root causes of vulnerabilities. When children participated in HVCA they frequently felt that social problems such as alcoholism, drugs, delinquency and violence were key obstacles to strengthening their communities’ resilience to disaster. In Cambodia, children identified violence against women as a major problem; the children were then helped by a local NGO to develop and carry out an action plan to address this – including awareness raising and campaigning.

In recognition of the value of Child-centred HVCA, Bangladesh’s Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme worked with Plan to revise its handbook on how to conduct community risk assessment (CRA), including a chapter on facilitating children’s input. After adoption by the Government of Bangladesh, the child friendly CRA tool is now being rolled out nationally.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE CHILD PARTICIPATION IN HFA PRIORITY AREA 2:

Policy-makers and practitioners at national and local levels should work to ensure that:

Children and young people conduct and/or participate in school, community, and local government hazard, vulnerability, risk and capacity assessments.<sup>10</sup>

Community DRR organisations facilitate community risk, hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessments:

- that take account of the views of children,
- that take account of national hazard data and research on future risks,
- that reflect the risks and vulnerabilities of children of all ages, ability and gender,
- that include child protection concerns,
- that are regularly updated,
- that are widely disseminated within the community and to local government with the participation of children and young people,
- and the results of which are widely disseminated and understood by all, including those at particular risk.

Local government has in place and regularly reviews risk reduction, preparedness and response plans:

- that have been developed with the participation of children.
- that address children’s vulnerabilities and rights.
- that are integrated into local development plans.

<sup>10</sup> See El Salvador video on the child centred HVCA approach: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X47glpUfYuE&feature=channel>

## Case Study 4: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (3) – Knowledge & Education

### CHILDREN PERSUADE ADULTS TO MOVE SCHOOL TO SAFER GROUND

The Hyogo Framework for Action's third priority area focuses on knowledge and education. It refers to encouraging and providing an enabling environment for reducing risks to disasters. Educating children on DRR can in turn ensure their right to education is fulfilled in the long term. Children's determination to have their views heard was demonstrated in Santa Paz, a community of 1,289 people in the Southern Leyte province, the Philippines; where children successfully lobbied parents and politicians to relocate their school from a landslide-prone area, despite opposition from some sections of their community.

The Philippines Mines and Geosciences Bureau ordered hazard assessments to be conducted across the province of Southern Leyte after a devastating landslide killed 1,100 people in the town of Guinsangon in 2006. The results showed that eight barangays (the smallest administrative division in the Philippines) were at high risk within the municipality, including Santa Paz. Santa Paz National High School, attended by 379 students, was found to be situated directly in the line of a potential landslide.

The Department of Education recommended that the school be relocated. This caused fierce opposition from some sections of the community who argued that “vague warnings” of a future disaster were not enough to warrant a move. There was also anger from those who sold snacks to school children who argued that a move would affect their livelihoods. The owner of Santa Paz's village shop, Samson Sabandal, echoed the view of the opposing adults as he said, “I'm not worried about climate change. It's been raining here a long time and nothing has ever happened.”



Students of Santa Paz National High School in their temporary school, awaiting their safer school to be built.

## Case Study 4: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (3) – Knowledge & Education

The fatalistic view held by many adults led children to galvanise into action. “We learned that if it ever rained for several days, the mountain may collapse on our school,” said 17 year old student, Honey. “We decided we had to relocate it; if we had stayed there, none of us would have been able to concentrate on our studies.”

With the support of their Headteacher, the school children began a letter writing campaign to the School Division Superintendent to win backing for the school’s transfer. They also embarked on an education campaign in their community about the physical processes of landslides. In an attempt to reach a democratic decision, their Headteacher opened the debate to a community-wide referendum; the students’ proposal won by a vote of 101 to 49.

The Provincial Governor of Southern Leyte, Rosette Lerias, backed the children’s decision. “The older generation have an idea that if nothing has happened so far, nothing will happen at all, which has no logic, especially when all the signs are telling us that it will.” She continued, “It’s the children who pressed the move because they felt in danger.” The school was subsequently relocated to a nearby area in safer ground 2km away from the old site in Pasanon.

Interestingly, following relocation there was a marked increase in overall academic performance. Marjon, a 16 year old student, claimed, “With the new school I no longer worry when there is heavy rain. I can concentrate on my studies. The petition campaign paid off well. It made us more aware of our rights to be heard and our power to make change.” The better grades are likely to be attributable to this sense of achievement, illustrating that linking education with local action can greatly contribute to improving academic achievements.

The new school was built with disaster resilience in mind. It was erected on a plinth well above ground level to avoid floods, it is earthquake resistant and the students have planted trees around the perimeter to minimise risks of landslide. It has a rainwater harvesting system as well as toilets for every classroom -- designed so that it can be used as an evacuation shelter during emergencies.

The active role played by the Santa Paz children to get their school relocated despite local opposition is an example of children’s ability to lobby for action to safeguard their right to protection and to safe education.

### FURTHER INFORMATION OF THIS CASE STUDY CAN BE FOUND IN THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2007) *Words into Action: A Guide for Implementing the Hyogo Framework*, <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/docs/Words-into-action/Words-Into-Action.pdf>

BBC and Plan UK documentary, *Children on the Frontline: Philippines*  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPcUnHEQxak>

## Case Study 5: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (3) – Knowledge & Education

### CHILDREN USE LOCAL MEDIA TO SPREAD DRR MESSAGING AND SECURE GOVERNMENT ACTION FOR THEIR RIGHT TO SAFE EDUCATION

The Hyogo Framework's third priority for action recommends the provision of:

**“easily understandable information on disaster risks and protection options, especially to citizens in high-risk areas, to encourage and enable people to take action to reduce risks and build resilience. The information should incorporate relevant traditional and indigenous knowledge and culture heritage and be tailored to different target audiences, taking into account cultural and social factors.”**

Children in Sierra Leone's Moyamba township successfully lobbied for their right to safer education. Their participation in hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessment exercises highlighted that the safety of some children was threatened every day as they crossed a bridge on the way to school. By using radio broadcasts to demand that this risk be addressed, the children were able to secure greater accountability and action from local government and have the bridge repaired.

The Moyamba District Children's Awareness Radio (MODCAR) was started in 2007 as a child-led community-based radio station in Moyamba Town, which is 56 miles from the capital of Freetown. It was supported by Plan with the aim to foster peace and reconciliation in Sierra Leone after the end of the civil war of 1991-2002. The children's radio station allows young people to discuss issues of concern to them, from HIV to peace building. It reaches an audience of 14 chiefdoms in Moyamba and the surrounding area, which covers a radius of 80 miles and a population of 260,910. Although MODCAR is primarily designed for children, adults



## Case Study 5: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (3) – Knowledge & Education

are also a regular audience as the radio provides useful information on improved farming techniques, market prices and the local economy, health issues and disease prevention, and a weekly one-hour programme on disasters and risk reduction.

In 2007 a group of children from Moyamba identified that the Salina bridge crossing the Yambatu river was very hazardous for children who had to walk over it on a daily basis to go to school. The bridge had a gap after one of the metal plates collapsed. The authorities had since fixed it with timber, but it would continually fall off. Children part of the MODCAR radio programme, who had learnt about DRR through Plan's Child-centred DRR programme, decided to lobby for the bridge to be properly repaired. "The DRR programme really made us aware," one member commented. "Before we regarded risks as just accidents that could not be helped." Once informed through DRR training the children knew differently.

MODCAR's members talked about the bridge on their radio programme and called for action by the local authorities. They also presented a petition they collected to the Deputy Chief Administrator for Moyamba Township. After several broadcasts regarding the issue, they were successful in getting local authorities to act. The army was called in to fix the bridge and a metal plate was welded on. "Children and even vehicles are not at risk anymore when they cross the bridge," said Alycious, a 17 year old member of MODCAR.

Learning about risks gave children a sound understanding of the hazards they faced on a daily basis. Their radio programme gave them a platform to voice their concerns and the confidence to speak out and compel authorities to take action.

The children from MODCAR went on to work with the National Disaster Management Office to host a bi-weekly radio discussion on DRR on the local radio station, Radio UNOSIL. As well as getting the bridge fixed they also spread knowledge about environmental protection and succeeded in persuading villages to create fire belts to protect their forests and to reduce indiscriminate tyre burning.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE CHILD PARTICIPATION IN HFA PRIORITY AREA 3:

Policy-makers and practitioners at national and local levels should work to ensure that:

- Children and young people, both vulnerable girls and boys, learn about disaster risks and how to manage them through school and community based training and education activities.
- Awareness-raising campaigns on DRR are conducted regularly with the whole community and with the participation of children and young people using a variety of gender sensitive and culturally appropriate communication methods that are suitable for all ages and different abilities.
- DRR is part of the school curriculum and is also included in non-formal education activities.
- Media organisations participate in communicating risks, measures to address them and the role of children and young people in DRR.
- Scientific bodies investigate and share information about disaster risks, recognising the rights of all children and young people.

## Case Study 6: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (3) – Knowledge & Education

### CHILDREN GET DRR MESSAGING HEARD THROUGH CREATIVE COMMUNICATION

The effectiveness of children as communicators in DRR has proven to be one of their most notable contributions. Their use of various means of communication – including theatre, songs, videos, radio and door-to-door awareness raising – allows for the dissemination of information on disaster risk reduction which is both creative and understandable. In turn, it allows for corresponding action towards improved protection in line with the Hyogo Framework's third priority area of Knowledge and Education.

#### HFA 3:

**Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels, because children are our future**

Children have demonstrated the ability to present DRR messaging in ways that can reach a wide audience, especially when they adapt information into formats that are culturally and indigenously appropriate. Methods such as theatre, song and video are ideal not only to reach other children but also for adults with low levels of literacy and who lack access to information or networks within the community from which to receive new knowledge.

An example of adapting DRR messaging into a culturally appropriate context is provided from Indonesia's Rembang province in Central Java, where the population of 44,000 are predominately Muslim. There, children's groups developed *qasidahs* to raise awareness about DRR. Qasidah is a form of poetry from pre-Islamic Arabia, which typically runs for more than 50 lines, sometimes 100, with a single subject logically developed and concluded. It is a type of art where religious poetry is accompanied by chanting and percussion. Children performed these at village gatherings, which proved to be very effective due to



DRR awareness raising via Qasidahs in Indonesia

## Case Study 6: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (3) – Knowledge & Education

communities' familiarity with the qasidah, enabling them to remember the catchy lyrics containing key DRR messaging afterwards. Children in Sikka, in the East Nusa Tenggara province of Indonesia, also came up with a creative way to communicate DRR messaging by using artistic theatre production to educate communities on the causes of landslides and their impact, as well as recommended coping mechanisms.

In addition to theatre and song, Plan's Child-centred DRR programme has promoted the use of participatory video. This as an effective communication tool that was used by children in Indonesia (Sikka and Rembang districts), the Philippines (Eastern Samar) and Cambodia (Kampoung Cham province). Children were given the opportunity to learn skills including story board writing, researching, filming, interviewing and editing – after which they created short DRR videos focusing on the hazards and vulnerabilities they had identified in their communities through the HVCA process. The children's videos were shared with the community and with local government officials followed by workshop sessions where risks that children had raised were discussed. This provided the opportunity for adults and children to work together on identifying local solutions to address local risks.

Participatory Video proved to be an effective advocacy mechanism for Child-centred DRR. In the Philippines, children in the community of Cagaut, in the Salcedo municipality of Eastern Samar, succeeded in persuading the local government to prohibit chromite mining near the river after screening their video about how the mines were making the river toxic and aggravating flooding during heavy rains. The powerful messages that the children conveyed through video led to the local government agreeing to ban mining near river banks and forced miners to rehabilitate worked mining excavations. The children helped to plant trees and restore the wasteland. Similarly, in Sikka in Indonesia, the Wolo Village Board decided to allocate additional funds to support children's initiatives of tree planting, forest protection (from fire) and water source conservation after



## Case Study 6: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (3) – Knowledge & Education

watching a video made by the children that described the hazards and vulnerabilities that they had identified. The children's risk assessment was subsequently integrated into the Village Board's risk assessment, including their recommendation to prioritise pregnant women in evacuation plans.

**“Through video, we as children are able to promote the real situation in our village, it shows the pictures and audio of our daily life, this is one of the best way to influence people, we are not only talking about our problems but showing something real that we can do together to help solve these.”**

**Marlis, a 15 year old girl from Sikka, Indonesia**

### WHAT IS CHILD-CENTRED PARTICIPATORY VIDEO (PV)?

Child-centred participatory video is a tool for engaging and empowering children in disaster risk reduction work. Plan has piloted this methodology in Indonesia and the Philippines in conjunction with IDS and RMIT.

In developing countries, the exchange of knowledge and views between those who face disaster risks and those who control policy is often challenging. Children, who are among the most vulnerable and marginalised, often face the greatest hurdle to get their voices heard. Children and young people are commonly represented in the disaster management literature as passive victims requiring protection. Consequently, their capacities to inform the decision-making process, communicate risks to their communities and take direct action to reduce risks have been neglected. A growing body of evidence has shown that children have a valuable and unique ability to conceptualise and analyse risk and that, with support, they can play a vital role in disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation processes.

The Child-centred PV project was carried out in three stages. First, children attended a number of training sessions/workshops on issues related to disasters, as well as to learn about the filming process. Following an HVCA process, children decided on priority issues that they felt needed to be communicated and addressed within their communities. By exploring these issues, their newly developed PV and DRR skills enabled the children to increase their knowledge of the causes and consequences of disasters. Second, their films were screened within the communities and a workshop was facilitated enabling children and adults to discuss the issues raised by the films and possible solutions. Finally, the films were screened for local government officials, who then participated in a workshop with the children. The project's approach empowers children to raise important issues with decision-makers and advocate on behalf of their communities, for change and the protection and promotion of child rights.



These examples demonstrate the value added of Child-centred DRR for changing attitudes and mobilising action by authorities in support of DRR through their use of different communication skills. Children's creative messaging is effective for widespread dissemination of knowledge, cross-cultural exchanges, and can provide an effective mechanism to build accountability of those in power. DRR awareness-raising led by children allows them to share their unique perspectives and has been successful in engaging the attention of others, whether it be local authorities shamed into action or parents proudly watching their children in community gatherings.

Participatory Videos developed by children in the Philippines and Indonesia are available here:

<http://www.plan-uk.org/uk/action/issues/reducingchildrensvulnerability/latestnews/childrenclimatefilms>

Links to the Philippines' videos:

- Flood: Menace to Education <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKcMI84Lx2M>>
- Barobo, The sinking Barangay <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5PskEFrNwC>>
- The Pock-marked Face of Barangay Caga-ut <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhYzkAfIMCs>>
- Link to combined video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zlzl0NdLEDc>



## Case Study 7: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (4) – Risk Management

### CHILDREN USE SEED GRANT TO IMPLEMENT DRR PROJECTS

Risk management is the fourth priority area of the Hyogo Framework for Action, which calls for attention to addressing disaster risks related to changing social, economic and environmental conditions through sector development planning. This includes hazards associated with geological events, weather, water and climate variability. Environmental and natural resource management are crucial elements for effective disaster risk management and climate change adaptation.

Children's groups that participated in Plan's DRR programme, following the HVCA exercises were subsequently supported with small grants, of up to \$500, to fund actions they prioritised to reduced their community's vulnerabilities to disasters. The grants were a mechanism to empower children and demonstrate to adults that children can effectively contribute to building community resilience. Children were supported to develop skills to turn their ideas into effective plans and efficiently manage the projects they had proposed. The process also led to other benefits – including learning new skills such as project and budget management, teamwork and fundraising. Some of the activities implemented by the children through the seed grants included: improving waste management through garbage collection, recycling, and clearing gutters; infrastructure and maintenance to improve safety within their schools and communities, such as building retaining walls to safeguard against landslides and floods. Some projects focused on community facilities such as restoring water points, others on reforesting hillsides to prevent landslides and to protect the environment. Many children's projects also focused on social problems such as alcoholism, youth gangs and domestic violence through awareness raising campaigns.



## Case Study 7: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (4) – Risk Management

The grant process was empowering for children and harnessed their ability to mobilise others into action. Some of the most successful achievements in support of risk management include school relocation to avert the dangers of a landslide (the Philippines), elimination of dengue in Potonico town through awareness raising on waste management (El Salvador), relocation of rock mining away from school (Indonesia) and placing speed bumps and traffic signs on roads to lessen road accidents (Cambodia). These initiatives contributed to the reduction of disaster risks within communities in a practical and low cost manner. They also provided an incentive for adults to become involved in DRR activities and to provide greater support to children's voices.

In Sierra Leone's Moyamba district in a village called Falaba, primary school children identified unsafe water as the cause of high rates of diarrhoea. To address this risk, they decided to renovate the village well with their grant. As a result, diarrhoea was subsequently significantly reduced in their community. One elder was asked what he thought about children participating in community activities. He replied, "We welcome what the children do. They pick up things that we don't see. The children are aware and take action." Discussing the well, he described adults' apathy to deal with the cause of the high prevalence of diarrhoea from contaminated water. "The children identified the well as a problem but the adults had just accepted it. Now we work with them." The grants were a successful mechanism to mobilise greater engagement by adults with children.

Children were also able to develop their entrepreneurial skills through the grant projects. One group in El Salvador found that their small grant was insufficient to implement the activities that they had planned. They then took the initiative to raise funds themselves by cooking and selling traditional foods and by asking each household to contribute to the fumigation campaign they wished to carry out against dengue. In another example in El Salvador, children secured extra funds by lobbying their local government.

Children's effective use of small amounts of money demonstrates that young people can be very effective agents for changes mobilising others to contribute to making their communities safer. Children's participation in community and school based DRR initiatives succeeded in showing to adults that they are an important local resource that should not be ignored.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE CHILD PARTICIPATION IN HFA PRIORITY AREA 4:

Policy-makers and practitioners at national and local levels should work to ensure that:

- Children and young people are supported to initiate or manage activities to reduce their risks and vulnerabilities in the school and community with the support of adults.
- The community conducts risk management and vulnerability reduction activities:
  - with the participation of children;
  - that strengthen children's rights before, during and after disasters;
  - that are integrated into community development activities.
- CSOs mainstream disaster risk management and vulnerability reduction into their development programmes.

## Case Study 8: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (4) – Risk Management

### CHILDREN PROTECT MANGROVES TO OFFSET EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The fourth priority area of the Hyogo Framework urges countries to build resilience to disasters by investing in measures to reduce risk and vulnerability. This includes preserving forests and wetlands to maintain the environment's capacity to withstand hazards, locating communities away from flood plains, building housing that can withstand hazards, and ensuring that government systems provide financial and social assets that communities can rely on during emergencies.

Children in the Philippines' Teguis community learned about the importance of protecting local ecosystems in their local DRR group. Teguis is one of 17 barangays (an administrative division) of Poro Town, with 21,500 inhabitants mainly engaged in farming and fishing. It is situated on the Camotes Island in the Filipino province of Cebu.

When children's groups in Teguis conducted their vulnerability and risk assessment exercise, one of the first things they noted was that mangroves were being cut down for charcoal and that this posed a huge risk for their community to disasters. A group of 20 girls and boys decided to act by spearheading a mangrove rehabilitation campaign to restore their local ecosystem.

Mangroves are trees or shrubs that protect coastal areas from erosion, storm surge (especially during hurricanes) and tsunamis, with the ability to absorb up to 90% of the force of wind during a storm. In the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, studies revealed that mangrove forests played a crucial role in saving lives and property, yet mangroves are among the most threatened habitats worldwide. The trees shield the land from wind and trap sediment in their roots, maintaining a shallow slope on the sea bed that absorbs



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## Case Study 8: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (4) – Risk Management

the energy of tidal surges. They are also one of the fastest absorbers of carbon dioxide; one tree can absorb 0.35kg of the gas a year. Mangroves are also a great spawning ground for fish and therefore offer livelihood opportunities for local communities.<sup>11</sup>

With support from Plan and the Teguis Farmers Association, the children's groups were able to educate others on how to protect mangroves. They shared their views at community meetings, used local media to raise awareness and distributed simple yet scientifically sound information, education and communication (IEC) materials stressing the importance of offsetting the impacts of climate change by protecting the community's natural resources. They also formed teams to replant mangrove trees. In seven months, the children planted 100,000 mangrove trees covering 10 hectares of land.

The children in Teguis are an example of the important role young people can play in risk communication and promoting behavioural change to reduce disaster risks. Children's sense of responsibility to protect their future is an invaluable resource. The Children Association's President, a 15 year old girl called Sharmaine declared, "It is very important that we do this, so that when we grow old we can say we've been a part of the movement against climate change."

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<sup>11</sup> Environmental Justice Foundation, *Mangroves: Nature's Defence Against Tsunamis* (2006)  
[http://www.ejfoundation.org/pdf/tsunami\\_report.pdf](http://www.ejfoundation.org/pdf/tsunami_report.pdf)

## Case Study 9: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (4) – Risk Management

### CHILDREN IN EL SALVADOR TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE DENGUE FEVER

The Hyogo Framework's fourth priority area on reducing risk illustrates that vulnerability can be reduced when simple measures are applied. With preventable diseases such as malaria, dengue and diarrhoea increasingly affecting millions of children a year, education about disease transmission is vital to increasing the resilience of communities. Children's groups in El Salvador recognised dengue fever in particular to be a key hazard for their community and were effective in educating others about how small changes in behaviour could significantly reduce the risk and save lives.

Dengue is found in tropical and sub-tropical climates worldwide, mostly in urban and semi-urban areas. As a high-risk country, the government of El Salvador started a national campaign to educate its 7.2 million inhabitants about the spread of dengue. The hurricane season which strikes El Salvador on an annual basis brings heavy rains and floods which create ideal conditions for mosquitoes to flourish. The only sure method of prevention is to stop the breeding of mosquitoes.

In Potonico, located in the municipality of Chalatenango, children aged 12-17 identified dengue fever as one of the primary preventable causes of illness and death in their community. The children learned that it is spread by mosquitoes laying eggs in stagnant water. Armed with this knowledge they started a clean-up campaign to reduce breeding grounds for mosquitoes, urging households to be more careful in their waste management and to drain or chemically treat any standing water.



Given the communities' vulnerability to landslides and floods, the children's group in Potonico also led a vetiver grass planting campaign. Vetiver is a grass native to India, which provides protection from soil erosion and stabilises slopes to prevent landslides.

## Case Study 9: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (4) – Risk Management

The children were supported by local health workers to carry out their campaign. They conducted monthly house-to-house visits throughout the village. They explained to homeowners the dangers of dumping rubbish and allowing stagnant water to collect. They worked in teams to conduct back-yard and garden inspections for potential risks. “We find things like coconuts, broken glass bottles, plastic bottles and wooden boxes that are no longer used or other containers that people leave around that eventually get filled with water when it rains,” explained 17 year old group member, Marcelo. “That’s where the mosquitoes come and lay their eggs.”

The children also inspected rubbish before it was thrown away for evidence of mosquito larvae. They collected all waste and debris into garbage bags and emptied out any stagnant water found, and they applied larvicide treatment in stagnant water. Whenever they found mosquito larvae, the accompanying health inspector recorded it in a log book and reinforced the children’s message to homeowners about why it is important to keep their grounds clean and free of rubbish.

Hector Orellana, the mayor of Potonico, acknowledged the value of the children’s cleaning campaign. The government’s public health records show that their efforts have been effective; the authorities in Potonico reported a significant reduction in dengue fever cases compared to neighbouring areas where incidences of the vector-borne disease remains high.

**FURTHER INFORMATION OF THIS CASE CAN BE FOUND IN THE FOLLOWING SOURCE:**

BBC and Plan UK documentary, *Children on the Frontline: El Salvador*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmHDRE0qWdk>

## Case Study 10: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (5) – Disaster Preparedness and Response

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S PREPAREDNESS SAVES LIVES IN FLOOD

The Hyogo Framework's fifth priority area focuses on disaster preparedness and response. It stipulates that losses during disasters can be significantly reduced when individuals, communities and the authorities are well prepared. This includes being ready to act, equipped with knowledge, and equipped with the skills for effective DRR. Coordination plans are essential for the success of disaster preparedness.

Young people in El Salvador who took part in Plan's Child-centred DRR programme offer an example of preparedness leading to an effective coordinated response that minimised the impact of a disaster which struck their community. Their planning in partnership with their community's Civil Protection Committee helped to save lives when Tropical Storm Ida swept through their hometown in November 2009, causing massive flooding. The previous year, a hurricane also struck the area and claimed the lives of 12 people in their community. It inundated the homes of Cerco di Piedra with mud and destroyed a nearby bridge. The hard lessons learnt from this experience made the local children and youth determined to take disaster preparedness seriously.

Cerco di Piedra's civil protection committee included five children and youth aged 14-21, all of them members of their community's child and youth DRR group. They were trained in early warning systems, first aid, contingency planning and evacuation. When Tropical Ida struck late in the evening and the river began to flood, the young people joined their adult counterparts alerting people to the danger. They divided into the brigades that they created to respond to emergencies – for monitoring and early warning, first aid, evacuation and shelter support. At 10pm, when the early warning system (EWS) sounded the alarm, they alerted community members of the imminent danger of flooding using megaphones, checking that everyone was awake and evacuating from their homes. As the flood waters rose, they worked alongside adults to help direct members of the community into safe shelters.





## Case Study 10: Hyogo Framework Priority Area (5) – Disaster Preparedness and Response

One of the youth on the Civil Protection Committee, Erika, 19, compared this experience to the previous year's floods, and explained that although there was more damage to property, they were able to save the lives of almost everybody in the area. "Now we know how to respond in many types of emergencies... because we know what to do, not like last year... I know what it means to lose everything", she said. "Last year's flood left us with nothing, and we were just starting to recover. Things might look worse now, but at least we managed to save most people." Tropical Storm Ida caused the loss of 199 lives nationwide and left extensive infrastructural damage in the areas of Cuscatlan, La Paz, San Vicente, and San Salvador. Only one person died in their hometown of Cerco di Piedra, in the province of San Salvador.

Children's involvement in preparedness planning can not only result in minimising disaster losses as happened in Cerco di Piedra, but it also helps them to better cope with the trauma of an emergency, leading to quicker recovery. The children shared how supporting their community has changed them and also shared that many adults in their community respect young people more since the flood.

This case study highlights the importance for high-risk countries, such as El Salvador to ensure that everybody, especially children and young people be given every opportunity to learn about disasters and to be actively involved in preparedness planning. The young people in Cerco di Piedra demonstrate that children should not be treated just as victims; they also have the capacity to lead and coordinate efforts to make their communities safer.

**This case study is available in video format - see:**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmesBo54Wh8&feature=player\\_embedded#at=26](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmesBo54Wh8&feature=player_embedded#at=26):

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE CHILD PARTICIPATION IN HFA PRIORITY AREA 4:

Policy-makers and practitioners at national and local levels should work to ensure that:

- Children and young people, especially the most vulnerable girls and boys, participate in preparedness activities in the school and community to respond to pre-identified hazards, vulnerabilities and risks.
- Children and young people participate in the establishment of adequate and appropriate Early Warning Systems.
- Evacuation routes and emergency shelters that can be used safely by children and other at-risk groups are identified, maintained and known by the whole community.
- The community is able to act on their disaster response plans and are supported by effective and timely emergency response services that reach all affected community members and are prioritised according to the need.
- Local preparedness plans should be based on internationally recognised standards – and ensure the needs of children are met.

## Case Study 11: The Contribution of DRR to Children's Rights to Health and Education

Disaster risk reduction is a crosscutting approach which is vital for the achievement of children's rights. It serves to safeguard and protect children from hazard risks and is crucial to help realise their right to health and education against a backdrop of increasingly frequent, intense and unpredictable disasters.

### Right to Health

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) stipulates that all children have the right to the highest attainable standard of health. This is to be achieved, among other measures, through preventing disease and malnutrition, ensuring access to clean drinking water, maintaining an environment without the risks of pollution, improving hygiene and sanitation and by preventing accidents.

DRR can greatly contribute to achieving good health for children worldwide. Promoting greater knowledge of hygiene and sanitation can serve to protect communities from major diseases that are amongst the world's biggest killers. Diarrhoea, for example, kills an estimated 1.5 million children under the age of five each year - more than AIDS, malaria and measles combined - but can be prevented through the provision of safe drinking water and improved hygiene practices. Children engaged in DRR have proven to be active in recognising preventable disease and spreading awareness on the behaviours needed to combat these, leading others through their own action. Children in El Salvador for example ran a successful campaign to reduce the transmission of dengue in their community. See case study 9.

Through Child-centred DRR, children are able to learn new skills and knowledge that they can use to safeguard their health and wellbeing. In Indonesia and Cambodia, children involved in DRR programmes saw drought as a major cause of malnutrition in their communities. They learnt about crops that can thrive despite drought and about techniques to preserve and distribute scarce water resources and shared this knowledge with farmers in their villages. They promoted these new learnings as ways of contributing to



## Case Study 11: The Contribution of DRR to Children's Rights to Health and Education

reducing malnutrition rates and the loss of livelihoods due to poor harvests. In Pong Ror village in Cambodia's Kampong Cham Province, children mobilised their community to have a canal dug from a nearby reservoir, 500 metres north of the village rice fields. They discussed their plan with the village leader and commune chief and eventually saw their proposal for the canal's construction integrated in the commune's annual development plan for 2009. They also took the initiative to ask several local organisations in the area to help facilitate the digging of the canal. 17 year old Chon, a member of the group, explained, "If we get the canal we will have more rice. Families will be more secure. They won't have to worry so much about food and they can think more about their children's education".

### Right to Education

Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention refer to children's right to education. DRR can effectively contribute to the provision of safer study spaces for children, minimising disruption of schooling during emergency situations and helping children to learn how to reduce the impact of disasters and adapt to the changing climate. Furthermore it can contribute to developing respect for the natural environment in order to promote better environmental and waste management practices and the protection of ecosystems.

Emphasising risk reduction in the education sector's planning promotes children's right to education by ensuring that schools are strongly built in safe locations. In the Philippines, children of Santa Paz community in the province of Southern Leyte lobbied to have their school relocated to safer ground when risk assessments showed that the school was vulnerable to landslides. In Sierra Leone, children advocated to have a bridge that they had to cross to get to school repaired. In the Philippines, following the 2006 landslide in Catig village in Southern Leyte province, a children's group persuaded the authorities to improve the sanitation arrangements at an evacuation centre that were found to be a major cause of stress for displaced children. The children's group also organised games and trauma support for the youngest children in the evacuation centres and helped them return to school.

DRR programmes have helped children learn about issues such as climate change, reforestation, recycling, tree planting and coastal clean-ups, as well as practical life saving skills including first aid, swimming, tree climbing, and disease prevention. This information helps children reach their full potential and contributes to realising their rights – in particular their rights to health and education.

## Case Study 12: An Inclusive Approach to Child-Centred DRR

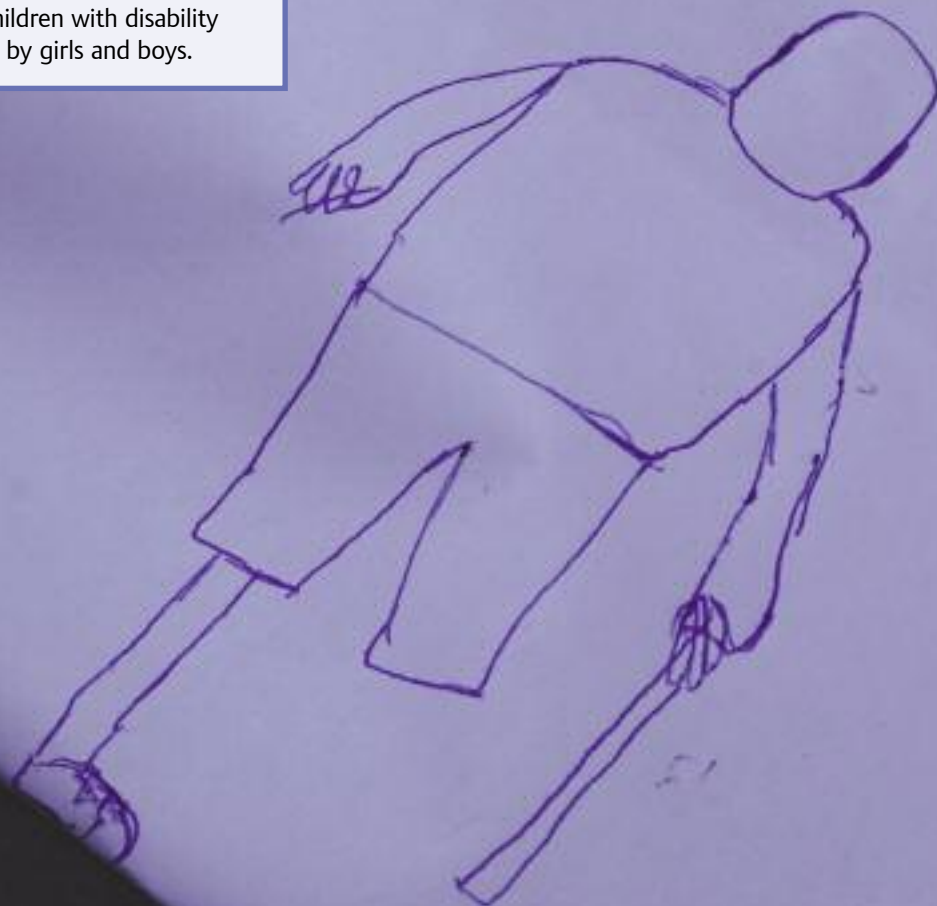
All children should be included in DRR programmes, but to be effective child centred DRR must address the particular needs of marginalised groups, such as disabled children and girls. Ensuring they are not excluded by actively involving them in holistic analysis of risk and in risk reduction activities is crucial for building any community's resilience to disasters.

There are 200 million disabled children in the world today<sup>12</sup> many of whom are subject to prejudice and the lack of belief in their capabilities. They are often considered to be a burden on their families, or society itself, particularly in poor communities in less developed countries, who do not have access to supportive services. Disabled children face many barriers to the realisation of their rights, including the right to education. Where children are given a chance to get involved in decision-making on community affairs, it is usually the brightest and most capable that are selected to participate. Disabled children are rarely represented which exacerbates their marginalisation. Disabled children's access to the same opportunities as their peers is often blocked, due to the low expectations that adults have of them – and that they also have of themselves.

To be effective, Child-centred DRR requires an approach that actively strives to include children of all backgrounds and abilities. Disabled children are most at risk during an emergency when swift evacuation is necessary. They face an additional set of risks compared to their peers and this needs to be accounted for in DRR planning. The most effective way is to include them at all stages of planning and preparedness – so they can contribute to decisions being made to ensure their particular needs are being addressed.

<sup>12</sup> *Promoting the Rights of Children with Disability*. UNICEF (2007)

As part of Haiti's Post Disaster Needs Assessment consultation with children, the needs of children with disability were identified by girls and boys.



## Case Study 12: An Inclusive Approach to Child-Centred DRR

Plan Bangladesh made a concerted effort to include disabled children in its DRR children's groups but was only able to enlist 10 disabled children out of a total of 1,860, partly due to parents, communities and disabled children themselves believing that they can't usefully add value to planning and DRR activities. Experience in Bangladesh also showed how important it is to challenge adult facilitators about their own prejudices about the capacities of disabled children. Working with organisations that specialise in disability is most desirable.<sup>13</sup>

The inclusion of girls is also crucial for effective Child-centred DRR. Plan's project achieved a good representation of girls and found in many instances that girls were more active than boys. In the Philippines, for example, when children of Teguis community in Eastern Samar province led a campaign to stop mangrove deforestation, girls were more active than boys in replanting trees, and in many other countries girls were also more active in video making activities to raise DRR awareness (see case study 6). However, despite their active participation, a study conducted by Children in a Changing Climate in September 2010, which analysed gender roles in Plan's Child-centred DRR work in Indonesia's Sikka and Rembang provinces, found that there remains a widely held belief that the views of girls and women are subordinate to those of boys and men.<sup>14</sup> Adult women also thought girls have less capacity to minimise disaster risks than boys. The researchers partly attributed this to the cultural and religious background of the communities, where men are seen to be superior to women, and natural disasters are viewed to be caused by 'divine punishment'. Inclusive Child-centred DRR not only emphasises girls' unique perspectives but it also gives girls an opportunity to prove to themselves and others that they are just as capable as boys, and challenge embedded gender norms in marginalised communities. Diligent efforts to identify the most vulnerable groups in society are essential for effective disaster risk management. Girls and disabled children, as well as children who are out of school, and street and working children must also be considered. They are likely to face additional risks to their safety, whether it be social problems or hazards in the workplace, which need to be addressed in DRR planning.

The valuable contribution that marginalised groups can offer serves to challenge and change negative perceptions towards them and also build a strong foundation for communities to work collectively to reduce the risk of disasters.

<sup>13</sup> Both Plan Indonesia and Bangladesh have worked with Handicap International to ensure their DRR work integrates disability concerns, and Plan Sierra Leone has worked with Disabled Rights Movement.

<sup>14</sup> *Child-centred disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation: Roles of Gender and Culture in Indonesia* Working paper No. 2 Katharine Haynes, Jonatan Lassa and Briony Towers. September 2010

## Case Study 13: Ensuring Child Rights Are Upheld in Child-Centred DRR Programming

The principle of the “Best Interests of the Child” is the underpinning rationale of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Applying this principle requires careful assessment of the complex pattern of social, economic and cultural circumstances that affect children. Child protection policies and instruments aim to keep children safe from harm, neglect and abuse by placing children’s best interest at the heart of all decisions and actions affecting them.

### UNCRC DESCRIBES THE PRINCIPLE OF THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD AS:

1. In the case of actions and decisions affecting an individual child, it is the best interests of that individual child which must be taken into account.
2. It is in a child’s best interests to enjoy the rights and freedoms set out in the CRC. For example, it is in children’s best interests to develop respect for human rights and for other cultures (article 29.1(b) and (c)). It is in a child’s best interests to maintain contact with both parents in most circumstances (article 9.3).
3. It is in the best interests of Indigenous children to be raised in the Indigenous community (articles 5, 8.2 and 30).
4. A child capable of forming a view on his or her best interests must be able to give it freely and it must be taken into account (article 12).
5. Parents have primary decision-making responsibility on behalf of their children (articles 5 and 18.1) but, if they fail to make the child’s best interests a basic concern, the State may intervene to protect those interests (see article 9.1 for example).



## Case Study 13: Ensuring Child Rights Are Upheld in Child-Centred DRR Programming

Child-centred DRR – like children’s participation in all types of community development – has faced criticism and concern that it overburdens children with “adult” responsibilities, infringing on their time to study, to contribute to household chores, to play and their right to be children. Although children’s engagement in DRR activities can be time intensive for children, membership in children’s groups and participation in activities is always voluntary and ultimately provides children with valuable life skills (such as increased self confidence, independent decision making, problem solving), as well as the opportunity to develop and exercise their citizenship. It provides them the confidence to know their rights and to learn how to assert their rights. Most importantly, it also empowers them to take action to not only strengthen their community’s resilience but also to safeguard their own safety and wellbeing.

Ultimately, children’s participation in DRR decision-making, implementation and monitoring and evaluation is valuable for increasing children’s agency within their communities and also ensuring that they develop the capacity to manage the wider risks they foresee. Child-centred DRR also allows children the opportunity to improve dialogue and collaborative work with local governments. In Bangladesh a national order has been passed allowing children to formally participate in Union Disaster Management Committees throughout the country, giving them the opportunity to contribute their knowledge and ideas and to hold local governments accountable for their actions on DRR. Plan’s work supporting children’s participation in local DRR decision making has generated evidence of the added value children bring to DRR. Their participation is particularly important in many at-risk communities where adults often have a fatalistic attitude towards disaster or feel apathetic towards DRR. Children, on the other hand, have proven to challenge fatalism and cultural norms contributing to increased vulnerabilities, and to be more enthusiastic about protecting their environment from future risks.

However, there is unease that children’s engagement in advocacy and lobbying can put them at risk when this challenges some of the root causes of disaster vulnerability. When children and young people in Eastern Samar, the Philippines, began to raise awareness about the impact of chromite mining near their local river, their calls for changing mining practices – such as reforestation degraded lands and ensuring the closure of extractive pits – were initially met with support from local authorities. Adults acknowledged the children’s concerns that the river was becoming toxic and that deforestation by mining companies was increasing landslide risk and causing floods during heavy rains. However, the children and their families faced strong criticism from people with a vested interest in the unregulated mining operations since their profits and livelihoods were being threatened. Despite support from Plan, the local council and their school, children’s advocacy for improved mining practices in the area was discontinued when it triggered a large dispute which could eventually jeopardise the children’s wellbeing and that of their families.

Similarly, in Petapa, a small town in the Chalatenango municipality of El Salvador, the children’s committee realised that the extraction of rocks and stones from the local river aggravated the risk of flooding for households located near the river bank. Children campaigned against the quarrying company and their demonstration included blockading extraction company’s trucks until they agreed to leave. The children in Petapa were successful in stopping the quarrying operations from damaging their river and increasing floods. Nonetheless, agencies implementing Child-centred DRR must be mindful of the potential risks children may be exposed to when they identify and wish to address some of the root causes of risks. Their conviction and determination may lead to exposing and challenging engrained power dynamics and economic interests in a society – which are increasing their communities’ exposure to disaster risks.

The best interests of the child and child protection are two central principles for effective Child-centred DRR programming.

## Case Study 14: Informed Children Uphold Their Right to Participation in Global Decision Making Spaces

Children's right to participate is enshrined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is promoted in Plan's DRR programme's **Theory of Change: "Young citizens have the right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and thus they have the right to participate in the governance of DRR 'services'. Their participation results in better decisions, higher quality services, greater access to those services, and better development outcomes as a result."**

At the international policy level where decisions are being made on climate change and DRR, children and young people have proven to be an important and influential force for advocating change and raising public awareness. With climate change being one of the most pressing issues facing governments today, children from developed and developing countries alike have met with policy makers to try to hold them accountable for safeguarding their future. "Climate change is very important for everyone, but because I'm young I'm more concerned as I will live to feel its effects", shared 15 year old Annie from the UK, who was a member of the team of youth journalists supported by Plan at the Copenhagen climate negotiations in 2009 (COP15).

Children make up more than half the population in countries predicted to experience the worst impacts of climate change. Their right to participate is inextricably linked to their right to survival, development and to protection. Climate change also brings to the fore important debates about intergenerational justice as today's children will have to manage the consequences of their parent's and grandparent's ways of managing our natural environment.

Plan's Child-centred DRR programme has supported children and young people to participate in major global events on climate change and DRR, including the UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COP) meetings, the UNISDR's Global Platform and the EU's Green Week. In 2007 at the COP13 meeting held in





## Case Study 14: Informed Children Uphold Their Right to Participation in Global Decision Making Spaces

Bali, young people challenged ministers and official delegates to uphold the rights of all children as they increasingly face the effects of climate change. Eni from Indonesia who attended COP13 with Plan's support voiced the concerns of many young people: "Can we just sit still and not do anything? Choosing to be silent, or not doing anything while watching this is the same as to make this thing last forever and make things worse. It is true that our government, I think, has not yet shown that it can tackle climate change. But, I will not just sit still and wait." Since the Bali COP, Eni has continued to engage in climate change awareness raising in her country, including serving as the climate change focal point for the Children's Forum in Central Java province (which includes youth groups from five districts), and leading a tree planting campaign which mobilised 100,000 people in the Pulokulon sub-district.

At the UNFCCC COP15 meeting, Plan supported a group of eleven children from Indonesia, Kenya, the UK, Netherlands and Sweden to attend as young journalists, where they had the opportunity to interview global leaders and policy makers and report on the negotiation process to major news networks around the world.<sup>15</sup> Their reporting was featured on BBC news, the Jakarta Post, Musyi FM (Kenya), Sveriges Radio P4 (Sweden), Dagens Nyheter (Sweden), Times Educational Supplement (UK), among other.

Aakash and Annie, COP15 youth journalists from the UK have continued to engage with the UK's Department of Energy and Climate Change and were invited to give a keynotes speech at the "Climate Revolution" event in London, on January 2010, where children and young people presented their Action Plan on Climate Change to the UK Secretary of State for Climate Change. Maira, another COP15 youth journalist from Indonesia, following her COP15 participation where she had the opportunity to interview Al Gore, won an Al Gore scholarship to be trained as a Climate Project Presenter and now sits on the advisory board for Inconvenient Youth. At COP16 in Cancun, Maira was an official member of the Indonesian government's youth delegation and took part in the Children in a Changing Climate side event. Young journalist from Kenya, Joseph, aged 12, who reported on COP15 in Copenhagen to a local community radio station, was invited by the Kenya Minister of Environment to visit his office in Nairobi to continue a discussion about climate change adaptation. Joseph is also engaged in a climate change school linking project by Plan where he is active in sharing his Copenhagen experience with colleagues in Kenya and the UK, Malawi and Senegal.

At the EU Green Week in 2009, Plan supported the participation of 17 year old Nurul from Indonesia, who presented her video on children's rights and climate change at a panel discussion with the European Commission's Director General for Communication. Nurul has since taken part in the global youth summit on the MDGs held in London in 2010 as the official Indonesian Delegate, and took part in national TV programmes on environmental issues (DAITV and Dahsyat RCTI TV).

Young people's participation is not only important at high-level global meetings – where decisions being made on their future are at stake. Plan also encourages young people to get engaged at local and national levels, and especially to share their experiences of taking part in global events such as the UNFCCC COP meetings. Young people who took part in global events have continued to share their experiences and views on coping with climate change at schools and in their communities, and continued to campaign for greater commitments by their national governments towards mitigating and adapting to climate change.

<sup>15</sup> The young journalists interviewed: Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; Gordon Brown, UK Prime Minister; John Holmes, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator; Åsa-Britt Karlsson, Swedish Environment State Secretary; Wangari Maathai, renowned political and environmental activist from Kenya; John Michuki, Minister for Environment, Kenya; Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, UK; Mohamed Nasheed, President of the Maldives; Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; Mary Robinson, former Irish President; Josette Sheeran, Executive Director World Food Programme; Ulla Tornaes, Minister for Development Cooperation, Denmark; Margareta Wahlström, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction; Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia; and Desmond Tutu.

## Case Study 14: Informed Children Uphold Their Right to Participation in Global Decision Making Spaces

Children and young people in many countries have demonstrated that they are interested in taking part and contributing to decisions being made at the global level which directly affect their lives. Their determination is proving successful. At the 2010 UNFCCC climate change meeting in Cancun (COP16), the former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, Yvo de Boer, acknowledged children as the human face behind the impact of climate change. “We have to give children the opportunity to get their voices heard and then we can understand that climate change is not just about environment and glaciers but also about people. We need to hear from people particularly affected... and that’s children.” In El Salvador, a humanitarian worker echoed de Boer’s views: “Working with children and youth in communities leads to sustainability; adults have certain taboos and will accommodate to disasters, but children are more prepared to change and develop a culture of prevention and mitigation”.

Around the world, high level leaders, risk reduction and development practitioners, teachers, parents and children themselves are increasingly acknowledging and supporting the participation of children and young people in climate change and disaster risk reduction decision-making and action. This is not just because they have the right to participate, but also because, increasingly, people understand the added-value and insights that children and young people offer to secure their future, and ours.

**To find out more about the youth advocates for climate change and DRR, please click on the following links:**

Young reporters who attended COP15:

<http://www.plan-uk.org/action/issues/climatechange/youngjournalists/>

Young delegates attended Bali climate change conference (2007):

<http://www.plan-uk.org/uk/action/issues/reducingchildrensvulnerability/latestnews/balinegotiations/>

Plan UK’s Youth Advisory Panel 2010 campaign *A Hand in My Future*:

<http://www.plan-uk.org/uk/newsroom/ahandinmyfuture/>

## Acknowledgements

The following people have been instrumental in developing Plan's Child-centred DRR approach: Plan Bangladesh - Michiel Slotema; Plan Cambodia - Chenda Bun and Sok Heng; Plan Dominican Republic - Dan Stothart; Plan Ecuador - Pamela Jarrin and Doris Gordon; Plan El Salvador - Mercedes Garcia; Plan Indonesia - Vanda Lengkong and Anto Amri; Plan Philippines - Baltz Tribunalo and Edwin Elegado; Plan Sierra Leone - Edward Sesay. The programme has also greatly benefitted from collaboration with many other people and organisations; notably, Tom Mitchell, Thom Tanner, Frances Seballos and Emily Polack at the UK Institute of Development Studies; Katherine Haynes at RMIT; Janet Boston of the Thomson Foundation; Patricia Ray, Maureen Fordham and Tamara Plush; and the partners in the Children in a Changing Climate coalition.

The DRR programme was managed by Nick Hall and Kelly Hawrylyshyn with Daniel Walden, Phoebe Farag and Janani Vivekananda at Plan UK.

Many thanks are due to the UK government's Department for International Development for providing financial support for this programme.



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**Prioritising the education and the agency of young people is an essential feature of any society's capacity to manage risk and develop sustainably. The threats that climate change bring emphasizes 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, especially their children, and all societies have sufficient information to take decisions on how much risk they will accept and how they will manage it. An informed and motivated citizenry will ensure good governance of managing risks, and good governance will thrive on the input of proactive citizens.**



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