



UN World Conference on
Disaster Risk Reduction
2015 Sendai Japan

CHILDREN & YOUTH FORUM

Concept Note (July 2014)

“One of the easiest disaster risk reduction measures we can take is to empower children and youth and ensure they are actively involved in disaster risk reduction and contribute to making their cities and community resilient to disasters. Denying them this right would be denying them from influencing their own future. The earth needs youth’s support to survive the threats of climate change and the growing intensity and frequency of disasters.”

Margareta Wahlström

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction

Content

Communities, children and youth are at the forefront of disasters. With increasing exposure and vulnerability to disaster risk, future generations will live with growing climate-related threats and more recurrent and intense shocks.

Children and youth are agents for future change: they have the capability to innovate, educate and reach out to their direct and extended family as well as their wider community on how to reduce the risks of disasters. Children and youth can be instrumental in leading change to reduce risks and build a culture of resilience.

As the decision-makers and leaders of tomorrow, children and youth need to acquire the appropriate knowledge, critical thinking and life-saving skills on how to reduce risk, prepare and respond to disasters to make well-informed decisions to protect themselves and their community against future risk. With that knowledge and skills, children and youth will represent well prepared citizens capable of engaging in decision-making processes to develop risk-sensitive policies that will shape their communities and the world’s future.

Despite their strong potential and contribution to building a more disaster-resilient world for all and in leading community change around disaster preparedness, children and youth are rarely heard or truly involved in decision-making that reduces disaster risks and builds resilience.

Rationale

Since the first session of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2007 and in the lead up to the 2013 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (May 2013, Geneva), Regional Platforms in Asia, Africa, and Latin America successfully recognized children and youth’s added value in reducing disaster risk and in building community resilience to disasters. The on-going consultations for a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction that started in March 2012 are providing a unique opportunity to children and youth to raise their voice on the role they want to play, their expectations and priorities. Children and youth called for their more systematic involvement in the decision-making processes that determine their life and “the resilient future they want”. They also expressed a

desire for a Children and Youth Forum to discuss disaster risk reduction at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan).

They were heard. At the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (May 2013, Geneva), the High-Level Dialogue Communiqué recognized the safety of children and youth as a priority “in accordance with their views as captured in the consultations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction”. The Chair’s Summary of the 2013 Global Platform called for a “Youth and Children’s forum” to be held at the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan.

Objectives

The Children & Youth Forum will be a child and youth-led Forum FOR children and youth that showcases their strengths, skills, and abilities to lead change in reducing risk and building resilience to disasters. The Children & Youth Forum will draw on children and youth discussions held at Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia, Central Asia, Pacific, Americas, Africa, Arab States and Europe ¹ and youth mobilization opportunities organized in the lead up to the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Children and Youth Forum will provide space for children and youth to:

- Share views, ideas and experiences in reducing disaster risk and in building community resilience
- Discuss their aspirations, expectations as well as the contribution and added value they bring to disaster risk reduction decision-making.
- Co-design innovative ideas for disaster resilience and opportunities to pitch their innovations and recommendations to the leaders of today and corporate partners for support and partnership-building.
- Formulate commitments to a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction to be presented at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction².

Expected outcomes

- Experiences, good practices and innovations emerging from regional discussions are collected, documented and shared.
- Children and youth perspectives on disaster risk reduction contribute to and inform the inter-governmental and multi-stakeholder discussions and events at the World Conference. Children & Youth have developed action plans to reduce risk in support of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.
- Children and Youth declaration of commitments to disaster risk reduction implementation in a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

¹ The 2014 Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction will be held as follows: Central Asia and South Caucasus Consultation (1-2 April 2014, Almaty, Kazakhstan), 5th African Regional Platform (13-16 May 2014, Abuja, Nigeria), 4th Regional Platform for Americas (27-29 May 2014, Guayaquil, Ecuador), Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management (2-4 June 2014, Suva, Fiji), 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (23-26 June 2014, Bangkok, Thailand), 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (10-12 June 2014, Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt), 5th European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (6-8 October 2014, Madrid, Spain).

² Children and Youth’s commitments This would include children and youth’s commitments to assess the status of their school through mobile application of existing crowdsourcing school assessment initiatives (including “How Safe is your School”, UNICEF, UNESCO’s crowdsourcing crowd-sourcing Initiative, as a contribution to the “Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools” to be presented at the World Conference in Sendai (UNISDR).

Proposed Format

The Children and Youth Forum will be part of the multi-stakeholder segment of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and is expected to inform the inter-governmental discussions on a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction throughout 14-18 March 2015 in Sendai. The Forum will be open to the public from Sendai surroundings (details to be confirmed with authorities in Japan)

The Children and Youth Forum is expected to integrate the following components:

1. Children-led and youth-led debates and workshops with recommendations and commitments for action that contribute to the inter-governmental discussions, in particular the Chair's Dialogue with stakeholder groups, the voluntary commitments report from stakeholders and the overall outcomes of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.
2. Competitions to identify innovative ways to build resilience in partnership with major governmental bodies and business companies.
3. Physical and online exhibitions of projects that contribute to building resilience. Flashmobs and multimedia campaigns around disaster risk reduction and resilience (in preparations for and at the World Conference).
4. Social media communications-related events with children and youth to build awareness and mobilize children and youth towards Sendai and beyond
5. Puppet shows and other performance shows including with children living with a disability
6. Involvement of influential youth representatives from all sectors in discussions to mobilize children and youth around disaster risk reduction implementation beyond 2015.
7. An Education Space to display materials produced for and by children and youth, major children and youth's achievements in disaster risk reduction, good practices and open source materials including videos and films etc.

The facilitation of the project is being led by the Youth Beyond Disasters community in partnership with the UNISDR and Children in a Changing Climate coalition .

Scope

The Children and Youth Forum will be of international scope, with children and youth attending from all regions. The Forum will also have a regional scope as it will build on the outcomes of children and youth discussions organized at the regional level, in particular on the occasion of Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction.

- **Regionally-focused dialogues and workshops** will be facilitated by UNISDR Regional Offices in close cooperation with youth change-makers and in-country child-focused partners.
- **The Children and Youth Forum in Sendai will be of international scope** with participation from children and youth from Central Asia, Latin America, Africa, Asia, Arab States and Europe..
- **Online Spaces / Portal** will be developed to host and share ideas, build awareness and foster a children and youth community for the development of a Children and Youth Sendai Declaration towards a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction and longer-term action in disaster risk reduction beyond 2015.

Children representation

The child participants at the Sendai conference will represent children from around the world and will carry and convey children's messages and views on disaster risk reduction to Sendai. They will represent children who have been actively involved in preparatory events throughout 2014 and especially during Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia, Pacific, the Americas, Africa, and Europe³ in the lead up to the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

A small group of children will be selected by their peers, supported by the main Child-Centred agencies⁴, to attend the Sendai conference. The selected children are likely to be teenagers between the age of 14 -17, coming from all the regions of the world and chosen for their understanding about DRR issues and their capacity to engage in debate. To assure optimum meaningful engagement in Sendai, and recognizing financial constraints, the maximum number of children is 10 to 15 children, with each child supported by a chaperone.

Youth representation

Youth will be represented through The Youth Beyond Disasters who is coordinating action with and mobilizing several youth movements around disaster risk reduction towards Sendai. They will co-design and lead youth discussions at regional Platforms and at the Children and Youth Forum to promote innovative solutions to share with children and youth globally via online platform

All commitments reached through children and youth contribution to the Third UN World on Disaster Risk Reduction will appear as part of the voluntary commitments report to a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction that will be referred to / presented on the last day of the World Conference.

Organizers and Partners

UNISDR, Youth Beyond Disasters, Children in a Changing Climate

For more information and relevant coordination with the Children and Youth Group, please contact Christel Rose, UNISDR Geneva (Tel+41 22 917 8355, rosec@un.org).

³ Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction will be held as follows: Central Asian and Caucasus Consultation (1-2 April 2014, Almaty, Kazakhstan), 5th African Regional Platform (5-8 May 2014, Abuja, Nigeria), 4th Regional Platform for Americas (27-29 May 2014, Guayaquil, Ecuador), Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management (2-4 June 2014, Suva, Fiji), 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (23-26 June 2014, Bangkok, Thailand), 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (10-12 June 2014, Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt), 5th European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (6-8 October 2014, Madrid, Spain).

⁴ Plan International, UNICEF, Save the Children and World Vision,