



UN Major Group for
Children and Youth
the space for children and youth in the United Nations



ASIA-PACIFIC MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON
Disaster Risk Reduction

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Children and Youth Call for Action



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Asia Pacific Coalition
for School Safety



Save the Children



School of Public Health
and Social Work

Introduction

Disasters pose a substantial and growing hazard to children and youth's well-being, and climate change is a rising threat to the environment and livelihood, including the survival and well-being of future generations. However, children and youth continue to be on the frontlines in combating climate change and building resilience in their communities. There has been consultative and robust research on child-centred risk reduction and school safety developed globally and in Asia-Pacific. Recent reports such as [Words into Action Guidelines for Children and Youth](#) and [Guardians of The Planet](#) have shown evidence of children and youth's crucial role and aspiration in DRR and climate action and how we should work with and for children and youth through dialogue, skills building and advocacy. The Asia-Pacific Children and Youth Call for Action are co-led by the Children & Youth Stakeholders Group composed of UN MGCY, UNICEF, IFRC, Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision and the Asia Pacific Coalition for School Safety (APCSS).

For the 9th Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) 2022, we call on the government, DRR partners and practitioners to ensure the following:

1. Commit to comprehensive school safety and ensure education continuity

Children and youth continue to face the compounding effects of multiple hazards, including natural and technological threats, climate change, pandemics (such as COVID-19), violence, conflicts, and everyday risks in and around schools that can cause adverse impacts on their rights to education and development. Thus, we call on Asia-Pacific Governments and partners to sustainably address the barriers to children and youth's equitable access to safe, continuous, and quality education by committing to the Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022-2030 and adopting its all-risk-and-all-hazards approach to protecting children and education.

Duty-bearers and stakeholders must review and update school safety-related policies, plans and procedures to include education continuity and protection mechanisms and ensure that school safety management systems and strategies are inclusive, gender-responsive, and child-centred.

Efforts to raise awareness and strengthen technical capacity on disaster risk reduction and resilience-building in the education sector (i.e. development of standardised training, resources and tools development, learning exchanges, and knowledge and information management), particularly for the students, teachers, school staff, and the education authorities, must also be continued. Empowerment and building leadership capacities among children and youth must also be prioritised to ensure meaningful participation in school safety planning, decision-making and implementation.

Finally, we urge governments and partners in Asia-Pacific to support establishing multi-stakeholder mechanisms for school safety at different levels (sub-national, national, and regional) to encourage coordination and collaboration toward achieving common school safety goals and outcomes.

2. Integrate child and youth protection into DRR and Climate Action

As children and youth are empowered in disaster risk reduction and are an agent of change in their communities, it is crucial to recognise that they are exposed to heightened protection risks, including gender-based violence, exploitation, child trafficking, child labour, psychosocial distress following the impact of COVID-19 and other protection issues. These risks deeply affect their security and sense of well-being, especially when they are forcibly displaced, separated from their families, or their learning is interrupted.

Addressing protection issues should start from the family and involve community stakeholders, including children and youth themselves. This entails listening to their issues, concerns, needs and priorities without discrimination and co-designing and implementing child protection policies and programs, including referral mechanisms, family unification, prevention of gender-based violence, psychosocial support, child-friendly spaces and other community-based child protection services.

Therefore, we call on governments, DRR partners and practitioners in Asia-Pacific to ensure that protection, gender, and inclusion are integrated across all DRR activities, including early warning mechanisms, regular mock drills, and climate action to better respond to the rights, needs and priorities of children and youth. Finally, ensuring access to sufficient protection services at all levels is necessary.

3. Uphold the rights to information and participation of children and youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Action.

Children and youth have the right to participate, and they are already working to tackle disaster risks and climate change – such as by disseminating messages, participating in DRR and early warning, and supporting in protecting their communities and themselves.

While children and youth have already been engaging in awareness raising and information sharing, more needs to be done. Information should further be localised, contextualised and accessible to children and youth - including making it disability-inclusive, gender-responsive, and child-friendly. This would equip children and youth with the information, knowledge and skills to participate meaningfully in DRR and CCA locally.

“Children and youth need to be more educated about how to prevent hazards and avoid calamities, especially flooding.”

Enabling environments should be promoted to enable children and youth to participate and adults to be ready to listen and work with them. This entails investing in children and youth-led initiatives, further building their capacities, creating mechanisms for their participation in policy and decision-making and co-developing solutions to address climate, environment and disaster challenges - particularly at the local level.

4. Ensure community infrastructure and social services are shock-responsive and not disrupted in times of disaster

In times of disasters, children and youth experience losing access to a range of social services and reconstruction efforts are often insufficient in bringing them back to a reasonable standard. Functioning community infrastructure and social services are critical for realising children and youth's rights to safety, survival, development and protection.

A comprehensive understanding of risks would help inform investments for disaster and climate-resilient infrastructure and social service programs, including safe water, health care, and education. Attention should be placed on children and youth's uninterrupted access to essential social services, especially children with disabilities, girls, young migrants and refugees, and other marginalised populations. This entails upgrading shelters and community infrastructures such as public transport, green building, green spaces, safe schools, and community centres, especially for children and youth living in the most disaster-prone areas.

5. Leave no child and youth behind in DRR and climate action

Children and youth still feel that people are affected differently by disasters, especially children and youth who live in remote communities, poor families, conflicts, who live with disabilities, health issues, who are orphans, separated from their families, indigenous people, young LGBTQIA+, and children under five. The disproportionate impacts of risks and disasters make them feel discriminated against, left out, and neglected.

Children and youth from the most vulnerable groups can have a role to play in emergency and disaster preparedness, advocate gender equality and social inclusion, help build resilient communities, and be involved in all levels of decision-making. Children and youth can take the lead in initiating child-friendly activities that promote disaster risk reduction and climate change awareness in their communities.

“We, Children and Youth are very prone to all kinds of hazards, so we need to be engaged in all kinds of advocacy and policy formulation in our community.”

Children and youth call stakeholders to create safe spaces suitable for children and youth from the most vulnerable group to share their thoughts and opinions on DRR plans, policies and initiatives. Leave No One Behind needs to be taken seriously by promoting a family-based approach to ensure that the children and youth are considered in household preparedness plans. Accountability mechanisms should also be in place. Furthermore, stakeholders should reach out, educate, and equip the most vulnerable children and youth to be resilient and disaster ready.

Children and Youth International

Children and Youth International (CYI) is the charitable arm of the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY). It is a youth-led, entirely volunteer-based organisation supporting education, training, and fundraising activities to empower children and youth from all backgrounds to engage in the UN meaningfully. UNMGCY work on a range of issues at the global, regional, national and subnational levels across the pillars of the UN-*human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security*. Our areas of work include the following: *policy & advocacy, capacity building, knowledge and action*.

Asia Pacific Coalition for School Safety

The Asia Pacific Coalition for School Safety is a regional coalition composed of Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision, IFRC, the All-India Disaster Management Institute, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, UNICEF, and other organisations that have committed to bringing children and youth into regional policy processes, and to supporting agenda development and implementation.