



Save the Children's Submission to the Seventh Session of the General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals: 6-10 January 2014

SUMMARY

Save the Children promotes a holistic post-2015 development agenda that has poverty eradication at its core and is guided by universal, equitable and human rights-based approaches to sustainable development. This briefing highlights key recommendations on disaster risk reduction and climate change aimed at realizing our vision of societies that are resilient to the impacts of disasters and protected from climate change and its impacts by 2030. In our *Ending Poverty In Our Generation* report, we propose a ten-goal framework that recommends goals and targets to:

- improve national disaster and risk management planning and risk reduction initiatives, focusing on building the resilience of vulnerable populations including children to sudden and slow-onset disasters;
- reduce economic and human losses from disasters;
- rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce vulnerability to climate change; and
- improve child protection at all times including during times of disaster and conflict.

Introduction

In November 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan swept through the Philippines killing at least 5,700 people, injuring thousands more and causing extensive damage to housing, water and sanitation infrastructure, schools, hospitals and transport links.¹² At least 5.5 million children were affected, including 1.8 million who were displaced from their homes.³

Events such as this exemplify the linkages between disaster risk, climate change and development. It provides a graphic illustration of why disaster risk reduction is so central to the post-2015 development agenda and a reminder of why climate change, as one of the primary drivers of increasing disaster risk, is relevant. The high incidence of poverty in the region hardest hit by the typhoon⁴ was undoubtedly a contributing factor to the number of lives lost and extreme damage sustained, and while it is difficult to attribute any one event to climate change, the science is clear that extreme events such as Super Typhoon Haiyan are likely to increase in intensity, frequency and unpredictability⁵ over the coming years. Climate impacts are already being felt in every continent although not equally: it is the developing countries, and those living close to the poverty line that are most vulnerable.

The post-2015 development framework will set the direction of development policy for at least the next 15 years, and so has an important role to play in ensuring that action is taken globally and nationally to address the inequitable impacts that climate change, and disasters in general, will have on the poor – the very people the framework is meant to be targeting. It can do this by including disaster risk reduction and climate change within the framework but it should also reflect and support the strategic priorities of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the successor agreement of the Hyogo Framework for Action, and the objectives of the 2016 Humanitarian Global Summit.

Why disaster risk reduction and climate change must be in the post-2015 development framework

Unaddressed, climate change and disasters threaten to set back decades of poverty reduction efforts⁶, and will compromise the achievement of human development objectives unless strategic and proactive action is taken to manage the risks that they pose:

- Ending hunger and under-nutrition for example, will be made more difficult in regions where climate change contributes to declining agricultural productivity and growing water scarcity.⁷
- Ending preventable child deaths will be made more difficult by the changes in distribution and prevalence of the pathogens that cause diarrhoea and the vectors that spread malaria.⁸

- Ensuring that all households live above the \$1.25 or \$2 a day threshold will become increasingly difficult as livelihoods and household assets are undermined or lost due to changing weather patterns, more intense and frequent weather-related events and the erosion of food and water security.⁹
- Ending income poverty and ensuring protection of vulnerable groups including children will become more difficult with forced displacement and migration provoked by climate change, disasters and conflict;¹⁰
- Non-weather related disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and industrial accidents similarly undermine development gains and push back poverty reduction efforts.¹¹

The economic, social and environmental impacts of disasters are already high and have a major impact on development outcomes. Since 2002, over the same period that developing countries and their partners have been pursuing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), disasters are conservatively estimated to have resulted in the loss of 1.3 million lives, affected the lives of 4.4 billion people and resulted in economic losses of US\$2 trillion.¹² Yet disaster risk reduction is still not mainstreamed into development planning. The MDGs, for example, failed to include disaster risk reduction at all.

Disaster risk is increasing

Losses from disasters are set to continue to rise¹³, however development policies that integrate disaster risk reduction can play an important role in reducing such losses by avoiding the creation of new risks and protecting development gains from future risks.¹⁴ The post-2015 development framework could drive action to improve disaster risk reduction in development, but to do so it will need to address the primary drivers of disaster risk – demographic changes and climate change¹⁵ – and be based more broadly on an analysis of existing and projected disaster risk and the principles of risk reduction.

Over the lifetime of the next development framework, urbanisation, migration, growing age-dependency ratios¹⁶, and in some regions rapid population growth will significantly increase the numbers of people exposed and vulnerable to hazards. These demographic changes need to be planned for and taken into account in disaster planning but also in development policy more broadly. Similarly, climate change will continue to accelerate, with some models projecting that two degrees of warming will be exceeded as early as the 2040s.¹⁷ A risk-based approach to development would require analysis of these challenges and help to ensure that appropriate actions are being taken to address them.

Dealing with disaster risk reduction and climate change

Designing a development framework that is resilient to risk demands more than simply one or two goals and targets aimed at risk reduction (although these are also important – see below). The framework itself should be designed using risk analysis principles so as to enable the early identification of key risks to the delivery of goal outcomes, proactive risk management through goal or target setting, and targeting of actions towards the groups most vulnerable to particular hazards.

At a minimum, the framework should include targeted goals on disaster risk reduction and climate change that treat the two issues separately but recognise the complimentary links between them. Save the Children recommends separate goals because while climate change is a driver of disaster risk, disaster risk reduction and climate change are both important issues in their own right, often requiring discrete interventions and approaches. A disaster risk reduction goal could, for example, deal with some of the risks posed by climate change (e.g. risk reduction to extreme weather events or adaptation) but would be unlikely to include the dedicated actions needed to slow and eventually halt climate change (e.g. emission reduction). Likewise a climate-only goal is unlikely to include the broader disaster risks facing communities around the world as not all hazards are climate-related (e.g. earthquakes, volcanoes and industrial disasters such as nuclear power plant accidents), nor are they all likely to be exacerbated by climate change.

Save the Children, along with other child-centred agencies,¹⁸ also recommends that the post-2015 development agenda pays special attention to the specific vulnerabilities of children during times of conflict and disasters, as well as the role that children can play as agents of change. Accountable, equitable governance systems which take into account the needs and priorities of vulnerable groups such as children, and which support risk reduction and

adaptation capacity, create more resilient societies in the long-term. Adults, as the duty bearers in households, schools, national governments and international organisations must take responsibility for children's protection in the face of increasing disaster and climate risks. To this end, a separate child protection goal and targets should be included in the post-2015 development agenda. Children may however, also play vital roles in their communities in reducing risks, adapting to climate change and preparing for future disasters.¹⁹ Accordingly, in addition to a separate goal on child protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation initiatives should include child participation elements.

Building disaster resilient societies by 2030

Disaster risk is increasing, and disasters place people at greater risk of falling into, and being trapped in, poverty. Recent analysis has shown that high levels of poverty will still be seen in 2030 if a business-as-usual approach to poverty reduction, disaster risk reduction and climate change continues.²⁰ The objective of a disaster risk reduction goal would be to move beyond business-as-usual to focus action on a number of different fronts:

1. The strategic integration of risk analysis and disaster risk reduction across the spectrum of development policy, planning and practice, so that it reduces rather than exacerbates risks;
2. The development and implementation of science-based disaster risk reduction and resilience plans by all countries. These should be built on local knowledge and use participatory approaches to improve national planning and action on the ground, and will require strengthened disaster risk reduction capacity of local institutions, government partners and civil society, with a central focus on women, children and other vulnerable groups;
3. Better targeting of disaster risk reduction efforts towards the countries, locations, communities and groups that are at greatest risk of disaster-driven impoverishment.²¹

Targets could include:

- Nations to halve disaster mortality rates by 2030;
- Nations to halve disaster related economic losses by 2030;
- All nations to develop and implement a national disaster risk reduction and resilience plan by 2020.

Accelerating action on climate change

Because so little progress has been made globally on reducing greenhouse gas emissions the world is on track for global warming of at least two degrees this century and could, if emissions continue unabated, exceed this goal possibly as early as the 2040s.²² This will bring with it rising sea levels, increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and more weather-related disasters.²³ Already seven out of 10 disasters are climate related.²⁴ What the future holds will depend on the development pathways countries take over the next few years and whether they choose to decarbonise their economies and how rapidly, and invest in disaster risk reduction (to address immediate threats), adaptation (to live with or manage longer term changes), and resilience building (to ensure communities can continue to develop in the face of and increasingly harsh climate). Each of these actions will be absolutely critical for reducing climate-related disaster risk and therefore for poverty reduction and sustainable development. The post-2015 development agenda can, if it sends the right signals, and provides the right incentives, play a critical role in enabling countries to transition to low carbon development pathways and respond to climate risks. However, action will be needed in the following areas:

- **Emission reduction** – Globally, carbon emissions need to peak between 2015-2020 and decline rapidly thereafter for there to be a likely chance of staying within the two degree goal and avoiding dangerous climate change;
- **Integration of climate change into development** - Development planning and poverty reduction strategies must include climate change objectives, take into account the specific vulnerabilities of different groups to the impacts of climate change (e.g. children and the elderly) and provide for their participation;
- **Preparation for climate impacts** - All countries need risk-based climate change adaptation plans developed in accordance with the relevant UNFCCC guidance.²⁵

Targets could include:

- Global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions by 2015-2020 and substantial reductions thereafter;
- Significant reduction in the vulnerability of key groups and countries to the impacts of climate change.

Disasters, climate change and child protection in the post-2015 development framework

Children are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and disasters,²⁶ the effects of which can extend long after an emergency has passed.²⁷ For example, when forced to migrate because of the effects of climate change or disasters, children become vulnerable to heightened risks of exploitation and lack the protective ties normally available in families and communities.

A goal aimed at protecting children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect at all times, including during times of disaster and conflict, would contribute to reducing the impacts of disasters on children. Targets to end child deaths, reduce sexual violence, violent discipline and the unnecessary placement of children outside family care would be needed to support such a goal.²⁸

¹ UN OCHA 2013 Philippines Typhoon Haiyan Action Plan 2013

² UNOCHA 2013 (6 December) Philippines: Typhoon Haiyan Situation report no 21.

³ Philippines – Haiyan Typhoon-Child Protection working group: snapshot of child protection needs and risks. 25 November 2013

⁴ NSCB 2013 2012 First Semester Official Provincial Poverty Statistics of the Philippines, Republic of the Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board.

⁵ Seneviratne, S. I et al 2013 Changes in Climate extremes and their impacts on the natural physical environment. Chapter 3 *In Managing the risks of extreme events and disasters to advance climate change adaptation: special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.*

⁶ World Bank 2012 Turn Down the Heat – why a four degree centigrade world must be avoided. A report for the World Bank by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Climate Analytics.

⁷ Turrall, H, Burke, J., Faures, J-M 2011 Climate change, water and food security. FAO water report.

⁸ See Save the Children 2009 Feeling the Heat: child survival in a changing climate, and World Health Organization Global Climate Change and Child Health <http://www.who.int/ceh/capacity/climatechange.pdf>

⁹ See UNDP 2007/2008 Fighting climate change: human solidarity in a divided world.

¹⁰ Protect my future: the links between child protection and disasters, conflict and fragility in the post-2015 development agenda. March 2013.

<http://www.familyforeverychild.org/sites/default/files/resources/child%20protection%20and%20disaster%2C%20conflict%20and%20fragility.pdf>

¹¹ World Bank 2005. *Philippines - Natural disaster risk management in the Philippines : enhancing poverty alleviation through disaster reduction.* Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2005/10/8387918/philippines-natural-disaster-risk-management-philippines-enhancing-poverty-alleviation-through-disaster-reduction>

¹² UNISDR 2012. UNISDR counts the cost of 20 years of inaction on climate change and risk reduction, <http://www.unisdr.org/archive/27162>

¹³ UNISDR 2012 Towards a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/reducing-risk-management/12-1289-reducing-risks-of-future-disasters-report.pdf>

¹⁴ UNDP 2004 *A Global Report - Reducing Disaster Risk: a challenge for development.* UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and recovery.

¹⁵ UK Foresight 2012: *Reducing Risks of Future Disasters: priorities for decision makers.* Government Office for Science.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/reducing-risk-management/12-1289-reducing-risks-of-future-disasters-report.pdf>

¹⁶ Age dependency ratio is the ratio of dependents--people younger than 15 or older than 64--to the working-age population--those ages 15-64.

Populations that are increasing due to high fertility and decreasing mortality rates tend to have a high youth dependency ratio (number of people between the ages of 0-14), while those with stable or declining populations (due to low fertility and low mortality rates) tend to have a high old-age dependency ratio.

¹⁷ See IPCC 2013 Fifth Assessment Report, Working Group 1 report – see Chapter 12, and World Bank 2013 Turn Down the Heat: climate extremes, regional impacts and the case for resilience.

¹⁸ Family for every child, ChildFund Alliance, Keeping Children Safe, Plan, Save the Children, Terre Des Hommes International Federation, World Vision

¹⁹ Children’s Charter; an action plan for disaster risk reduction for children by children. Children in a Changing Climate Coalition.

²⁰ ODI 2013 The geography of poverty, disasters and climate extremes in 2030. ODI, Met Office and RMS.

²¹ ODI 2013. The geography of poverty, disasters and climate extremes in 2030. ODI, Met Office and RMS.

²² IPCC 2013 Fifth Assessment Report, Working Group 1 report – see Chapter 12, and World Bank 2013 Turn Down the Heat: climate extremes, regional impacts and the case for resilience.

²³ Seneviratne, S. I et al 2013 Changes in Climate extremes and their impacts on the natural physical environment. Chapter 3 *In Managing the risks of extreme events and disasters to advance climate change adaptation: special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.*

²⁴ UNESCO 2012. Disaster Risk reduction and education: outcomes for children as a result of DRR activities supported by the EEPCT programme.

²⁵ Refer UNFCCC <http://unfccc.int/adaptation/items/4159.php>

²⁶ Protect my future: the links between child protection and disasters, conflict and fragility in the post-2015 development agenda. March 2013.

<http://www.familyforeverychild.org/sites/default/files/resources/child%20protection%20and%20disaster%2C%20conflict%20and%20fragility.pdf>

²⁷ Protect my future: the links between child protection and disasters, conflict and fragility in the post-2015 development agenda. March 2013.

<http://www.familyforeverychild.org/sites/default/files/resources/child%20protection%20and%20disaster%2C%20conflict%20and%20fragility.pdf>

²⁸ Save the Children, 2012. Ending Poverty in our Generation: Save the Children’s vision for a post-2015 framework.