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Statement of purpose

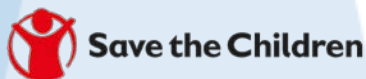
The Research-into-Action Brief series provides concise summaries of academic and grey literature on a range of topics for practitioners working in the fields of child-centred risk reduction (CCRR), climate change adaptation, and school safety. This purpose of this brief is to provide a concise review of research findings for practitioners on the topic of including children in disaster risk reduction.

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Child-Centred Risk Reduction Research-into-Action Brief:

Including Children in Disaster Risk Reduction

Abstract

Research shows that inclusion is easier to put forward in policy guidelines than to translate into practice. Inclusion is a long-term process that requires sustainable transfer of power to people, including children, who usually lack the ability to make decisions on matters that affect their everyday life. Inclusion in disaster risk reduction requires the genuine participation of children, which is often a long and complicated process. It requires the negotiation of power relations between both children and adults, and between children themselves. Therefore, it is a political process that often generates resistance from those whose privileges are challenged. Inclusion and participation may involve addressing deep-seated and culturally sensitive issues that require careful facilitation if prompted by outside stakeholders. Ultimately, fostering inclusion in disaster risk reduction means recognising that children, including the most marginalised, are not only vulnerable but display capacities that often constitute a crucial resource in dealing with hazards and disasters.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Inclusion	"A set of three linked, unending processes to do with the participation of individuals: the creation of settings, systems (procedures, policies and laws) that encourage participation; and with putting particular 'inclusive' values into action" (Index for Inclusion Network, 2017)
Participation	"A voluntary process by which people (...) influence or control the decisions that affect them" (Saxena, 1998)
Facilitation	A process through which a neutral third party encourages participation through appropriate activities and inclusive decision-making
Accountability	A process "that ensures (...) that beneficiaries influence the content and direction of the activity with reasonable expectations of compliance by those in authoritative positions (Ressler, 1978)

Participatory 3D Mapping	A form of participatory mapping that involves building stand-alone and scaled 3D models with thematic layers of geographical information (Gaillard and Cadag, 2013)
Quantitative Participatory Methods	Methods that generate participatory numbers or quantitative information; produced by those who are usually excluded from mainstream research initiatives (Gaillard et al. 2017)

Introduction

“Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and nondiscriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted” (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2015: 10).

This is how the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-30 frames DRR, putting “inclusion” as one of its key principles. The framework, which serves as blueprint for international and national policies, promotes inclusion in multiple sections of the overall document.

Inclusion, however, is a tricky concept: research shows that it is easier to put forward in policy guidelines than to translate into practice (Wisner et al. 2012). Inclusion entails sharing power for the benefit of those people, including children, who usually lack the ability to make decisions on matters that affect their everyday life. It is therefore a political process that often generates resistance from those whose privileges are challenged (Williams 2004). Inclusion in DRR requires genuine people’s participation, especially that of people at the margins who prove the most vulnerable in facing hazards and disasters, including children (Twigg et al. 2001).

More recent evidence has, however, stressed that this list of often vulnerable groups is not exhaustive and could also include people experiencing homelessness, prisoners, and sexual and gender minorities, as well as people who experience several forms of marginalisation such as children with disabilities and elderly women, among many others (Gaillard and Navizet, 2013; Walters and Gaillard, 2014; Gaillard et al., 2017). There is, therefore, a danger in sticking to predetermined lists of particular people to be included in DRR as it may leave many groups even more marginalised and, hence, more vulnerable in facing hazards and disasters. Inclusion of one vulnerable group should ultimately not happen at the detriment of another.

Why is children's inclusion in disaster risk reduction essential?

Fostering the inclusion of children in DRR requires a recognition that they primarily know what their needs are and that these needs are diverse. Indeed, not all children have the same needs. Research shows that children's vulnerabilities are most often driven by external factors that reflect how power and resources are shared within the broader society (Rivers 1982; Wisner 1993). Nonetheless, vulnerability appears in the context of children's unique and diverse everyday lives and needs. It mirrors their uneven access to resources and means of protection in facing a range of hazards. As such, children's vulnerability can be difficult to assess from an adult's perspective.

Inclusion in DRR also acknowledges that children, even those with different forms of vulnerabilities – such as children with disabilities or children from ethnic minorities or children from ethnic minorities – display internal capacities in facing hazards and disasters. Research emphasises that these capacities include the array of knowledge, skills and resources that children resort to in preventing hazards, preparing for adverse events, coping with actual disasters and recovering from their long-term impacts (Delica 1998; Peek 2008). These capacities are often shared and/or combined among children and/or adults who live in the same place or share ties across distant locations.

Considering the unique nature of every child's vulnerability and capacities is essential in fostering inclusion. Simply declaring assumptions such as "children are vulnerable" is insufficient. Children's diverse vulnerabilities and capacities can only be understood through their genuine participation in DRR efforts, as no-one understands their experiences and needs better than children themselves (Bhatt 1998).

Inclusion entails genuine children's participation

Research clearly stresses that children's genuine participation in DRR is an ongoing process, not an outcome (Mitchell et al. 2009; Lopez et al. 2012). It reflects children's, including the most marginalised, ability to make the decisions that matter for their everyday wellbeing, including in the face of hazards and disasters. It often requires existing unequal power relations to be challenged to the benefit of children. This can, in turn, destabilise adults' control of decision-making, and force a reconsideration of how children are assumed to be the subject of adults. As suggested earlier, fostering inclusion through participation can become a political process that often generates conflicts.

By its nature, genuine participation entails an empowering process "by which people, organisations and communities gain mastery over their lives" (Rappaport 1984: 3). In DRR, this means that children – especially those with multiple vulnerabilities, such as children with disabilities – should take the lead in assessing their own risk. They should also be allowed to identify and take socially, culturally and economically acceptable initiatives to reduce that risk, using participatory tools (including games, drawings and other activities adapted to different age groups) and processes (Back et al. 2009; Tanner and Seballos 2012). This holds true for all segments of society.

Nonetheless, fostering inclusion through genuine participation in DRR cannot happen by working with just one specific group of people such as

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children; nor can it happen if children are considered as a homogenous group of individuals. The challenge is to get adults to recognise children's diverse vulnerabilities to disasters, as well as to get children to recognise that they are all different. This is crucial to addressing the root causes of these vulnerabilities, effectively support children's particular and diverse capacities, and ensure that their unique needs and ideas feature in DRR policies. It also requires adults to consider children's various capacities, including those of the most marginalised, so their unique needs and ideas can be featured in DRR policies. This multi-stakeholder process can help ensure that DRR planning capitalises on and promotes children's existing capacities and diverse potential for meaningful inclusion. For instance, adults can provide the social support required to help children develop their abilities, including their skills, knowledge and resources, in responding to disasters (Cox et al. 2017).

Fostering children's inclusion in DRR through dialogue with adults

Fostering children's inclusion requires that adults develop trust with children. Trust also needs to be built among children so that, for example, the most privileged ones collaborate with those at the margins, such as children with disabilities or children from ethnic minorities. Research emphasises that trust can only be built through fair dialogue (Lopez et al. 2012). Such dialogue is essential so that children and adults can share their own knowledge and discuss who can do what in dealing with hazards and disasters. Combining children's and adults' initiatives is essential to both address the underlying and external causes of children's vulnerability and harness their internal and diverse capacities in facing hazards and disasters (Wisner et al. 2012).

Research shows that one of the main challenges of such a dialogue (and indeed, the combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives) is getting children, including the most marginalised, and adults simultaneously around the same table (Mitchell et al. 2009). For this to occur, careful facilitation and appropriate tools are required to build trust and level power relations with children and between children and adults, including parents, teachers, local and national authorities etc (Chambers, 2008). This is particularly true in contexts where the inclusion of children in decision-making may be culturally inappropriate.

A case study from the Philippines

Yubo is a small village on the slopes of Mount Kanlaon, one of the most active volcanoes in the Philippines. The people of Yubo also deal with flash floods, cyclones and droughts as well as chronic food insecurity and the lingering consequences of an armed conflict between local guerillas and government forces. Many of the locals are landless farmers and plantation workers who lack access to sustainable resources and means of protection in facing natural and anthropogenic hazards.

Since 2010, villagers and the local government, supported by outside partners – including NGOs and scientists – have spearheaded inclusive DRR (Cadag 2013). A number of activities have been conducted to gather the views of a wide range of local people, including children, older people and gender minorities, as well as NGOs and scientists. The children included boys and girls from dominant and ethnic minorities, offspring of rebel returnees and children who identify themselves beyond the boy-girl

“Fostering children's inclusion requires that adults develop trust with children”

binary. Tools such as Participatory 3-Dimensional Mapping (P3DM) and Quantitative Participatory Methods (QPMs) have facilitated dialogue among children, between children and adults, as well as between local and outside stakeholders. All of which has made them aware of their own tangible knowledge in assessing their own risk and planning for DRR.



Figure 1. Children using QPM to identify their priorities and needs

Both locals and outsiders contributed to a shared assessment of disaster risk for the village. This relied on a careful identification of both everyday hazards (such as economic shocks and diseases), and less frequent hazards (cyclones and volcanic eruptions) that threaten people's wellbeing in the short and long term. Assessing villagers' vulnerabilities and capacities relied on evaluating the diversity, extent and strength of the resources that compose their various livelihoods. Specific activities were conducted at the primary and high schools to capture children's priorities and needs through QPMs (Figure 1). QPMs, especially scoring and ranking activities, and careful facilitation led to dialogue among children and revealed the knowledge and skills of the most marginalised ones. Children's diverse views were eventually shared with adults and included within the village disaster risk assessment. The children, including boys and girls from dominant and ethnic minorities, offspring of rebel returnees, and children who identify themselves beyond the boys-girls binary, also took a significant role in building the P3DM, where they could plot their own knowledge alongside that of adults (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Children using P2DM to show their knowledge

Ultimately, this led to establishing priorities for DRR and sets of actions for different hazards. For example, a specific early warning plan and associated evacuation initiatives were set up in the event of a volcanic eruption. The specific needs of schools and diverse children were included in the plan, especially in the event of an evacuation of the village should Mt Kanlaon erupt. This plan was eventually tested through an exercise that entailed the evacuation of the upper hamlet of Yubo, located very near the crater of the volcano, and the temporary accommodation of those affected in a shelter in the centre of the village. Children of the hamlet, including those from ethnic minorities, took the lead in carrying their household's belongings and walking down the slope of the volcano (Figure 3). They were eventually looked after by the city social workers in a public shelter located at the centre of Yubo. In their psychosocial debriefing, the social workers gave particular attention to the most marginalised children (Figure 4). The exercise was followed by a collective reflection upon the strengths and shortcomings of the plan, and how it could be improved.

The genuine participation of a diverse group of local children and adults, in partnership with local government officials and outside stakeholders, happened through a careful dialogue facilitated by tools such as P3DM and QPMs. These tools enabled children, adults and outsiders to share knowledge and design integrated actions to help reduce disaster risk. Local government officials, in particular, had the opportunity to recognise the diversity of local people's vulnerabilities and capacities and eventually adjust governmental support to better fit local needs. The whole process was facilitated by the staff of local NGOs and scientists, who were careful not to take part in the decision-making process.



Figure 3. Children leading an evacuation exercise



Figure 4. Children participating in a debriefing

This initiative is one example of how taking an inclusive approach to DRR helps to foster more collaborative decision-making. Its strength lies in its focus on creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue to occur between diverse groups such as local people, including children, government officials, NGOs and outside stakeholders. Through the inclusive process, disaster risk was better understood from multiple viewpoints, including those of children. This allowed for more integrated actions to be developed towards reducing disaster risk to the benefit of all people of Yubo. The dialogue and process of participation have ultimately strengthened all stakeholders' ownership of DRR initiatives.

Practical applications

Fostering children's inclusion in DRR ultimately revolves around a series of key principles:

1. Children are not a homogenous group of vulnerable individuals. They all have distinct vulnerabilities and capacities that reflect their own position within society and unique experience of both their everyday and hazardous environment. It is therefore essential to consider children in their diversity, especially those who stand at the margin of society and combine different forms of vulnerabilities, such as children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities.

2. Children's inclusion cannot happen in a silo. It is not enough to work only with children as it does not address the unequal power relations (or their inability to make informed decisions by themselves or in collaboration with adults) that underpin their vulnerabilities and prevent recognition of their capacities. Inclusive DRR should, therefore, be a process through which adults recognise the unique vulnerabilities and capacities of children – including those of children who combine different forms of vulnerabilities – through fair and open dialogue.

3. In many societies, including children in decision-making can be culturally inappropriate and DRR needs to be as culturally sensitive as it is inclusive. In such contexts, the importance of dialogue is paramount, and a balance needs to be struck between respect for local culture and children's inclusion.

4. Genuine participation is essential to the process of children's inclusion, especially for the most marginalised. When initiated by outside stakeholders, genuine participation requires an appropriate choice of tools as these contribute to determining who participates and who does not. Careful facilitation that relies on trust, transfer of power and flexibility is also essential. This not only means trusting in the abilities of the diverse children who participate, but ensuring that those who are hearing such concerns, including the most privileged children, are willing and able to transfer decision-making power as required. The facilitator's role is to both foster opportunities for dialogue and ensure that dialogue will be meaningfully respected by decision-makers, so it can be sufficiently responded to. In the end, genuine facilitation occurs when the facilitator supports rather leads the participatory process.

5. When fostered by outside stakeholders, children's inclusion requires that prime importance be given to downward accountability – i.e., towards and among children – rather than upward – e.g., towards NGOs. This, again, requires flexibility to accommodate the diverse needs and views of children who aim to participate in DRR in their own timeframe and according to their own schedule of priorities.

6. Ultimately, the key questions to ask when fostering children's inclusion in DRR revolve around who, whose and whom: who collects and analyses information about hazards and disasters and contributes to disaster risk assessment; who decides which actions to take to reduce disaster risk based on whose knowledge; who implements these actions and who benefits from them; and, ultimately, who assesses the impact of such actions on whom, for what and whose purpose.

Principles for children's inclusion:

- *Children have diverse vulnerabilities and capacities.*
- *Children's inclusion cannot happen in a silo. Adults must be involved.*
- *Children's inclusion must be sensitive to local culture.*
- *All children, especially the most marginalised, should be able to genuinely participate.*
- *Practitioners should think critically about who makes decisions, whose knowledge is used, and who benefits.*

Conclusions

Fostering all children's inclusion in DRR requires more than ticking a box in a report designed to match the expectations of donors or international policy frameworks such as the SFDRR. Children's genuine participation is indeed better assessed as a long-term process rather than an outcome. As such, inclusion is a long-term political process that requires sustainable transfer of power to children in their diversity. This is often a protracted and complicated process that requires negotiation of local and broader power relations among children and between children and adults, including parents, teachers, NGOs, local and national authorities, as well as scientists. Inclusion, therefore, entails trust that can only be built through fair dialogue between children and other stakeholders. Fostering inclusion may also involve addressing deep-seated and culturally sensitive issues that require careful facilitation if prompted by outside stakeholders. Ultimately, it means recognising that children are not only vulnerable but that they also display capacities that often constitute a crucial resource in dealing with hazards and disasters.

Follow-up questions

1. What are the likely benefits of including children directly in DRR?
2. What does children's participation in DRR entail?
3. Why should children's participation in DRR not happen in a silo?
4. Who decides about the objectives, methodology and schedule of C-CDRR projects?
5. Whose knowledge counts in C-CDRR projects?
6. Who makes decisions at the different step of C-CDRR projects?

Readings

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All the references cited in this Research-into-Action Brief, can be found in the Child-Centred Risk Reduction and Comprehensive School Safety Bibliography at:

https://www.zotero.org/groups/1857446/ccrr_css

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