

## Summary: Research-into- Action Brief

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### Research-into-Action Brief series

The 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 summary highlights the main messages in the full Research-into-Action Brief on including children in Disaster Risk Reduction.

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# Including Children in Disaster Risk Reduction

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-30 frames DRR as “inclusion” as one of its key principles, and states that:

“Disaster risk reduction [DRR]...requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory 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).

However, inclusion is a tricky concept that is easier to put into policy guidelines than to put into practice. Inclusive DRR is a long-term process - it should be ongoing and sustainable, not a one-off event. It requires sharing power with people, including children, who usually cannot make decisions on matters that affect their everyday lives. Consequently, powerful people whose privileges are challenged might resist inclusion.

The SFDRR recognises vulnerable groups that should be included in DRR; for example, poor people, women, children, and older persons. However, it is dangerous to stick to predetermined lists of particular people to be included because it may leave other groups even more marginalised and more vulnerable to hazards and disasters. People can also experience several forms of marginalisation, such as children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities.

## Genuinely including children in DRR

Children have the ability to make the decisions that matter for their everyday wellbeing, including in the face of hazards and disasters. Children’s diverse vulnerabilities and abilities can only be understood by genuinely including children in DRR efforts, as no-one understands their experiences and needs better than children themselves. Genuine participation in DRR means that children – especially those with multiple vulnerabilities, such as children with disabilities – take the lead in assessing their own risk.

Practitioners can support children to genuinely participate in DRR by:

- Recognising that children, even those with different forms of vulnerabilities – such as children with disabilities or children from ethnic minorities – have knowledge, skills, and resources that they use when facing hazards and disasters.
- Helping other adults to recognise children’s diverse abilities (as well as their vulnerabilities), so that children’s unique needs and ideas can be featured in DRR policies.
- Using participatory tools (including games, drawings and other activities adapted to different age groups and abilities) to help children to identify and take appropriate actions to reduce risks.

- Building trust among children and adults so that they trust and value each other's abilities and knowledge.

## Practical Applications

Practitioners can use these six principles to guide their work to genuinely including children in DRR:

**1. Children are not all the same; Children are not just vulnerable individuals.** Children have diverse vulnerabilities and abilities that reflect their own position within society and their unique experience of their everyday environment. It is essential to consider children in their diversity, especially children who experience different forms of vulnerabilities, such as children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities.

**2. Children's inclusion must involve adults.** It is not enough to work only with children as it does not address the unequal power relations between adults and children. Inclusive DRR should encourage adults to recognise the unique vulnerabilities and abilities of all children, including children from marginalised groups and children with disabilities.

**3. Children's inclusion must be culturally sensitive.** Sometimes including children in decision-making may challenge cultural expectations. Practitioners need to carefully balance respect for local culture and children's inclusion.

**4. All children, especially the most marginalised, should be able to genuinely participate.** Practitioners should carefully consider how the activities and tools used (e.g., games, drawings) affect who can participate in DRR. Practitioners also need to create opportunities for children and adults to talk together, and to build trust among children and adults so that adults (and decision-makers) will respect and respond to children's ideas.

**5. Practitioners should prioritise children's needs, rather than the needs of more powerful stakeholders.** Especially when practitioners are from external organisations (e.g., NGOs), practitioners need to be flexible for the diverse needs and views of children who aim to participate in DRR along their own timeframe and schedule of priorities. This should not be rushed to meet the deadlines of donors or NGOs.

**6. When working to include children in DRR, practitioners should think critically about '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?
- Whose knowledge is used to make decisions about DRR?
- Who implements DRR actions and who benefits from them?
- Who assesses the impact of DRR actions, on whom, and for what and whose purpose?

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. Including children means recognising that children are not only vulnerable but that they also have diverse abilities that are important for dealing with hazards and disasters.

## More information

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

[https://www.zotero.org/groups/1857446/ccrr\\_css](https://www.zotero.org/groups/1857446/ccrr_css)

*Find all the references on this topic by using the tag "Inclusion."*

## Readings

Back, E., Cameron, C. and Tanner, T. 2009. *Children and disaster risk reduction: Taking stock and moving forward*, Brighton, Institute of Development Studies.

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