

Mechanism for involving children in Disaster Risk Reduction

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About **Secure Kids**:

The Secure Kids project aims to contribute to sustainable and inclusive mechanisms for child participation in planning, implementation and follow up of national and local measures for building resilient societies that are equipped to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.



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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. PREREQUISITES FOR CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION TO DRR	4
2.1. Legal and policy changes to promote children’s rights to participation.	4
2.2. Participatory structures and mechanisms, to be already in place before a crisis strikes.	4
2.3. Positive attitudes toward children and youth: awareness-raising and sensitization of adults.	5
2.4. Competences and skills on child rights and child participation among decision-makers.	6
2.5. Knowledge-based and conscious choices of methods and levels of participation: points of engagement; level of engagement; inclusive engagement.	7
3. SPACE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS.	10
3.1. Mapping and assessment of existing child participation mechanisms and structures.	10
3.2. A physically and emotionally safe and inclusive space.	11
4. VOICE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS.	16
4.1. Provision of information and support.	16
4.2. Children should have the opportunity to express their views ‘freely’ and in various formats that best suit their needs and choices.	19
5. AUDIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS.	23
5.1. Clearly identifying and assessing Assess existing DRR decision-makers, mechanisms and platforms.	23
5.2. Involving relevant decision-makers: how to communicate about the right to, importance and benefits of child participation in DRR.	25
5.3. Stakeholders’ analysis in the DRR context.	26
6. INFLUENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS.	30
6.1. Monitoring to which degree the existing DRR decision-making mechanisms are taking into account the views from children and young people.	30

7. COMMON CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED WHEN INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN DRR	34
7.1. Lack of legal and policy commitment that support children’s right to participate to DRR activities.	34
7.2. Lack of clarity about what “participation” means in the context of DRR.	34
7.3. Knowledge about risk, disaster and preparedness are not cultivated among children.	36
7.4. Discrimination against certain groups of children and youth	37
Bibliography	38
Annex I. WHY CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION TO DRR?	40
Annex II – Key terms and definitions	46

1. INTRODUCTION

This document presents a mechanism and a practical tool for including children in disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities. Together, the mechanism and the tool form a **comprehensive guide** for involving children in DRR. The guide has the following **aims**:

- To assist **national and local stakeholders** how to involve children and young people in DRR activities;
- To facilitate **linking between existing DRR coordination mechanisms** at the national and local level **and child and youth participation structures**.
- To **guide professionals** at all levels **to set up, develop and implement child participation in the specific contexts** in which they work.

The stakeholders of this guide include individuals responsible for disaster risk reduction, with a particular focus on the role that children and youth play or could play in preventing and responding to disasters. These stakeholders consist of representatives from institutions or organizations (including IOs, NGOs, and CSOs), as well as independent experts working at the national, local (provincial/district), and community levels.

The intended **beneficiaries** of the guide are children and young people who live in the Baltic Sea Region – and potentially beyond.

The DRR cycle envisages different phases: prevention; preparedness; response; and recovery. While children and young people have the potential to engage in, and positively contribute to any of the phases listed above, the mechanism will **focus on the first two steps: prevention and preparedness**. From previous work undertaken by the CBSS and partners, it appears that the activities in which children and youth are involved and would like to engage most frequently fall under these steps.

2. PREREQUISITES FOR CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION TO DRR

There has been progress in child and youth participation in DRR activities both globally and in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). However, greater, sustained efforts are needed and their involvement in this area is still in the early stages of development.

Several preconditions can be considered essential requirements for children and youth's meaningful participation in DRR activities, and that should be in place for the child and youth participation in DRR to work effectively.

2.1. Legal and policy changes to promote children's rights to participation.

National legal and policies should ensure that the voice of children is included in the development of national policy, legislation and infrastructures on matters that affect children and young people's lives. For example, in policy related to education, health, justice, recreation, children in care, youth work and social inclusion. This includes legal contexts where the voice of the child should be heard such as adoption processes, care proceedings and the justice system. National sets of standards, charters and frameworks should also consider the voice of the child - e.g., national standards, quality standards and assessment frameworks. (Roe, S., 2023: 33).

At the local level, local institutions – whilst having limited legislative power – have the possibility to apply national legal frameworks in ways that maximize the application of children's right to participation, and to issue additional policies at the local level opening up spaces for participation.

2.2. Participatory structures and mechanisms, to be already in place before a crisis strikes.

Stable and well-functioning structures for child and youth participation before a crisis will result in better child and youth participation during the crisis. In times of crisis, it is sometimes necessary to make rapid and drastic decisions, but it is crucial to involve children and youth in decisions that will significantly affect

them. This will also result in better decisions that children and youth will perceive as being fair and legitimate. (Kjellander, T. et al., 2023: 43). Sometimes, existing child and youth participation spaces are shrunk, side-stepped or forgotten during a crisis. It is important that adult decision-makers continue using the existing structures; this is more likely to happen if they are stable and solid, and were already well-established and allowed children and youth to effectively participate in day-to-day decision-making, prior to the crisis.

Successful child and youth participation needs planning, resources and continuity. For participation to be effective, this must become embedded in institutions and processes that influence children's everyday lives and must be grounded in sustainable and steady resources.

2.3. Positive attitudes toward children and youth: awareness-raising and sensitization of adults.

There is still considerable resistance among many adults towards recognizing that children have both the right to be heard and that their views can add significant value. (UNICEF, 2022: 32).

Building strong institutional and personal bonds between institutions and decision-makers – especially those who are closer to their everyday lives - on the one hand, and children and youth on the other hand, is a process that should start before a disaster unfolds. A good relationship should be based on a positive attitude by adult decision-makers, in which children and young people are regarded as invaluable resources, and as experts about their own lives and life situations. (Kjellander, T. et al., 2023: 52). It is crucial that adults feel that there is a real need for children and young people to participate in DRR activities, that they believe in children and youth's competence, and that they convey a genuine interest for children and youth's contributions.

Adult decision makers should be encouraged to engage directly with children and youth. The quality of the interaction between adult decision-makers and children is key to achieving a more meaningful and effective participation of children and young people.

“During a crisis, it is often necessary to make rapid decisions and decision makers will generally have to prioritise between a range of critical challenges. Thus, consulting with children and youth is much more likely to happen if their input is regarded as being crucial for making better decisions.” (Kjellander, T. et al., 2023: 54).

It is also important to address the broader context in which children and young people live and to raise awareness of parents and communities as key stakeholders in children’s lives. They are in a position to promote or to inhibit opportunities for child participation, therefore their awareness of children’s right to participation should be raised and be the focus of a strategic approach, involving also children and youth themselves.

2.4. Competences and skills on child rights and child participation among decision-makers.

Cultural resistance to children and youth’s involvement in DRR appears to be commonplace and represents a key obstacle to involving children and youth in prevention and preparedness. Children and young people are often regarded as only passive and fragile victims in potential disaster situations. Preparing adults to work with children and young people and to engage them in decision-making processes is a pre-requirement for children and youth’s participation in DRR.

It is therefore essential not only to raise awareness among decision-makers, but also to provide them with regular training about the right to child participation, what it entails, and how to implement it. Decision-makers should understand that children and young people’s participation in DRR is indeed possible and feasible, and beneficial.

2.5. Knowledge-based and conscious choices of methods and levels of participation: points of engagement; level of engagement; inclusive engagement.

It is important to decide on how participation is going to take place most effectively. In choosing the methods of engagement in DRR, it is crucial to gather the perspectives of children and young people.

Defining the scope of child participation involves looking at the following aspects:

- When do children get involved (referred to as “point of engagement”);
- What level they get involved at (“level of engagement”); and
- Which children get involved (inclusive engagement).

(Save the Children, 2014a: IV).

Concerning the **point of engagement**, children can be involved at different stages of a programme cycle, namely:

- Situation analysis (finding out what the problems are);
 - Planning (deciding what to do about problems identified);
 - Implementation (taking action);
 - Monitoring and evaluation (measuring and assessing what has been done); and
 - Feedback and dissemination (acting on findings and lessons learnt).
- (Adapted from Save the Children, 2014a: 3).

One very important aspect is to give children and young people from different backgrounds – especially those belonging to particularly vulnerable groups - a say in defining what a disaster is for them, and when is it over (or not). There is a risk that a disaster is defined as being ‘over’ by adult decision-makers, whereas it may still be affecting some groups of children and youth. (Kjellander, T. et al., 2023: 60).

Children and young people have demonstrated knowledge about what disasters are. (Di Maio, 2022).

The choice regarding the level of engagement of children and youth in DRR must be pondered and conscious. There are three potential levels of engagement for children's participation – consultative, collaborative, and child-led. These may not always be completely clear-cut.

- Consultative participation: adults seek children's views in order to build knowledge and understanding of their lives and experiences, or in order to design a policy or programme. Consultative participation is adult-initiated; it allows children to influence outcomes, while maintaining control over the process in the hands of adults.
- Collaborative participation: adults identify a problem that needs to be addressed, and involve children to work out together what needs to be done and how. Collaborative participation is also adult-initiated, but involves a degree of partnership with children, who are empowered to influence and challenge the process and outcomes.
- Child-led participation: children are provided with the space and opportunity to initiate their own activities, and to determine the issues that are most important to them, which they want to take action to address. In the case of child-led participation, children come together to organize their own activities. They are the ones controlling the process. Adults serve as facilitators rather than leaders. (Save the Children, 2014a: 4-9).

The choice of level of participation will influence the power that children and young people have in the process. Such a choice should always be a conscious one. Different levels of participation may be appropriate for different tasks, activities or projects.

Engagement of children and youth in DRR must be **inclusive**. Too often, participation mechanisms involve children who are the easiest to reach – those in school, the more able and better educated, or those who are already active in various participation initiatives. While this is in some ways unavoidable, and children and youth need to be welcomed to further engage, the process risks leaving out those children and young people who are not (yet) active in their communities.

It is therefore important to:

- Ensure that also children who are not affiliated with a child rights (or other) organization can access and fully participate;
- Identify the different groups of children who may be excluded from participation activities, depending on the specific context. These can include: children with disabilities; children living in poverty; children belonging to ethnic minorities; out-of-school children; children on the move; younger children; young people who are gay, lesbian or transgender; as well as other groups;
- For decision makers who consult with children and youth, to have skills and knowledge about how to work in a non-discriminatory manner to engage with children and youth with different needs and life situations.

It is generally preferable that children and youth from different groups are included in participation processes, rather than to have separate groups for children with different needs and from different backgrounds. All participation processes should be inclusive, accessible and safe, for all children and youth.

Some issues and/or groups of children and youth may call for additional and separate participation processes, but these should be regarded as an additional, not a replacing process. For example, minority groups might have specific issues that are better discussed in smaller settings to ensure that no nuances are missed. Or, for example, in the case of children and youth with cognitive impairments, while inclusion in participation processes shall be pursued, an adapted process may also be necessary to ensure that the participation is genuinely meaningful for these participants. (Kjellander, T. et al., 2023: 71). In any case, a disaster situation is no excuse for not including all groups of children and youth.

Finally, participation shall be age-appropriate, and accessible to children and young people from different age ranges. The choice of methods of involvement needs to make these suitable for children of different age groups, as well as backgrounds and special needs. This aspect requires careful consideration when devising child and youth participation mechanisms and processes.

3. SPACE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS.

Section 2 outlined some necessary preconditions for meaningful child participation in DRR. The upcoming four sections will present the mechanism of how to involve children in DRR.

Whilst decision-makers at many levels are more and more open to 'listen to children' and to 'hear their voices', all too often these intentions and expressions do not capture the long-ranging nature and full range of the commitment as enshrined in Article 12 UNCRC.¹ The Lundy Model for child participation holds that to successfully implement Article 12 of the UNCRC, four separate factors require consideration: space, voice, audience, and influence. The mechanism is based on the Lundy model for child participation. If you have never encountered the Lundy Model previously, please consult Annex I where it is described in more detail.

The mechanism aims to tailor the model for work related to DRR.

3.1. Mapping and assessment of existing child participation mechanisms and structures.

In most countries in Europe, a number of child and youth participation bodies and mechanisms are already in place. These are established mainly in the form of child and/or youth councils, and children and youth parliaments. (Janta, B. et al., 2021:11). Examples of such structures include: school councils; youth councils working with municipalities; children and youth advisory bodies working for different projects; child- and youth-led organization; national umbrella organizations for local youth councils; children and youth groups working with Ombudsman Offices; children's parliaments; etc.

Some of these structures are set up at the national level, whereas other ones work at the local level. They are often adult-initiated and, while a variety of names are used to label them, they operate in rather similar ways.

¹ For more information about relevant legal and policy documents outlining children's right to participate in DRR, please visit **Annex I**.

Finding out and **mapping** what is available in your country or area in terms of child and youth participation mechanisms is the starting point to involve children and young people in DRR, as working with and building upon existing structures enables more sustainable and steadier participation processes and outcomes.

After having identified existing child and youth participation structures, it is important to **assess** their composition and functioning. The following aspects need consideration:

- Are these regular, steady structures, or time-bound (for example, related to a particular project)?
- Who are children and young people involved?
- What is the level of engagement of children and youth involved?
- Is there potential to involve children from more diversified backgrounds (inclusivity)?
- What is the point of engagement for children and youth?

Annex III provides a table to facilitate mapping and assessment of existing child and youth participation structures in your country.

3.2. A physically and emotionally safe and inclusive space.

The space in which children and young people gather in order to participate to DRR activities has to be safe, welcoming and inclusive. The nine basic requirements for ensuring inclusive, ethical and meaningful participation shall apply.

In choosing or assessing the **physical** space where children and youth perform their activities, the following elements should be considered:

- The venue should be accessible to all respondents, including those with disabilities and special needs. Existing and potential barriers to allow all children concerned to reach the location (for example, transport needs) should be considered and resolved in advance.
- The location should be suitable to the type of activities planned (for example, can a group of children be reasonably loud? Is there an outdoor

space? Is there a room where a child can take a break if needed?) Children and youth could always be involved in co-arranging the physical space with adults for the different activities planned.

- Will participants have access to all facilities they need?
- Is the time of the day/week when meetings or events are held suitable to the different needs of children and young people involved? To the extent possible, participants' commitments should be respected and accommodated for – including the possibility for their parents or other caregivers to accompany them to the planned location.
- The actual activities in which children will participate shall always be assessed from a risk-mapping perspective: any risks to physical safety should be identified and mitigated.

The space in which children and youth meet to engage in DRR activities should also be **emotionally** safe. In particular, children need to have enough time to build relationships and trust with each other, and with adults they interact with.

Each child and young person involved in DRR activities shall be protected from any form of violence, abuse, exploitation, or any other risk that may arise from getting involved in the initiative. One important manner to address risks related to participation relates to child safeguarding.

Child safeguarding implies the responsibility that all institutions and organizations should take upon themselves to make sure that their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse. Therefore, child safeguarding concerns both the physical and the emotional safety of all children involved in DRR. In order to ensure that children and youth are effectively protected from harm that arises, or may arise, from coming into contact with institutions' staff or programmes, clear and effective child safeguarding policies and procedures shall be in place when involving children in DRR activities. Children and youth have to be informed about the fact that all considerations in relation to their safety have been taken into account and addressed.

In case such policies and procedures are not in place (or not fully adequate), the establishment of such policies and procedures shall be upheld, with the support from child rights organizations proficient in child safeguarding.

A space needs to be **inclusive**. Participation should challenge and not reinforce existing trends of discrimination and exclusion. Factors that keep some children and young people from equally participating in DRR decision-making should be recognized and proactively addressed. All children and young people who have been, are or may be affected by disasters should be involved and represented in any mechanism to ensure participation to DRR activities.

Cultural needs, language needs, gender differences, and other specific features of the different children and youth attending the meetings should be considered and attended. The following aspects need careful consideration:

- **Age:** While assumptions about individuals' capacities and maturity should not be made lightly, it is important to recognize that these do differ on developmental lines. It is important to try and include all different age-groups, and that age-appropriate opportunities of involvement are offered to all children and youth - through appropriate activities, materials, and levels of engagement. A "lifecycle approach" recognizes the need to focus on how children and youth develop as they move through age categories. (UNDRR, 2020a:22). "Opportunities to be heard should start in early childhood to lay the foundations for expression and active participation in decision-making and to support children's growth and development into healthy, resilient and active citizens." (UNICEF, 2021: 4).
- **Gender:** the composition of a group of children and young people involved in DRR activities should ensure representation of gender diversity and gender identities. Participation of trans and non-binary individuals should be encouraged. It is important to be aware of how gender is constructed in the particular context each participant comes from, and to assess whether and to which extent children and youth of all genders and sexual orientations are comfortable discussing and working on (especially sensitive) topics in a mixed gender group.
- **Geographical origin:** the group's composition should represent the diversity of the communities and areas children and young people come from. Diversity along variables such as ethnicity, rural/urban origin, and socio-economic background shall also be reflected in the group's composition.
- **Abilities:** Discrimination acts as a key-barrier concerning the involvement of children belonging to certain groups - among which, children with disabilities - in the form of lack of knowledge about their experiences in

the face of disaster, and of their perception as vulnerable and unable to make choices and to control their lives. Children with disabilities (and people with disabilities in general) are often overlooked during emergency preparations and in DRR policies, fact which often leaves them unprepared to face such emergencies. Further, limited knowledge about their diverse skills to cope and contribute to DRR actions, acts as a barrier to mobilizing their exceptional potential. Meaningfully and safely involving children and youth in DRR activities, therefore, fulfils their fundamental rights to participation and non-discrimination, and enables the whole community to discern their true problems, perspectives, as well as potential.

- **Experience:** Often times, children and young people who are involved in participatory structures and mechanisms are the ones who already have some level of previous experience of volunteering, community service – acquired through their school, clubs, or families. While this is an undoubtable asset, when selecting children and youth members, it is paramount to offer equal opportunities also to those children and young people who are usually not heard and not involved in matters affecting them, including DRR.

The use of peer educators and ‘recruiters’ may be one way to reach out to, and facilitate inclusion of marginalized groups of children and young people. Each child and young people should be thus offered genuine opportunities to contribute to prevention and preparedness activities in ways that best suit their preferences and evolving capacities.

After an initial assessment of existing child and youth participation mechanisms and structures, each mechanism/structure should be analyzed more closely, in order to assess whether these constitute safe and inclusive spaces. All questions and aspects included in paragraph 3.2. above should be used as guidance in such an in-depth assessment.

Space: key points to bring with you.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are children's views been sought as early as possible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ As first step in the process of involving children and young people in DRR, it is important to map existing children and youth participation structures at the national and local level. ➔ After identifying such structures, an initial assessment should be conducted to review the key features of each structure/mechanism. The questions provided in para. 3.1. and the table enclosed in Annex I will support your mapping and assessment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a safe place in which children and youth can express themselves freely? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Space can be intended according to different, equally important dimensions: physical and emotional. Safety is to be granted at both concerning the actual physical venue, and the relational and emotional aspects entailed by participation. ➔ Paragraph 3.2. will guide you in undertaking a more in-depth assessment of a child participation mechanism/structure when looking at physical and emotional safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have steps been taken to ensure that all children affected by decisions can take part? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Child and youth participation in DRR should challenge existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion, and ensure appropriate inclusion of all children and youth concerned. ➔ Key aspects to consider when looking at inclusivity include: age; gender; geographical origin; abilities; and experience. Paragraph 3.2. will guide you in undertaking a more in-depth assessment of a child participation mechanism/structure when looking at inclusivity.

4. VOICE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS.

4.1. Provision of information and support.

Children cannot exercise their rights unless they have access to information. This is a decisive factor in children and young people taking on an active role, in being able to express themselves freely, and in activating their energies and sense of agency.

Building children and youth's foundational knowledge of disaster risk is the first step in enabling creative solutions to shared problems. If provided with information and knowledge on risks, hazards and disaster, children can contribute to observation and monitoring of local risks, and are able to identify, participate in and even lead preparedness measures and anticipatory actions to mitigate the impact of hazard events on themselves, their families and their communities. (Save the Children, 2024).

Having practical information about what to do in an emergency is regarded by children and youth as very important. Children and young people wish to inform peers, families and communities about risks and disasters, and ways of being prepared. They themselves perceive lack of information, including self-perceived unpreparedness in handling stress in a disaster situation, as a key factor that could hamper children and young people's willingness to engage in DRR activities. (Di Maio, 2023: 55).

Therefore, providing information that is relevant, appropriate and accessible to all ages and abilities is fundamental in enabling child and youth participation to DRR. Despite this being a complex theoretical and practical sector, DRR issues and responses can be explained of children and young people in a manner that they understand the concepts entailed.

Children and youth are a heterogeneous group, so it is important to analyze how to convey crucial information to all children, before and during a disaster. For instance, adaptation may be needed for children with disabilities, children who speak different languages, younger and older children and so on. (Kjellander, T. et al., 2023: 59).

Children and youth are experts on the communication channels they prefer, so they should be consulted on that. For example, addressing the Directors General for Civil Protection and civil protection authorities in the BSR, youth volunteers recommended (among others) the increased use of widely-used digital communication tools to ensure that relevant information reaches young people on the communication channels they use. Actually, children and young people could and should be involved as audience and also as contents creators and experts supporting authorities on these platforms. (CBSS, SPEK, 2023: 2). This would also help put an accent on safe use of new technologies, while enhancing information sharing and child and youth participation.

While providing appropriate and accessible information is a key pre-requirement to enable children and young people to participate to DRR activities, systematically providing them with relevant accurate information throughout such participation keeps their interest alive and increases the likelihood that child and youth participants stay engaged and remain interested. Thus, providing information represents one of the key initial steps to entice child and youth participation. However, providing information to children and young people is an ongoing process, that should be undertaken in parallel to their active engagement. Information provided should cover the following areas:

- What is children's right to participation?
- What are the relevant legal and policy provisions defining their right to participation in the place where they live?
- What are risks, hazards and disasters?
- What is DRR?
- Why children and young people should get involved in DRR?
- Who are the relevant decision-makers, what power and will they have, and what are the (implicit or explicit) decision-making processes these decision-makers are part of?
- Where do institutions stand, in their country/local area, in terms of engaging children and youth in DRR?
- What are possible ways for enhancing institutional capacity on child participation among stakeholders who have a role and responsibilities on DRR?

When child and youth participation in the context of DRR is discussed, one recurring point expressed by adults in the position to facilitate their involvement is that the **language and concepts** associated to disaster, risks, and dangers are “too difficult” to be communicated to children and young people (especially younger children). As highlighted above, a lifecycle approach to child participation in DRR asserts that there is no age limit to start building a collaborative relationship with children and to enable them to play an active role in matters affecting them.

CBSS and Partners have consulted children as young as seven in DRR-related research activities. Many of those children had never had any opportunity to talk about the topic before; still, they provided very valuable insights, ideas and inputs on several aspects concerning risks, safety, security, disaster, and building resilient societies².

Below, a list of DRR-related definitions adapted to children aged 9-13 and 14-18 are provided as an example of such adaptation.

DRR-related key-definitions for children and young people³

What is a **hazard**?

A hazard is a process, a phenomenon or a human activity that may cause harm to people, their belongings or their environment, if they do not take precautions.

There are different types of hazards. Some are natural – such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, or volcanic eruptions. Others are caused by people, for example: pollution, factory accidents.

In many cases, hazards are a result of a combination of natural and human factors. For example, a landslide occurring in areas where too many trees have

² Consultations took place in the framework of the ChYResilience Project:

<https://childrenatrisk.cbss.org/chyresilience-exploring-the-role-of-child-and-youth-resilience/>

³ Adapted from: Helen Kearney, Claudia Blanco & Magenta Creative Networks (no date) *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: For Children*. (no place): Children in a Changing Climate, ChildFund Alliance, PLAN International, Save the Children, UNICEF, World Vision. Available at: [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: For Children | Save the Children's Resource Centre](#).

been cut down and houses have been built there. Or a wildfire in a dry forest, started by a cigarette dropped somewhere.

What is a **disaster**?

A hazard can turn into a disaster, which is a really bad event. In a disaster, lots of people are hurt or killed, and their belongings are damaged or destroyed.

What is a **risk**?

A risk is the chance that a hazard will turn into a disaster.

We cannot always prevent a hazard. But we can reduce the chances of hazards becoming disasters. For example, we can build houses and schools so that they are less likely to fall during a hurricane; we can stop cutting down trees, so landslides are less likely.

What is **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**?

Disaster Risk Reduction is about that: reducing the chances that hazards become disasters. But it is also about managing existing risks and helping affected people cope with and recover from disasters once they occurred.

And when families, communities and countries are fixing and restoring everything that broke or was damaged in a disaster, DRR actions aim to guide them in “building back better” for next time.

4.2. Children should have the opportunity to express their views ‘freely’ and in various formats that best suit their needs and choices.

Child and youth participation can be facilitated using different participation **methods**, mainly including: direct interaction with targeted decision-makers; and indirect interaction, whereby children’s inputs are gathered by a third subject (for example, an NGO).

Selecting participation methods entails consideration of various aspects, including:

- Inclusiveness: which method can ensure the broadest involvement of concerned children and young people? (For example, a school-based participation mechanism may exclude out-of-school children, whilst reaching out to a larger number of participants);
- Decision makers' capacity to apply and use a given method: are they able to interact with child and youth participants in a safe and meaningful way?
- Long-term sustainability (for example, participation facilitated by a CSO can be effective, but raise concerns about its long-term sustainability).

This Mechanism is intended to bring about direct interaction and cooperation between DRR decision-makers and children and young people. However, while a direct relationship between child and youth participants and decision makers is preferable, this can be in some cases achieved gradually, in parallel with progress attained in raising awareness and building capacities of the concerned adults. In case of indirect participation, adult facilitators play a key role in conveying child and youth's messages to decision makers, and are critical in enhancing children and young people's influence over DRR decision-making processes. As adults increase their capacity to directly interact with children and young people, and as children and youth gain expertise and confidence, the role of adult facilitators should diminish. (UNICEF, 2022: 65).

In terms of **tools and formats** through which child and youth participation to DRR should be facilitated, to the extent possible, children and young participants should be provided with a range of options suiting their age and maturity, abilities, backgrounds, skills, and preferences. These may include: drawing, music, drama, art exhibitions, discussions, using new technologies and a variety of expression means.

According to research to date, children and young people have been, and should be involved in a range of different **prevention and preparedness activities**. An illustrative, non-exhaustive list of such activities is provided below.

Prevention:

- Child-centered hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessment exercises, conducted by children and youth, to develop preparedness plans;
- Conducting baseline or situational assessments of target populations to identify knowledge, attitudes and behaviors;
- Child- and youth-led risk education programmes, through which children and young people can convey risk reduction measures
- Peer-to-peer information sharing, through creating peer support groups, organizing summer camps on disaster prevention, using social networks for spreading information among peers (e.g. publishing news and alerts on social networks and chat services, creating communication videos, etc.);
- Child-led awareness raising campaigns and advocacy initiatives on household and community disaster preparedness, better hygiene practices, alternative livelihood strategies and greener lifestyle choices;
- Peer education on risks and disaster, in particular to reach out to marginalized groups (e.g. out of school children).

Preparedness:

- Prepare others about what to do in the event of a disaster and how to protect themselves;
- Translate warning messages for family and community members who do not speak the dominant language;
- Provide food and other supplies;
- Participate in search and rescue operations;
- Prepare siblings, pack up belongings and do specific chores as family prepares to evacuate;
- Establish and strengthen preparedness and contingency plans in cooperation with institutions, and periodically update those plans;
- Promote simulations involving peers and community members, to reinforce and promote behavior change;
- Establish and strengthen early warning systems using technologies and identifying roles that children can play in these systems;
- Develop clear and time-bound action plans with other children, the community and relevant institutions, to mitigate the risks identified;
- Help volunteers and staff of centers and operations, assist at shelters, identify organizations that family, peers and community members can access for assistance;

- Engage in clean-up campaigns

Voice: key points to bring with you.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do children and youth receive the information they need in an appropriate format to enable them to form a view on dangers, risks, disasters and DRR activities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Providing children and youth with information is a decisive factor in children and young people taking on an active role, in being able to express themselves freely, and in activating their energies and sense of agency. ➔ While being a first step in fostering children and young people’s engagement in DRR, providing information should be regarded as an ongoing process, that should continue in parallel to their active engagement. ➔ A list of areas of information to be provided to children and young people is included in section 4.1. above.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are children and youth being given a range of options as to how they might choose to express their opinion on DRR? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Child and youth participation can be facilitated using different participation methods, mainly including: direct interaction with targeted decision-makers; and indirect interaction, whereby children’s inputs are gathered by a third subject (for example, an NGO). ➔ Selecting participation methods entails consideration of various aspects, listed in section 4.2. above. ➔ Children and young participants should be provided with a range of options concerning the tools and formats through which their participation shall be facilitated, suiting their age and maturity, abilities, backgrounds, skills, and preferences. ➔ Section 4.2. includes also a list of possible prevention and preparedness activities in which children and youth can be included.

5. AUDIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS.

5.1. Clearly identifying and assessing Assess existing DRR decision-makers, mechanisms and platforms.

Identifying and assessing institutions retaining functions in the areas of disaster risk management, crisis management, security and safety, is a crucial step in identifying strategic pathways to institutionalize child participation, and to anticipate and address potential resistance. Such institutions may be, for example, local or national DRR platforms; crisis units at municipal level; etc.

As mentioned earlier, while the DRR cycle envisages different phases, the mechanism will focus in particular on prevention and preparedness. Therefore, the focus of participation will also affect the selection of the actors to be involved.

After having **mapped** DRR decision-making institutions, analyzing such institutions will aim to finding out ways and possible measures for embedding a child and youth perspective in the crisis management structure – especially on prevention and preparedness.

In particular, the **assessment** should focus on whether the following elements are in place or need to be strengthened/created:

- Policy frameworks that allow for child and youth participation;
- Sufficient and sustainable budget resources, and staff resources.

As a first step, the assessment should consider the extent to which national policy frameworks on children's rights and/or child participation (i.e. national action plans on children's rights; national strategies etc.) support child participation in national and local institutional decision-making processes.

Secondly, it is important to assess whether, within each identified DRR decision-making structures, there are policy frameworks in place that allow for child and youth participation to (some of) their activities.

Even if policy documents and decisions concerning child participation are not in place at a given DRR institution, it might be that children and youth have been or are involved in that institution's activities to some extent. It is therefore important to assess whether the given institution interacts with children:

- Are there regular meetings between adults and children?
- Have DRR-related child-friendly communication materials been produced?
- Are the identified institutions proactive in communicating with children and young and in sharing information with them concerning decision-making processes and outcomes?

Child participation requires sufficient and sustainable resources, as well as a dedicated workforce. Therefore, it is important to assess whether:

- There is a child participation person/team within the institution that is being assessed;
- Staff ever received training on the international and national legislative and policy standards in respect of child participation;
- The institution has a child participation budget, through which they allocate resources for involving children and young people in their activities. This budget should cover both the funding of priority actions identified by children and young people, and the operational aspects of child participation initiatives (e.g. facilitation, meetings, training etc.)

Answering the above-questions will help understand whether child participation exists, and whether this is project-based or mainstreamed within a given institution's policies and practice.

Assessing institutions' capacity to engage with children, and related training needs, is of particular relevance. It is important to also consider how to ensure that capacity can be maintained and further supported over time, in light of changes in staff composition (e.g. staff turnover or following political elections.) A standardized training package, with incremental levels of competency

objectives, should be devised, in order to support regular decision makers' training, and to scale up the scope of child and youth participation.

From a sustainability perspective, it is preferable to build on existing structures rather than to establish new ones. However, in the absence of suitable structures to involve children and young people, a new structure (committee or similar) with both DRR and child participation as part of its remit could be piloted.

Assessing existing DRR decision-making institutions means being sensitive to both formal and informal differences across them. Formal differences include organizational and institutional variations (e.g. national vs local) and tiers (e.g. provincial- vs district-level institution). Informal differences require direct and closer engagement and discussion with each institutions' representatives while carrying out the assessment. Moreover, whilst some functions can be formally assigned to a given institution, that may be still controlled by a different (perhaps higher-ranking) institution in practice.

5.2. Involving relevant decision-makers: how to communicate about the right to, importance and benefits of child participation in DRR.

It is of paramount importance to explain to relevant decision makers "why" they should involve children and young people in DRR activities.

Although it appears difficult to achieve sometimes, decision makers at any level can be familiarized with the huge benefits of including children and young people in their institutional decision-making processes, by being reminded about the following argumentations:

- Child participation is a fundamental right. Children and young people are entitled to be consulted on any decision affecting them.
- The existing literature stresses that there are many benefits stemming from children and youth's involvement in DRR, which by far outnumber the associated risks. Children often have the time, energy, creativity and capacity to contribute to disaster risk reduction.
- Children have the capacity to communicate effectively on risk and risk reduction with their parents, siblings and peers, transgressing the

intergenerational gap, and through informal communication networks. With appropriate support, children can effectively communicate risks to the wider community and larger audiences.

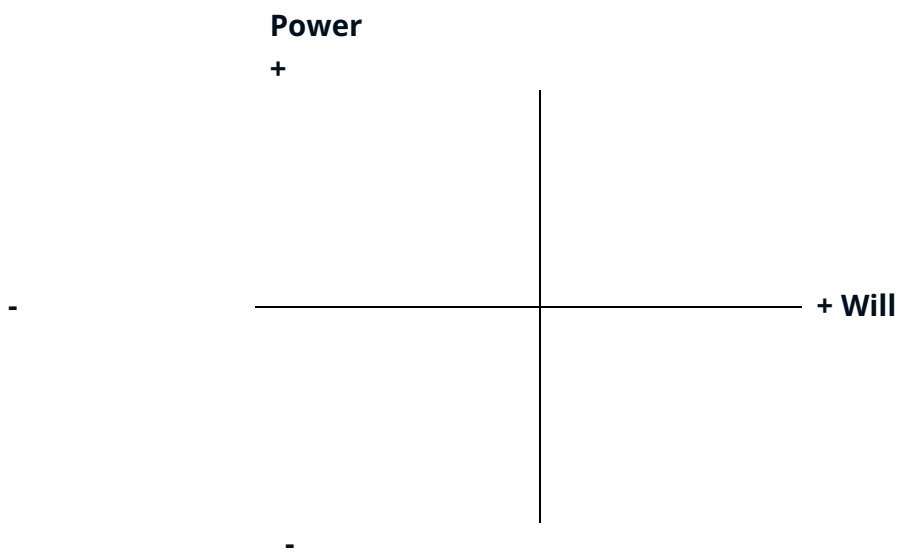
- Children and youth are tomorrow's leaders and decision-makers. By investing in their behavior change, and involving them in DRR governance structures and mechanisms today, a generation can be better prepared for the disasters of tomorrow. Moreover, young people and children generally are more progressive.
- Involving children and youth in DRR will significantly help reduce the so-called eco-anxiety, eco-distress and related psychological challenges that children and young people may experience when confronted with information about climate change and the degradation of the physical environment around them.
- An additional line of argumentation to persuade the identified audience about the importance and benefits of involving children and youth in DRR relates to budget advocacy. This entails undertaking research and analysis on budget allocations, public expenditures, and their impacts to generate evidence about how different decisions and practices related to local or national public resources – entailing child and youth participation – could generate savings for the whole community and/or society. This evidence would be used to advocate for child and youth involvement in DRR.

In sum, child participation is a fundamental right, but also a way to strengthen national and local DRR action. This message should be clearly conveyed to relevant decision makers, in order to motivate them to engage with children and young people and to demonstrate commitment and accountability for results. Another motivating factor for DRR institutions can be media attention in response to successful child and youth participation in their activities. (UNICEF, 2017: 22).

5.3. Stakeholders' analysis in the DRR context.

There is a number of different ways to undertake a stakeholders' analysis. In order to assess whether the different institutions who could be the potential 'audience' for child and youth participation to DRR actions, it is important to assess their power to act upon children and young people's inputs, and their willingness to do so.

To this purpose, a simple diagram to map out DRR actors based on their power and will to share their decision-making power with children and youth is proposed below. It is important to keep in mind that such assessment should be focused on each institution's power and interest to involve children – rather than to accept and fulfil their overall role and responsibilities in the DRR (or other) sector.



Placing DRR institutions along the power/will diagram is simple:

- The two axis above show power to effectively create or support child participation mechanisms, and the will to do so, with a plus and a minus sign at each end of each axis;
- Each DRR decision-making institution mapped earlier should be placed somewhere along the diagram, according to the perceived will and power to bring about child participation practices in their work;
- High power, high will stakeholders are regarded as the most promising ones. Low power and low interest stakeholders are least important. Nevertheless, they should be considered for engagement in the medium- or long-run.

In carrying out the power and will analysis, it is important to think about formal as well as informal power. After an initial analysis, it is also important to reach a greater level of details concerning power and will, respectively, to do what in particular (to lobby on the adoption of new laws or policies; to fund some participatory project; etc.)

Similarly, analyzing the institutional landscape should, however, not be confined to institutions, mechanisms and platforms with DRR decision-making responsibilities. Indeed, other government and local institutions can act as facilitators in establishing or supporting child and youth participation structures in the DRR area. These include, among others, ministries of child and youth affairs, social affairs, child protection and/or education; mayors, local government associations, municipal-level child protection departments; international agencies; NGOs and CSOs engaged on children's rights and child participation; networks of researchers on childhood studies and youth studies (anthropologists, sociologists, pedagogues); etc.

Questions to ask in order to identify potential allies include:

- Which actors from the national or local government could play a role in supporting children and youth participation to DRR?
- Which IOs, NGOs or CSOs can support child participation to DRR? At which level (national, local)? Do they have expertise in child participation?
- How can each actor have an influence over the identified DRR institution(s)?
- Could some of the identified allies play an active role in facilitating DRR child and youth participation mechanisms?

Explaining to children who are the relevant decision-makers, what power and will they have, and what are the (implicit or explicit) decision-making processes these decision-makers are part of, is part of the information that they should be provided with, in order to be able to form their views and to be effectively involved in DRR activities.

Audience: key points to bring with you.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the 'audience' for children and youth's perspective on DRR issues? • Is there a process for children and youth do communicate their views? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Clearly identifying and assessing existing DRR decision-makers, mechanisms and platforms is a key step in selecting audience for child and youth participation. Para 5.1. provides a list of key aspects to be considered, and questions to be answered while undertaking the assessment of DRR institutions. → In particular, the institutions' capacity and experience in child participation requires careful consideration. → Presenting child participation as a fundamental right, but also a way to strengthen national and local DRR action, may strengthen institutions' motivation to foster child and youth participation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do individuals/bodies identified as 'audience' have the power to make decisions and act upon children and young people's views? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → In order to assess whether the different institutions who could be the potential 'audience' for child and youth participation to DRR actions, it is important to assess their power to act upon children and young people's inputs, and their willingness to do so. → High power, high will stakeholders are regarded as the most promising ones. Low power and low interest stakeholders are least important. Nevertheless, they should be considered for engagement in the medium- or long-run.

6. INFLUENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS.

6.1. Monitoring to which degree the existing DRR decision-making mechanisms are taking into account the views from children and young people.

For children and youth participation to be effective, it is important to align the timing and modalities with the schedule and timeline of the decision-making institutions with which children and young people are engaging.

In any case, child and youth participation in DRR should not be ad hoc. The timeline and frequency of child participation should be established at the outset. In principle, a more frequent interaction between children and youth and adult decision makers is to be regarded as an indicator of children and youth's status and ability to influence decisions. (UNICEF, 2022: 67).

Aspects to consider include:

- Assessing in advance when and how is it best to schedule child and youth participation in relation to targeted DRR decision-making processes, in order to maximize potential impact;
- Establishing through formal commitments a minimum number of times that adults and children will meet each year;
- Introducing systems and mechanisms for children and young people, as well as for adult members of the institution, to convey additional meeting when need be, and establishing clear and easily accessible communication channels.

Once a participation mechanism has been established, adult decision-makers (directly, or through third parties' facilitation) should engage with children to collaboratively define the aims and objectives of their work, and how the outcomes of their participation will be monitored. In particular, a system should be established to best monitor the following:

- The degree to which the existing DRR decision-making mechanisms are taking into account the views from children and young people;
- The reasons why some/all/none of their views were taken into consideration, and the reasons why, as elicited from decision-makers.

Irrespective of the features of child and youth participation regarding level of engagement, frequency, method etc., child and youth participant should receive ongoing feedback on the outcomes of their participation. Often, adults do not provide feedback to children and youth about the outcomes of their participation. Decision makers should always inform children and youth about how their input was taken into account in their decisions, and why.

Ideally, children should be actively involved in defining indicators to measure progress in the achievement of participation objectives. Impact monitoring should encompass any positive, negative and unintended outcome of a child participation initiative (including, for example, negative feeling a child may have as a consequence of discussing sensitive topics). There should always be room for child and youth participants to express their dissent and to voice their criticisms on the participation processes they engaged in.

In the context of 'influence' on DRR processes and decision-makers, the following information stemming from impact monitoring should be regularly reaching child and youth participants:

- How their views were taken into account, and by which DRR institutions.
- Constraints to child participation to DRR decision-making structures and mechanisms, including low engagement from children and youth's side if that occurred.
- Reasons why some/all/none of their views were taken into consideration, and the reasons why, as elicited from decision-makers.
- Efforts undertaken to overcome constraints to child and youth participation to their activities and processes.

Hopefully, DRR decision-makers will embed the perspectives of children and young people in their formal decisions and practical action. However, efforts should be made to try and establish a link between children and youth's involvement and a given outcome (attribution). Many factors can contribute to

one change. One way to approach this issue is to try and identify specific activities that had a strong influence over a decision-maker on a specific outcome.

Along with child and youth participation mechanisms, monitoring mechanisms should be progressively institutionalized at the decision-makers involving them in DRR.

Albeit this is not always possible, especially in the context of time-bound mechanisms for child participation (for example, linked to a specific project), participation processes should try and ensure that child and youth development and leadership are supported, and that they do not just merely provide inputs and views to the DRR prevention and preparedness activities they are engaged in.

Building the skills and knowledge of children and young people will not only prepare them for contributing to DRR; it will also provide them with the life skills that will enhance their ability to actively contribute to their communities and the broader society later in time. Learning goals should be collaboratively identified and set out with children and youth, by mutually agreeing upon which concrete skills they can expect to develop through their participation to DRR actions. This will serve as a reference point for mutual accountability as the group develops, and also as an incentive for participation and attendance.

Influence: key points to bring with you.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are children and youth's views considered by those with power to effect change? • What process is in place to ensure that children and youth's views inform decisions that affect them? • Are children and youth being informed about the ways in which their views will be considered and acted upon? • Are children and young people provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → For children and youth's influence to be more effective, child and youth participation in DRR should not be ad hoc. The timeline and frequency of child participation should be established at the outset, through formal commitment by adult decision-makers; → A system should be established to monitor the degree to which the existing DRR decision makers are taking children and youth's views into account, and the reasons why. → Children and young people should be actively involved in defining indicators to measure progress in the achievement of participation objectives, and encouraged to express dissent and criticisms. → Learning goals in terms of skills that children and youth will acquire as a result of their participation, should be thought of and defined, together with child and youth participants.

7. COMMON CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED WHEN INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN DRR

7.1. Lack of legal and policy commitment that support children's right to participate to DRR activities.

Enabling children, as well as young people, to realize their right to participation to building resilient societies, requires the introduction of legal provisions affirming such right and institutionalizing their entitlement. Whilst the goodwill and commitment by individual adult decision-makers is essential, this is not sufficient.

If for example the legislation generally stipulate that the population should be informed and trained on DRR, but does not foresee specific provisions to ensure children and youth' participation, this gap represents a constraint to their involvement.

One central aspect in this regard is to expand, through legal provisions (followed by practice), DRR-related education activities targeting children and young people, and to make these become broader participation opportunities.

Questions to ask:

- What are the legal and policy documents providing an obligation and commitment to involve children and young people in DRR?
- Does the above-obligation refer to all children or is it exclusive to certain groups in certain contexts?

7.2. Lack of clarity about what "participation" means in the context of DRR.

Generally, participation is used to describe a wide range of activities. Often times, such activities are short-term, one-off processes that provide only limited opportunities for the children involved to realize their right. (Save the Children, 2014b:6).

A lack of shared understanding about the objectives and outcomes of child participation to DRR actions seriously constraints children's involvement. If the objectives and expected outcomes of child and youth participation are not clear, there is risk of tokenism and participation for the sake of participation.

Often times, the accent is placed on the right of children to be heard, rather than on other aspects of participation enshrined in the UN CRC. "We often consult with children, but without any plan on what to do with the information we receive", one professional working on DRR issues admitted. Another expert stated: "We occasionally speak to a group. But we don't want them to work equally with us."

"Everyone listens but we don't want them to be part of the solution", another professional echoed. (Experts attending a CBSS Workshop, 6-7 February 2024).

Often times, adults do a lot of work and then at the last stage they ask children and youth what do they think about something that is almost finalized. Children and young people are in this case only involved on a superficial level; it appears that they have been consulted, but their opinions are not actually taken into account in a substantial manner.

Aspects to consider before engaging children and young people in DRR activities include:

- What are the aims and objectives of children and youth's participation? Have these aims and objectives been validated by the concerned children and young people? Do they reflect what children and youth would like to achieve – having been informed about what is feasible within the given context?
- Are we organizing participation opportunities *for* the children, or *with* the children? Do we want them to be part of the solution to existing issues?
- Is the child and youth participation process well-timed, so that inputs provided by them could really influence ongoing decision-making processes?
- Is there a plan on how the inputs offered by child and youth participants will be used, by whom, and when? Have children and youth been informed about how their inputs will influence decision-making in practice?

Children and young people, as well as adult experts in DRR, identify as the single most important factor hampering children and youth's active role in DRR as the lack of knowledge, awareness and capacity of adults around them. (Di Maio, 2023: 56).

Cultural resistance to children and youth's engagement in DRR manifests at different levels. Generally, adults tend to regard children as weak and passive, and not as potential contributors, in the face of disasters. Also, adults may fear that children and youth will somewhat replace them in taking decisions on very delicate aspects of DRR.

Questions to ask:

- Do adult decision-makers understand that children and young people should be provided with the opportunity to participate to DRR?
- Do they really understand what child participation means – that this is not just about “giving away power”, but it is just working together better for the effectiveness of actions?

7.3. Knowledge about risk, disaster and preparedness are not cultivated among children.

Limited exposure to information regarding risks, disasters, and DRR actions, may limit children and young people's readiness to engage and to explore participation opportunities. Self-perception of limited or scattered knowledge about the above-topics may also instill anxiety, as children and youth may feel ill-equipped to prevent disasters, to act in case of disasters, and to help others.

Children and young people of different age-groups and backgrounds receive information on safety, risks and disaster from several sources, including: school/pre-school teachers; parents, older siblings and other family members; practitioners (fire-fighters, municipal police etc.); and the internet.

While the variety of information sources can be regarded as positive in principle, children and young people might have different emotional reactions based on the kind of information received, the means through which they accessed it, the

support (or lack of) available to them in order to process such contents, and of course the individual maturity, personality and experiences of the child/youth concerned.

Information about impending threats could be perceived as mobilizing or paralyzing, according to all the above-variables. In the latter case, this sense of fear might be overwhelming, and prompt children and young people to avoid opportunities for active engagement in DRR.

7.4. Discrimination against certain groups of children and youth

Discrimination against certain groups of the population, and of children and youth therein, also hinders participation to DRR. When a community is not recognized by the Government, such as in the case of migrants living in informal settlements or minority groups, DRR activities can still be conducted directly with and by such communities, but additional advocacy efforts for official recognition of their specific needs, as well as the active role they could play in the area is needed.

Discrimination acts as a key-barrier concerning the involvement of children with disabilities in DRR activities, in the form of lack of knowledge about their experiences in the face of disaster, their perception as vulnerable and not competent, as unable to make choices and lacking capacity to structure and control their lives. Also, the physical environment around children with disabilities often acts as a limitation to their active involvement: such an environment is shaped by and for persons without disabilities, and thus does not offer a context for social interaction accessible to these children.

(Di Maio, 2022: 33.)

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Annex I. WHY CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION TO DRR?

Article 12 of the states that “State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”. Being one of the four guiding principles of the CRC (best interests; life, survival and development; non-discrimination; and participation), article 12 is both connected to and indivisible from all other rights enshrined in the Convention.

Therefore, ratifying states agreed to ensure that all those working with and for children understand their duties in relation to upholding children’s rights, including the obligation to involve children in all decisions affecting them.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (‘BSR’) stresses that many of the challenges faced by the region require action at regional level, as responses at national or local level may be inadequate, and in light of the considerable interdependence demonstrated by the concerned countries. (European Commission, 2009). The latest Action Plan adopted by the European Commission in order to support the implementation of the above-Strategy, under its Policy area “Secure”, identifies a key-action in achieving a common societal security culture in the BSR, in particular: “a) Encourage increased involvement of NGOs and volunteers in the field of civil protection and emergency management; b) Strengthen the role of children and youth in promoting a common societal security culture in the BSR, and their role as contributors to building resilient societies”. (European Commission, 2021: 3.9.)

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child also envisages actions to empower children “to be active citizens and members of democratic societies”. In particular, it commits the EU to “create space for children to become active participants of the European Climate Pact through pledges or by becoming Pact Ambassadors. By involving schools in sustainable climate, energy and environment education, the Education for Climate Coalition will help children to become agents of change in the implementation of the Climate Pact and the European Green Deal”. (European Commission, 2021, chapter 1.)

The provision and principle enshrined in article 12 of the CRC has been elaborated in the General Comment on the right of the child to be heard produced by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the independent body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the CRC by its State parties, which provided authoritative guidance on how to fully realize this fundamental right for all children and young people (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009).

The above-General Comment includes nine basic requirements for the implementation of the right of the child to be heard, in relation to the nature and features of child participation. These are summarized as it follows:

1. Transparent and informative. Children and youth should clearly understand that they have a right to be heard, and that their opinions will be taken into account and valued. Transparency also means that participants are fully informed about the purpose of their involvement, and how this will take place.
2. Voluntary. Children and young persons should be aware that their participation is voluntary, and that they always have a choice as to whether to participate or not. They should know that they can opt out of the process at any time, and how to go about doing so.
3. Respectful. The views and opinions of every child and young person should be heard and valued. No participant should be humiliated or exposed to harm as a consequence of their participation, and each of them should feel free to express themselves without fear of discrimination.
4. Relevant. Children and young persons should be enabled to understand why the issues that the mechanism seeks to address are relevant to them, and why their views and contributions are being sought. They should be enabled to understand both the relevance and the limitations of their participation, and should be given the opportunity to identify themselves the issues that they believe are most important – in the broader framework of the DRR actions.
5. Child-friendly. Children and youth should feel welcomed. Activities should be entertaining and engaging, and should promote children's confidence in speaking out. Working methods should take into account the level of

maturity, evolving capacities, age, diversity and capabilities of all participants. Meeting times and places should be suitable, accessible and friendly for children and youth. In the case of online meetings, children and youth should receive easy-to-follow instructions. Technology (possession of or ability to use devices) should never become an obstacle to participation for any of the children and young people involved.

6. Inclusive. All children and youth have the right to participate without discrimination and risk of stigmatization. Methods, approaches, languages and arrangements should encourage and facilitate the participation of each individual in line with his/her age, maturity, gender, and any other personal characteristics. Existing patterns of discrimination, power and status imbalances and cultural sensitivities should be taken into account and proactively addressed.
7. Supported by training. Participation has to be facilitated by professionals who are trained and equipped to work effectively with children. Moreover, children and young persons themselves should have access to training that is aimed to support them in acquiring new relevant knowledge and skills throughout the process.
8. Safe and sensitive to risk. Each participant shall be protected from any form of violence, abuse, exploitation, or any other risk that may arise from getting involved in the initiative. Risks should be anticipated and mitigated. Child safeguarding policies and procedures shall be in place, and be understood by all professionals involved. Children and youth have to be informed about the fact that all considerations in relation to their safety have been taken into account and addressed. Opportunities and risks related to participation should be illustrated clearly to participants. Expectations should be openly shared by both sides and discussed.
9. Accountable. Children and youth should be kept up-to-date about the ways in which their contributions have been used to advice, inform or influence processes and developments. A system to monitor their participation should be in place, and children should be informed about the outcomes of their participation – included any unintended and/or negative ones. (Adapted from: Save the Children, 2021: 3-11).

Thus, respecting children's views is not just a model of good pedagogical practice, but a legally binding obligation, descending from the ratification of the UN CRC – and from other relevant international, regional and national legal provisions aimed to implement children's right to participation. Whilst decision-makers at many levels are more and more open to 'listen to children' and to 'hear their voices', all too often these intentions and expressions do not capture the long-ranging nature and full range of the commitment as enshrined in article 12 CRC. In this view, Lundy developed a model according to which, in order to successfully implement children's right to participation, four separate factors require consideration.

Space: a prerequisite for the meaningful engagement of children and young people in decision-making is creating an opportunity for involvement – a space in which they are encouraged to express their views. Such space must be inclusive. The views of a diverse range of children shall be sought and participation should not be afforded only to the articulate and literate. The following questions should be considered:

- Have children's views been sought as early as possible?
- Is there a safe space in which children and youth can express themselves freely?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that all children affected by decisions can take part? (Is the space inclusive?)

Voice: children and youth may need the help of others in order to form a view, and have a right to receive direction and guidance from adults in order to do so. Indeed, children's right to express their view is not dependent upon their capacity to express a mature view, but only on their ability to form a view. The following items should be looked at:

- Did children and youth receive the information they need in an appropriate format to enable them to form a view?
- Have children and youth been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express their opinion?

Audience: children and young people should have a guaranteed opportunity to communicate their views and intention to (an) identifiable individual(s) or body

with the responsibility to listen. Children should have their views listened to by those who make decisions. The following questions should be asked:

- Who was the 'audience' for children and youth's perspective on a given topic?
- Was there a process for children and youth to communicate their views?
- Did the individual/body have the power to make decisions and act upon such views?

Influence: adults who were there to listen to children and young people should not only listen to them, but also take their views seriously and effectively act upon these. Children and youth should be informed on how their views were taken into account during decision-making processes they were involved in. The following aspects should be looked at:

- Were the children and youth's views considered by those with power to effect change?
- What process is in place to ensure that children and youth's views inform decisions that affect them?
- Have children and youth been informed about the ways in which their views will be considered and acted upon?
- Have children and youth been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

2.2. Children, young people and disasters.

Children and young people are greatly affected by disasters, and their exposure is expected to increase in the coming years. Between 2000 and 2019, disasters claimed approximately 1.23 million lives, an average of 60,000 per annum, and affected a total of over 4 billion people (many on more than one occasion). (CRED, UNDRR, 2020). "Half of the world's population are children and youth and they are often the first and most affected when environmental, technological or biological hazards strike. Disasters disproportionately impact them: their physical and mental health; nutritional needs to grow and thrive; access to education and decent work; economic opportunities; exposure to violence or trafficking; and choices of where they can safely live, study, play, grow and build community." (UNDRR, 2020a).

According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), an estimated 535 million children, nearly one in four, live in conflict- or disaster-stricken countries, with restricted access to medical care, quality education, proper nutrition and protection. (UNDRR, 2020a). And yet, “all too often, children and youth are relegated to the margins in preparing for hazardous events, in the taking of decisions that affect them at critical junctures following a major disaster.” (UNDRR, 2020a). Despite evidence of the benefits of involving children and youth in DRR activities to children and young people, as well as to the whole communities and society, it is still difficult for many organizations and individuals to fully accept that they can take responsibilities in DRR.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) – adopted by the United Nations member states between 14 and 18 March 2015 at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan, and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in June 2015 – calls for states and all other concerned stakeholders to enact “a broader and more people-centered preventative approach to disaster risk”. (UNISDR, 2015: I.7). In particular, the Sendai Framework calls upon Governments to “engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards”. (UNISDR, 2015: I.7).

Among its guiding principles, the Sendai Framework emphasizes that “disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible, and non-discriminatory participation [...]. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted”. (UNISDR, 2015: III).

Stressing the important role that non-state stakeholders should play (while acknowledging the overall responsibility of states) for reducing disaster risks, the Sendai Framework considers children and youth as “agents of change [who] should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula”. (UNISDR, 2015: V.36 (ii)).

Annex II – Key terms and definitions

For the purpose of the Adaptation Tool and the Mechanism, the following definitions are used:

Adolescence is defined as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19 (WHO, no date).

Build back better: The use of the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases after a disaster to increase the resilience of nations and communities through integrating disaster risk reduction measures into the restoration of physical infrastructure and societal systems, and into the revitalization of livelihoods, economies and the environment. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

A **child** is any person under the age of 18 years⁴.

A **disaster** refers to a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. (UNISDR, 2009: 9).

Disaster risk reduction is aimed at preventing new, reducing existing disaster risk, and managing residual disaster risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

A **gatekeeper** is a person who stands between facilitators and potential respondents, and who have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations during the field-research. They may be members of institutions or organizations, or of the community or family of the potential participant(s).

A **hazard** is a process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption, or environmental degradation. (Hazards include – as mentioned in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 – biological, environmental, geological, hydrometeorological and technological processes and phenomena (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

⁴ Art.1, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Youth/Young persons are those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. (UNESCO, no date).

Resilience is defined as the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform, and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through disaster risk management. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

Risk assessment is a methodology to determine the nature and extent of risks by analysing potential hazards and evaluating existing conditions of vulnerability that together could potentially harm exposed people, property, services, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend. In the context of this Pre-Study, risk assessment most often refers to how individuals and groups (particularly children and young people) perceive the risk of hazard in their environment and how children and youth learn and understand the risks facing their families and communities. (UNISDR, 2009: 26; Fothergill, 2017: 4).

Prevention of disasters means activities and measures to completely avoid the harmful impacts of a hazardous event. (UNISDR, 2009: 19). While certain disaster risks cannot be eliminated, prevention aims at reducing vulnerability and exposure in such contexts where, as a result, the risk of disaster is removed. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

Preparedness refers to the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organizations, communities, and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current disasters. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

The **response** period refers to actions taken before, during or in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, which is the first minutes, hours and days, perhaps even up to a week, depending on the type and severity of the disaster event. It includes the provision of emergency services and public assistance in order to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected. (UNDRR, 2020:42 and 130-131; Fothergill, 2017: 6, 14; UNISDR, 2009: 24).

Mitigating disasters means to lessen or minimize the adverse impacts of a hazardous event. (The adverse impacts of hazards, in particular natural hazards, often cannot be prevented fully, but their scale or severity can be substantially lessened by various strategies and actions. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

Risk is generally intended as the combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences. Disaster risk more specifically refers to the potential disaster losses, in lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and services, which could occur to a particular community or a society over some specified future time period. It shall be noted that risk is not an absolute and fully objective measure; rather, it relates to the properties of objects exposed to threats, including their vulnerability and resilience. Moreover, there is an important psychological dimension hidden in the definition of risk, which is related to risk perception. (UNISDR, 2009: 9-10, 25; Wolanin, 2017: 9).

Recovery refers to restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, and economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets, systems and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “build back better” to avoid or reduce future disaster risk. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).⁵

Rebuilding/reconstruction refers to the medium- and long-term sustainable restoration of resilient critical infrastructures, services, housing, facilities, and livelihoods required for the full functioning of a community or a society affected by a disaster, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “build back better” to avoid or reduce future disaster risk. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

Security is a complex process, involving cultural, social, economic, organizational, and technical activities the function of which is to ensure the degree of resistance and protection against damage of various types of values, assets, and social actors (individuals, communities, organizations and institutions) that make up a specific community. Children and youth, as well as any other individual, play a double role in the context of security: on the one hand, they are subjects to protection, and on the other hand, they are a significant, active element in the entire security system. (Wolanin, 2017: 8, 17).

A **stakeholder** is considered, for the purpose of this Pre-Study, as anyone who has the responsibility, capacity, or opportunity to work on disaster risk reduction, particularly on the role that children and youth are playing and could play in relation to disasters prevention and response, and more generally in building

⁵ For children and youth, it generally means that recovery starts when they return to school/work, their homes have been repaired or replaced, and their parents (or other caregivers) have returned to their jobs. In other words, for children and youth recovery happens when they reach a semblance of stability, routine, well-being, and predictability in all spheres of life. However, it must be acknowledged that there are many children and youth living at the margins of society before a disaster strikes, who live a daily existence lacking stability, sense of routine, or predictability. (Fothergill, 2017: 16-17).

resilient societies. While it is indeed recognized that children and young persons – as well as their families and communities - do have a stake in these processes, the term “stakeholder” (also referred to as “key informants” in the context of the field research) here indicates representatives of institutions or organizations, as well as independent experts, other than children and youth, their families, and communities.

Vulnerability refers to the conditions determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards. (UNDRR, 2020: 130-131).

