

# APP-DRR 2021: Children & Youth Stakeholders

## Group

**Almost every child and young person in the Asia-Pacific has experienced Disaster Risk in the last 12 months**

- More than half of the world's population are children and young people under the age of 30, out of which 1.8 billion are people between ages 10 and 24. Most of them live in developing countries (UNFPA).
- Over 60% of the world's youth live in Asia-Pacific (ESCAP).
- Over 99% of children and youth in the Asia-Pacific had experienced disaster risks in the last 12 months (World Vision).
- 24% parents/caregivers resorted in physical punishment or emotional abuse as 43% parents/caregivers are partially or completely unable to handle the change in their children's behaviour (World Vision)
- There are around 30 million children born in the East Asia-Pacific region every year (UNICEF).
- Approximately 627 million children under 18 years reside in South Asia, an equivalent of 36% of the total population of 1.82 billion (UNICEF).
- Youth unemployment is more than double the rate of the total working-age population (ESCAP).
- One in every five children (5 – 15 years) were not attending school in any form. 55% of children affected by school closures were not able to continue accessing formal education remotely (World Vision).
- The COVID-19 pandemic poses a significant challenge for children, and particularly girls and young women, in the Asia-Pacific region. The pandemic's indirect socio-economic effects are likely to be extensive and long-term, potentially reversing decades of efforts dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable youth (Plan International, 2020).
- Of the 4.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers in Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 810,000 are at primary school age whereas only 32% of them have access to formal primary education (UNHCR).

The Asia Pacific is a very large region spanning approximately 2.8 billion hectares or 22% of the global land area. It is highly affected by disasters. Each year disasters have a major impact on children, and youth (Rocha 2020). The region has also witnessed the devastating impact of COVID-19 on children and youth. 2020 was a tough year for communities and countries of Asia-Pacific in terms of disasters and global pandemics. Disasters and climate change have increasingly become more unpredictable, more intense and more frequent.

At the institutional level, governments are already stretching thin trying to manage the COVID-19 pandemic response. Compounding this issue is the dual risk of multiple disasters including floods, droughts, typhoons, conflicts, crises etcetera. The approaches needed to deal with these intersecting risks are complicated, and they have huge impacts on the vulnerable.

In the context of COVID-19, school closures affect nearly 91 per cent of the world's student population, over 1.5 billion learners have had their education disrupted, including 743 million girls (Plan International, 2021). In Asia and the Pacific regions, schools serving 62 million children have been completely closed due to lockdowns during the pandemic (UNICEF, 2021), which resulted in a long period of compromised access to learning, protective services. Those with access to remote learning opportunities were unsatisfied with limited learning options during the pandemic (World Vision, 2021). Children and Youth are particularly at risk with growing numbers of disasters in multi-risk contexts but are also innovative agents of change. They are current and future assets in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Actions. There is a need to hear their voices and new initiatives in disaster management, and include children and youth in decision-making processes to enable children and youth to become leaders in disaster risk reduction and climate actions in the future

It is imperative that to enhance the development of the region and encourage, acknowledges and continue to promote for children and youth to be societal change-maker and problem solvers, their voices are listened to, especially focusing on those who are experiencing the impact of climate change first hand.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) policy and practice require knowledge for informed decision making and coordinated action. Furthermore, building resilience among vulnerable groups should be central to any climate change policy and action which seeks to create a healthy society. A critical way to achieve this goal is to provide better integration of and governance of DRR and climate change policy and planning through transparent and participatory approaches at different levels.

UN Major Group for Children and Youth in Asia-Pacific together with the Asia-Pacific Coalition for School Safety (APCSS) want to propose the following key interventions to APP-DRR 2021 and Mid-Term Review of Sendai Framework. The document is in alignment with the overall UNDRR Asia-Pacific Action Plan 2021-2024.

- The continuing gap between national DRR policies and local-level practice requires the proactive engagement of children and youth, and other stakeholders in decision-making that affect them.
- Highlight the role of local good governance for DRR and climate action and ensure that each country and locality have a child focus climate change adaptation strategy

- Recognise the importance of science & innovation, knowledge and education in building resilience. Consider the gender digital divide and address gender disparities in access to digital learning.
- Apply the framework of “Building Back Better” with green, healthy and inclusive recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
- Strengthen the meaningful engagement of children and youth in planning and implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation programs and in the decision making process at all levels
- Strengthen inclusion of children, adolescents and youth in public awareness efforts and sensitization on Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) and related DRR strategy and planning. Dedicated plans to create and maintain disaster loss database systems should be prioritized for local and national levels, and include metrics on specific impact on children and youth access to education.

### **About Organizational**

**UNMGCY** is a youth-led, completely volunteer-based organization supporting education, training, and fundraising activities to empower young people from all backgrounds to meaningfully engage in the UN. Children and Youth International (CYI) is the charitable arm behind the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY).

The **Asia-Pacific Coalition for School Safety (APCSS)** is a regional affiliate of the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES). The coalition consists of a regional technical group (including core members: ADPC, IFRC, Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNDRR). The group, in close collaboration with All India Disaster Management Institute, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, and other technical contributors, is dedicated to fostering Comprehensive Safe Schools implementation and building community resilience in the Asia and Pacific regions, upholding commitment to bringing children and youth into regional policy processes, and fostering an exchange of technical resources, good practices/lessons learnt and model policies on Safe Schools to minimize the impacts of disasters to children’s education.