

## Why DDMP should be Child Centric? — Ten Reasons



Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Country Representative, UNICEF launched Child-Centric District Disaster Management Plan, Raipur along with Prasanta Dash, CFO UNICEF Chhattisgarh; O.P. Choudhary, District Collector Raipur; Nileshkumar Kshirsagar, CEO, Jila Panchayat Raipur (right to left); December 22, 2017, Chhattisgarh.

District Disaster Management Plans (DDMPs) are important policy instruments that help in disaster governance at the sub-national and local level in India. Mandated by the Disaster Management Act of 2005, these DDMPs have become increasingly central in guiding administration's response to a disaster or emergency. The following ten points capture the importance of having child-centric DDMPs:

1. Children are a vulnerable group primarily because of their age. Their dependency on adults for food, hygiene, care, shelter and protection has bearing on their survival and development.
2. During the last decade of the 20th century, disasters affected an estimated 66 million children around the world each year (children typically represent 50-60 percent of those affected by a disaster). This number is projected to more than triple over the coming decades.
3. In the aftermath of a disaster, children face a range of risks, from death, injuries, and diseases related to malnutrition, to poor water and sanitation, and psychological trauma and its debilitating effects. Displacement and separation from guardians and support networks, and the increased impoverishment of already poor households further exposes children to abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. Further adding to the long-term effects of disasters is the disruption of education during critical development years.
4. Children's rights to survival, clean water, food, health, sanitation, shelter, education and protection are compromised by disaster risk and climate change. When a disaster occurs, schools are frequently used as shelters, depriving children of their learning spaces. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have inalienable rights in all circumstances - including during disasters when they are most exposed to risks. Children also have the right to participate in decisions that affect them, risk reduction and resilience building decisions at district level.
5. Governments in South Asia have demonstrated their commitment to the survival, development and protection of children by being signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and its two Optional Protocols in 2000. They have further adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in 1990. Regionally, the Heads of States and Governments of South Asia signed the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements on the Promotion of Child Welfare

in South Asia in 2002 and adopted the SAARC Social Charter in 2004, which places strong emphasis on the promotion of the rights and well-being of the child. School Safety Guidelines of National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India, focus light upon the urgent need to strengthen risk resilience of schools in urban as well as rural areas of the country.

6. Child-centred DRR and programming for children have long-term development gains for children and for the society at large. Investments in child health, nutrition, education and child protection not only result in child survival, development and well-being but also in poverty reduction and increased resilience of societies to withstand shocks and stresses. Participation, empowerment and equitable development further help stabilizing fragile states and building stable societies.
7. In 2000, all South Asian governments endorsed the Millennium Development Goals with six out of eight goals related

directly to children. South Asia governments have also played an active role in formulating the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals that are emerging as a result of the post-2015 development debate.

8. Vulnerability assessment is a critical task for governments working for the survival, well-being and protection of their citizens. Children's vulnerability and exposure to disaster risk are largely shaped by their birthplace and the period in which they are born. The socioeconomic status and educational level of family members also matter and so do their own physical and mental condition.
9. A child-centred risk assessment brings children onto the national DRR and CCA agendas by making use of child vulnerability data from sectors such as health, nutrition, WASH, education and child protection. The point is that child vulnerabilities often serve as a better proxy for community vulnerabilities than monetary values used by insurance companies and development

banks. This is particularly true for South Asia, a region with a high proportion of children and youth. 'SAARC Framework for Care, Protection and Participation of Children in Disasters' emphasis on the need for mainstreaming the issues of children in the policies, strategies, programmes of projects in all relevant sectors including DRR and emerging management in South Asia.

10. Migration, urbanization, slum settlements and rapid growth contribute to the risk profile of South Asia. Population movements from rural to urban areas remain unplanned. People from rural areas often end up living in slums as squatters in cities due to lack of affordable and safe shelters. The region has nine mega-cities with a population of more than 10 million including Delhi, Mumbai, Karachi, Dhaka, Kolkata, Lahore, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad. While most countries have adopted national land-use policies and implemented area-based development plans in priority areas, no countries have enforced comprehensive spatial planning. Although natural hazard maps are available, seismic, landslide and flood assessments have rarely been incorporated into development plans. In most South Asian countries building codes are seen as complex and costly, and building standards rarely enforced.

All the aforementioned reasons have enhanced the exposure and vulnerability of children in South Asia to multiple disaster risks. Therefore, the district disaster management plans (DDMPs) of the region should be child centric to protect the children against such risks. ■

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