

Facilitators' notes

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction FOR CHILDREN

Why engage with children?

When working with children, the humanitarian principles of attending to the most vulnerable and facilitating the participation of beneficiaries often go unrealized.

As the case studies demonstrate, involving children in disaster risk reduction is an important way in which the targets and priorities for action outlined in the Sendai Framework can be met. It also supports the fulfillment of the child's rights to be heard, to life, to health and to education, among others, as stated in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Learning and expressing opinions about disaster risk reduction should be empowering. Experience shows that the process develops children's confidence and agency – as individuals, in groups and as members of the wider community – so that girls and boys can contribute to making their own lives safer and their communities more resilient.

Before you start

These exercises aim to help children understand the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. This inevitably involves discussing a variety of important risks and dangers. All activities aim to do so in an abstract and impersonal manner, without using examples from the children's own lives. However, when working with groups of children in emergency or post-emergency contexts, facilitators should be aware of recent experiences and likely sensitivities. Facilitators should be skilled, supported and highly trained.

Do facilitators have the skills, confidence and support to deal with any distress and emotional reactions that may arise?

In the interests of building trust and rapport, is the facilitator from the children's own community or at least someone who will be around over the medium to long term?

Is the facilitator aware of language and ways of communicating? Are there language barriers or communication difficulties due to disability or special needs? The facilitator will need to adapt his/her communication to the participants' ages and abilities: this child friendly guide is aimed at children aged 10-14 but facilitators should expect considerable variation even within this defined group.

Do parents or carers understand the topics being discussed? Have facilitators obtained informed consent?

Ground rules

When beginning participatory exercises with children, it's a good idea to come up with a set of ground rules. These work best if everyone agrees on them together. They should be displayed in the room (perhaps written on a flipchart or similar), so they can be referred to as necessary.

Learning objectives:

Discuss and agree on a set of ground rules for the group

What you need:

- ✓ Pens, paper, a flipchart, coloured crayons or similar
- ✓ Copies of the suggested rule list below

Small groups: In groups of three, children should discuss the following suggested rules. By each rule, they need to decide whether it's "Good" or "Bad," or write "Not sure" if they don't know.¹

- We will listen when others are talking
- We will try to reach a shared agreement
- Everyone will talk as loudly as they can
- No one can change their mind
- We will cooperate and try to get along with each other

- We will listen and think carefully about each other's ideas
- When someone has an idea we don't understand, we will ask more questions
- The person who is writing chooses what happens
- If people find it hard to join in, we ignore them
- If someone says something we think is silly, it's ok to laugh at them
- The oldest child's idea is more important
- Girls are always cleverer than boys
- We are not allowed to ask extra questions
- The person who talks loudest is always right

Whole group: After 10-15 minutes, discuss each rule together and agree on the list of good rules to keep. Add "If something we talk about makes you feel sad or upset, let an adult know". Write them up and display them in a visible place.

Know your group

The Sendai Framework is a long and complicated text. It is important that the facilitator(s) adapt the material and exercises to the needs and interests of the group in question. For example, discussing the risk of avalanches may seem remote and irrelevant to children in some parts of the world. However, it is useful to briefly mention hazards in other locations as this encourages children to think from a global perspective.

Exercises and games

It is suggested that the facilitator select a few of the exercises best suited to the age, developmental stage and experience of the group, as well as the time allocated to the session.

Exercise 1: Natural or human-made?

Materials required: Coloured pens.

Time: 10-15 min, including time to go through answers with whole group.

Notes and learning objectives: In groups of 2-3, children match pictures with names and explanations. The aim is to develop knowledge and understanding of the variety of hazards around the world.

Exercise 2: What kinds of hazards happen most frequently in your area?

Materials required: Flipchart or similar, and pens.

Time: 5-10 min.

Notes and learning objectives: Brief brainstorming activity aiming to get children thinking about their surroundings and participating actively in the session.

Game: Find the hazards in the alphabet soup

Materials required: Pens or pencils

Time: 10 min.

Notes and learning objectives: Typical word search – children must find words in the alphabet soup. The aim is to reinforce and consolidate vocabulary around hazards.

Exercise 3: Look at the picture. What could people have done to reduce the chance of the hazard turning into a disaster?

Materials: Flipchart or similar, and pens.

Time: 10 min.

Notes and learning objectives: This exercise invites children to think actively and creatively about what the community could do to protect themselves, including children's specific role. It should be empowering. Be prepared to prompt answers and invite exploration with open questions.

Possible answers:

Deforestation: There are lots of tree stumps. The people have cut down the trees but the tree roots help hold the soil together.

Houses: The houses are very close together. They are on the muddy slope. The building materials and techniques may not be very safe.

Planning: Did the people in the village decide on a safe and dry place to store their food, medicine etc.?

Warning systems: Did they know about warning systems? How do the community share information about heavy rains and earthquakes? For example, friends in neighbouring villages, or children and youth responsible for going from door to door and warning people.

Perhaps share the following example from the Philippines: Children had the idea to develop a 'Disaster Risk Reduction Texter Clan': *"Using our mobile phone we send text messages about disaster risk reduction, warning people of an incoming typhoon and preparedness to our friends who live in high risk areas. When a typhoon is coming, I forwarded text messages on the weather forecast shared by our disaster risk reduction project staff taken from the weather bureau. We also send tips on what to do during bad weather."* Mark 14-year-old boy, Eastern Samar, Philippines.ⁱⁱ

Exercise 4: Let's take an example of a common hazard in your area. What can people do to reduce the chance of the hazard turning into a disaster?

Notes: Again, prompt discussion and creative thinking – this time with an example from the children's own context.

Exercise 5: Think about your community. Who are the most vulnerable? Imagine you get an SMS warning that a flood is coming. What would you do to make sure the most vulnerable people are protected?

Materials: Pens and paper.

Time: 5-10 min.

Notes and learning objectives: Children begin to think about inequality and access, including those based on gender, age, socio-economic status, etc. The exercise should be empowering as children are prompted to see themselves as actors in their communities' future and safety.

Game: Arrange the letters in the right order

Materials: Pens

Time: 5-10 min.

Notes and learning objectives: Typical cryptogram puzzle. Children need to find the word 'Deforestation'. Exercise should be completed alone, then followed up with a whole group discussion on how deforestation can greatly increase the chances of erosion, landslides and flooding. Then speak about the importance of reforestation and communal resource management, repeating the definition of sustainable development.

Exercise 6: Over to you!

Notes and learning objectives: These additional exercises can be as short or as expanded and detailed as you see fit – depending largely on time available, group's interest, etc.

1. Drawing risk maps and spotting dangers

Materials: Big sheets of paper and lots of coloured pens.

Notes: In groups of 2-3, children draw detailed maps of their immediate vicinity – including home, daily journeys and likely hazards. Then they are asked to identify the risks in the area.

2. Helping others in the community understand risks and keep safe

Materials/Notes: This begins as a group discussion, following up on the discussion around differentiated vulnerability and hazards in the immediate vicinity. Given the appropriate time, energy and resources, it can develop into a larger activity or series of activities. For example, child-facilitated discussions with community members, film screenings, etc.

3. Protecting nature

Materials/Notes: Again, this may simply be a discussion around the importance of protecting nature in efforts to reduce disaster risk – through, for example, waste and water management, sustainable forest

management, etc. But it could develop into a day-long activity for children and the whole community, such as a reforestation hike, or a child-facilitated discussion with the whole community around the importance of not dumping rubbish in the river or forest, etc.

ⁱ This exercise is adapted from materials provided by the Thinking Together Project at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. See <http://thinktogether.educ.cam.ac.uk>. Accessed 28 July 2015.

ⁱⁱ UNISDR and Plan International (2012), *Children's action for disaster risk reduction: views from children in Asia*, p. 15-16.