

Submission by Save the Children, Plan International and World Vision (for the Children in a Changing Climate coalition) for Zero Draft of the outcomes document of UNCSO Rio+20, 2012

Children in a Changing Climate (CCC) is a coalition of leading child-centred development and humanitarian agencies calling for investment in children as agents of change for resilient, sustainable development. CCC welcomes the dual track of Rio+20 to i) develop a roadmap for the green economy, and ii) develop a new institutional framework for sustainable development. These are two areas that are crucial for building a green, environmentally safe world for current and future generations. This submission outlines the key issues for children that must be considered in the development of a new institutional framework for sustainable development.

The Role of Children and Young People in Sustainable Development

Children and young people every day demonstrate their important role in achieving and raising awareness about environmental safety and sustainability. *The involvement of youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical¹* to successful sustainable development the world over.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.² In order to successfully and equitably achieve this aim, we must put today's children and future generations at the heart of any sustainable development plans.

Girls and boys under the age of 18 make up half the population in some of the world's poorest countries, and over a third of the population of the world as a whole. They are some of the most vulnerable people requiring protection in the face of environmental risks, in particular the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change and disasters. Their children will inherit the world we leave behind.

Through our education, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation programmes, we have seen children advancing the principles of sustainability in school, at social clubs, and at home – effecting real change in their communities, and their countries, right up to the global level³.

Education for sustainable development (ESD), as part of the formal curriculum as well as informal education activities, ensures that children are well informed about environmental degradation and environmental risks. With this knowledge and suitable encouragement young people are able to contribute fully to policymaking and action to address environment and development issues. ESD should be a central part of a strategy for sustainable development for the 21st century.

In order to secure a sustainable future for the world:

- **Education and awareness for sustainable development must be prioritised in planning and implementation for sustainable development.**
Education and awareness raising are the foundation of sustainability, safety and resilience-building in development. Through formal and informal education activities, children can raise one another's awareness and that of their duty-bearers: parents, teachers, community leaders, local governments. The principles and options for sustainable development will then be understood, supported and acted upon.
- **The active involvement of children and young people in planning, decision-making and implementation of sustainable development activities must be encouraged and supported, financially and technically, by national governments and the international system.**

¹ UNDESA Agenda 21, Chapter 25, 1992

² World Commission on Environment and Development, 'Our Common Future', 1987 (*The Brundtland Report*)

³ Including at the UNFCCC COP meetings and the UNISDR Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Girls and boys of all ages must be given equitable access to information and opportunities to meaningfully take part in ensuring sustainability in their futures, and for their children. Their unique insight and contribution are crucial, from the local level to the international; and their role as implementers of sustainable development activities is pivotal to the success of those activities.

It's already happening

Stepping up to the challenge, in 2011 around 2000 children from Africa, Asia and Latin America took part in two global consultations calling for the increased involvement of communities, in particular children, in decision making and action to identify and reduce environmental risks. One of these culminated in the production of the *Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction* which has been translated into multiple languages and dialects and has been signed up to by more than 200 representatives from civil society and 26 governments to date⁴.

In the Philippines, children made short films to successfully lobby their local government to ban chromite mining, which was poisoning a river and exacerbating floods.⁵ In Bihar, India, children across 50 villages played a major role in community risk mapping and leading village taskforces for flood risk reduction, including developing community plans for child protection in emergencies.⁶ Child-centred education training builds the skills of local governments to engage with children and introduces teachers to new participatory teaching methods, including for risk reduction lessons. In Laos, children themselves have reported higher school attendance after the teachers began to use new methods in other classes.

Children and young people are increasing their knowledge and stepping up their action for sustainable, resilient development in communities across Asia, Latin America and Africa. With regular, specific and systematic support ESD can continue to generate in this vast and relatively untapped stakeholder group the knowledge, motivation and wherewithal to achieve a sustainable world for the future.

It's already supported

Multiple international agreements and campaigns have already emphasised, acknowledged, and committed to the importance of children's role in building a sustainable future for the world. The outcome of the Rio+20 meeting should echo and advance Agenda 21: It must continue to advance education for sustainable development, and support children's meaningful participation in decision making which will affect them, and their world – and the future of both.

The outcome document from Rio+20, must put children and future generations at the heart of any new sustainable development initiatives, recognising their centrality to the creation and success of sustainability.

This submission is based upon and supported through several international agreements and campaigns, including

- **UNDESA Agenda 21**, chapters 3 (poverty), 24 (women), 25 (children and youth), 36 (education and awareness)
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, articles 3 (best interests of the child), 6 (survival and development), 12 (right to participate), 28 and 29 (right to education)
- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**, articles 4 (commitments), 6 (education and awareness)
- **Millennium Development Goals**, especially 1 (poverty), 2 (primary education), 4 (reduce child mortality), 7 (environmental sustainability)
- **Hyogo Framework for Action**, especially priorities 1 (governance), 3 (knowledge and education)
- **SAARC Declaration**, article III.B.4 (education, awareness and training for disaster management)
- **Incheon REMAP**, article I.E. (child-centred and people-centred education for risk reduction)
- **Beijing Declaration on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights**, paragraphs 15-17 (equity) and 18-20 (environment and disaster risk reduction)
- **Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction**, signed up to by 200+ individuals including representatives from civil society, the UN and 26 national Governments
- **UNISDR Step Up! for Disaster Risk Reduction** campaign, supported by UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon⁷

⁴ The Children's Charter is included with this submission as an annex. www.childreninachangingclimate.org. The other consultation was as part of the global *Views from the Frontline* survey www.globalnetwork-dr.org

⁵ 'The pock-marked face of caga-ut' is available to watch at www.youtube.com/watch?v=1upKBQ0tOeM

⁶ See www.savethechildren.in

⁷ See www.unisdr.org/2011/iddr for a youtube video of Ban Ki Moon's official statement