STATEMENT OF CHILD-CENTERED ORGANIZATIONS, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH

For the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 22-26 June, Bangkok, Thailand

We, children, adolescents, and youth, and child-centered organizations from countries in Asia and the Pacific, attending the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (6th AMCDRR):

Noting that Asia Pacific is the most hazard-prone region in the world. The majority of lives and livelihoods lost to disasters are concentrated here. While large-scale, high-impact disasters attract international attention, small-scale and high-frequent events also cause significant cumulative damage. The region is predicted to be one of the most affected by the projected impacts of climate change. Furthermore, exposure to hazards has multiplied as urban centers grow and people and economic activities expand into increasingly exposed and hazard-prone land.

Recognizing that Asia-Pacific consists of 750 million young people aged 15-24, which is 60% of the world’s youth population. In addition, persons under 14 years constitute 25.3 percent of the population in Asia-Pacific. Children in the region under the age of 18 make up more than 50% of those affected & are disproportionately affected by disasters. Children and youth are especially vulnerable in disaster situations and face particular risks to their health, psychosocial well-being, protection, access to education as well as nutrition. Women, girls and boys account for more than 75% of displaced persons following disasters.

Aware that disasters significantly threaten human lives and profoundly impact economic and social conditions of the poor whose rate of exposure and vulnerability is continually increasing. Asia-Pacific is paying a huge price for extreme weather events which are impacting negatively on the continent’s socio-economic development. Impacts inevitably reduce the resilience of the affected communities, forcing them to take risk management strategies that affect children’s development.

Noting that child-centered DRR places a child’s right to survival, protection, development and participation at the heart of development and humanitarian action. Child-centered, gender-specific and disability-sensitive interventions need to be mainstreamed into all community-based DRR interventions and into national and sub-national development policies, plans and programs of governments in the region, as well as donors and development partners.

Recognizing that child-centered disaster risk assessments are crucial in ensuring that the vulnerability of children to natural hazards are taken into consideration in national risk assessments and development plans. Age and gender specific vulnerability indicators combined with exposure to hazards need to be given priority to ensure survival, protection and well-being of children and access of basic social services for all.

Noting that implementing child-centered DRR will help promote the outcomes sought by the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the post-2015 Development Framework, contributing to the increased resilience of children and communities towards achieving sustainable development.

Recognizing the Children’s Charter on DRR (2011) developed by child-centered organizations in collaboration with 600 children across 21 countries established five priorities to advance DRR. Children identified measures including school safety and education continuity, child protection systems, safe community infrastructure, inclusion of the most vulnerable, and access to knowledge and information for children, girls and boys, as critical to reduce disaster risk.

Recognizing the Colombo Declaration on Youth (2014) developed by and for youth with over 600 global youth from 148 countries in collaboration with Ministers responsible for youth which established Environmental Protection, DRR and Youth-Centered Urbanization as a key thematic area. Youth resolved to call for clear targets and indicators focused on youth as a cross-cutting issue throughout the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Youth also identified priorities for action including climate change, intergenerational equity, a youth and children’s forum on DRR, youth participation and engagement, DRR education, safer schools and hospitals, urban planning, youth-friendly cities and sustainable production and consumption.

In view of the 6th AMCDRR, forums and consultations at national, regional, global or community levels with children and youth across 10 countries in Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam) were conducted between April-June 2014. Participating children and youth identified key recommendations for adoption by governments, civil society, academe and the private sector, and inclusion in the HFA 2 in order to achieve resilience for nations and communities.

1. Support and strengthen meaningful participation of children and youth in DRR and enable access to information
   - Establish a global and regional children, adolescents and youth network on DRR as an avenue to share experiences, broaden perspectives, and collectively engage governments and global and regional actors on DRR.
   - Establish at the national level a children, adolescents and youth council which will provide guidance and work with schools and education officials in strengthening DRR.
   - Institutionalize participation of children, adolescents and youth in community and school based DRR activities, including trainings, simulation exercises and other preparedness measures. At the commune/ward level, children, adolescents and youth must be represented in the disaster management committee.
   - Establish mechanisms and platforms whereby children, adolescents and youth can engage local government authorities and community associations and access relevant information, as well as share their knowledge to community members to contribute to awareness raising on DRR.
   - Ensure participation of children, adolescents and youth in the local and national government planning process and implementation on DRR initiatives
   - Develop child-and youth-centered risk assessment and advocate for the integration of a child and youth-centered approach in community-based DRR.
   - Conduct regular meetings on DRR in remote and highly vulnerable areas.
   - Include education on DRR in regional/local languages within the country to protect the most vulnerable children and communities.
   - Simplify DRR concepts to be understood easily especially for children, adolescents and youth.
   - Develop and disseminate DRR-related information through appropriate and accessible materials and media such as TV, FM radio, local newspapers, SMS, internet and social media to increase knowledge and understanding of households on DRR.
   - Develop youth internship programme in DRR-related organizations for the meaningful engagement of adolescents and youth.
   - Increase the engagement of adolescents and youth in preparedness, relief and recovery operations.
   - Support adolescents, youth and children to promote (internally and externally) inspiring practices, approaches, models and examples provided by themselves through social media and publications.

2. Ensure equity and increase access of children and youth and risk-prone households to quality basic social services
   - Provide health centers with adequate facilities and resources that can reach the remote and vulnerable areas of communities.
   - Make children’s health a priority. Provide child-friendly early detection of diseases, and provide recovery programs for children in safe places where they can play.
   - Provide mental health care for children and youth affected by disasters. Establish long-term programs and safe spaces to ensure that children’s mental health are taken cared of after the onslaught of disasters.
   - Increase access to adequate and nutritious food for risk-prone households before, during, and after disasters.
   - Ensure that disaster management authorities work on disaster risk reduction with ministries and departments in charge of child-facing social services, including ministries of education, child health programs, and social development initiatives, both at the national and local levels.

3. Build safe community infrastructures and ensure relief and reconstruction help to reduce future risks
   - Improve and ensure access to safe evacuation centers and facilities that are, for instance, sensitive to gender and disability.
     - Promote and build safe evacuation centers aside from schools.
     - Construct parks on high grounds so that it is easier for children to evacuate when hazards like floods, tsunamis and storm surges strike. Equip those parks with various play equipment and surround them with nature.
   - Provide what is rightfully due to the affected population and increase budget for response and recovery.
     - Relief and recovery must reach the most vulnerable, especially those from the most remote areas, regardless of their gender, disability, and ethnicity.
4. Make schools safe and improve infrastructure to ensure learning continuity
   **Construct safe learning facilities**
   - Conduct compulsory participatory risk assessments and strengthen land use planning and zoning to ensure schools are not located in areas that are hazard-prone or constructed in hazardous ways.
   - Strengthen the rebuilding and/or retrofitting of school infrastructure by improving building standards to provide complete and safe facilities.
   - Use schools as model institutions to pilot climate-smart building design, including low-energy approaches and hazard-proof water and sanitation facilities.
   **Integrate risk reduction and resilience education in the curriculum**
   - DRR training programs should be sensitive to children of different gender, age, and abilities and should be formalized as part of the Educational curriculum.
   - Establish children’s clubs in every school and support the implementation of DRR activities for and by the clubs.
   - Promote regular First Aid and rescue training for children and youth and accredit certifications to qualified youth instructors/trainers so that they can put what they have learned into practice in the field.

5. Children and youth protection must be a priority at all times and for all children regardless of backgrounds
   - Advocate for the rights and responsibilities of children, adolescents and youth in the context of disasters.
   - Develop and enforce policies and regulations on child protection before, during, and after disasters.
   - Protection for the most vulnerable e.g. children from poor families, the elderly, those with disability, must be ensured at all times regardless of age, gender, culture, religion, and ethnicity.
   - Recognize the special needs of young people, especially in developing countries, especially in Least Developing Countries, Land-Locked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States.

6. Promote environmental protection and management to reduce future disaster and climate change risk
   - Protect the environment and implement environmental laws to reduce the impacts of hazards and disasters. Activities include limiting the extraction of natural resources (stop mining, logging, deforestation, use of illegal fishing methods), proper waste disposal.
   - Organize children, adolescents and youth groups and increase budget to allow them to engage in environmental management activities to reduce disaster and climate change risk like tree planting, improving appearance of public parks, e.g. painting, waste segregation, and recycling.

7. Promote good governance on DRR
   - Do away with corruption. The system of mishandling money and corruption make it impossible to invest in DRR and make it more difficult to reach the most vulnerable.
   - Intensify fund sourcing and increase budget for DRR as well as DRR integration into development, and the construction of safe evacuation centers.
   - Encourage the development of basic guidelines and risk indicators to better inform child and youth specific policy and monitor progress.
Asian Coalition for School Safety