

New learning tool to arm children on disaster preparedness

NEW DELHI/BANGKOK, May 3, 2012 – Often seen as nothing more than victims in disasters, children in Asia actually have a vital role to play in community disaster risk reduction activities, according to a new climate change report by global child-focused organisations launched this week in Asia.

The 28-page report, called *Climate Extreme: How young people can respond to disasters in a changing world*, gives children in the developing world knowledge about how to prepare and reduce risks they could face when disasters impact their communities.

Presenting examples of crucial roles children have played in disaster preparedness, community education, hazard identification and in evacuation and first aid during disasters, the learning tool is a simplified version of the 594-page of Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX), produced by a panel of climate experts.

“Children and young people have the right to information that is tailored to them. Even complex scientific reports should be converted to child and youth appropriate versions, if the information is likely to affect them,” says Amalia Fawcett, the author of the youth-friendly version and Plan International Australia’s Senior Child Rights Specialist.

Climate Extreme converts complex but hugely important research into easy-to-understand information, which can arm young people with the knowledge they need to be a part of climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness, challenging them to be involved in disaster preparedness, Fawcett explains.

Many examples already exist across Asia.

Young people have lobbied their government to get their school moved out of the path of potential landslides in the Philippines. Girls and boys in Bangladesh have carried out household visits and community assemblies to share their skills and knowledge on early warning and household preparedness with others. A school safety program in India involves children in conducting risk and vulnerability assessments in over 2,000 schools, while in Thailand youth are actively engaged in revising community based disaster risk management plans in flood affected areas. In Vietnam, children are training their peers on how climate change could affect their communities.

Climate Extreme is based on the report that was prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), featuring the extent to which climate change is affecting the number and severity of weather related disasters, investigating the current and predicted changes in our climate, how these affect disasters and what communities, governments and the international community can do to reduce risks people face.

“The IPCC report is crucial to understanding the relationship between climate change and disasters. It will help communities, governments, scientists and agencies like Plan International prepare for

disasters and work out what should be done to reduce their impact," says Rohan Kent, the Disaster Manager for Plan International Australia.

Plan International, on behalf of the Children in a Changing Climate Coalition, took up the challenge of producing the simplified *Climate Extreme* version.

"The IPCC report is important to decisions about how to prepare for, and respond to, disasters in the context of climate change that we are very excited to be involved in making sure young people have access to some of the IPCC research. We are very appreciative that the Australian government supported us to do this." Kent said.

"Children are so often referred to as 'future decision makers' at best and 'victims of disasters' at worst. While we must be sure they are appropriately supported and protected during disasters, part of that should be to recognise their role in the present, rather than continually looking solely at their future potential. Children and young people can make a difference now; they are not just the future, but the present as well." Fawcett concludes.

Along with the IPCC report, *Climate Extreme* is launched in New Delhi on May 3 and Bangkok on May 4.

Notes to editor:

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a scientific body first established in 1988 by two United Nations organisations, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and later endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. Its mission is to provide comprehensive scientific assessments of current scientific, technical and socio-economic information worldwide about the risk of climate change caused by human activity, its potential environmental and socio-economic consequences, and possible options for adapting to these consequences or mitigating the effects. As such it produces regular reports, the latest of which, the 'Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation.'

Children in a Changing Climate is a coalition of leading child-focused research, development and humanitarian organisations each with a commitment to share knowledge, coordinate activities and work with children as agents of change. Members of the coalition include UNICEF, World Vision, Plan International, Save the Children and Institute for Development Studies.

Australian Aid (the disaster response arm of AusAID) funded the production of the child-friendly version.

For the full version of IPCC report, please click [here](#). For the child-friendly version, it's [here](#).

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