

PRESS RELEASE

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UNISDR SAYS THE YOUNG ARE THE LARGEST GROUP AFFECTED BY DISASTERS

GENEVA, 13 October 2011 – The UN office for disaster risk reduction, UNISDR, today marked International Disaster Reduction Day with a call for children and young people to be empowered and engaged in disaster risk reduction as the group most affected by disasters each year.

UNISDR estimates that every year over 100 million young people including children, are affected by disasters. Last year young people died in record numbers because of the Haiti earthquake which claimed 316,000 lives according to the Haitian government.

UNISDR Chief and Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, said: “This year we are issuing a call for everyone to ‘Step Up for Disaster Risk Reduction’ but especially children and young people who have such a special insight into how disasters disrupt their lives and the lives of their communities. We must get beyond perceptions of children as passive and subordinate to ensure they are active participants in decision-making and risk reduction activities.

“They can influence their communities to invest in safe schools and health facilities and take into account the special circumstances of children and other vulnerable groups when designing early warning systems and other projects which contribute to resilience in the face of disasters and climate change.”

At events around the world today and in the coming 12 months, UNISDR is working with its partners UNICEF, Plan, Save the Children and World Vision, to promote the new Children’s Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction which was developed through consultations with more than 600 children in 21 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The children identified five priorities for resilience:

- Schools must be safe and education must not be interrupted.
- Child protection must be a priority before, during and after a disaster to avoid threats such as child labour and trafficking.
- Children have the right to participate and to access the information they need in order to protect their communities as well as themselves from disaster risks and climate change.
- Children are sensitive to the erosion of investments in development infrastructure, particularly schools and health facilities and want infrastructure to be safe and well-located with good road access.
- Children are also concerned that special attention be paid to people who are vulnerable because of a range of factors including disability, age, gender, location and social status.

About UNISDR

UNISDR is the UN office dedicated to disaster risk reduction. It is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* which has been adopted by 168 countries and seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.” Over 130 countries now report on their disaster risk reduction efforts. The biennial Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction took place in May 2011 and was opened by the UN Secretary General. It attracted several Heads of State and over 2,600 delegates representing 168 governments, 25 inter-governmental organizations, 65 NGOs and other ISDR partners. UNISDR has facilitated the creation of 38 National Disaster Data Bases around the world as part of its on-going global effort to lead and convince governments and the private sector to invest in risk reduction and avoid recurrent disaster losses which waste development resources. It has also mobilised over 800 cities and local governments to take part in the World Disaster Risk Reduction Campaign, *Making Cities Resilient: My City is Getting Ready!* In early 2011, UNISDR supported the initiative by the President of the UN General Assembly to organize the first thematic debate on disaster risk reduction ever held in the UN General Assembly.

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