

» challenges

Newsletter on childhood and adolescence



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Children and disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean



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Editorial

Recent decades have seen a significant global increase in the occurrence of disasters, and Latin America and the Caribbean has been no exception. Today, natural and man-made disasters are considered to be social phenomena due to their impact on people's lives and the fact that there is scope for preventing and mitigating the damage they cause and thus reducing or at least controlling their effects. Households living in poverty are extremely vulnerable to disasters and are disproportionately exposed to their impacts, which have affected them increasingly and for longer and longer periods. Children are likelier to be poor than the population aged over 18, and therefore suffer more from the consequences of disasters. This constitutes a violation of their rights.

The main article in this newsletter looks in some detail at the social protection given to children when disasters occur. It highlights their particular vulnerability to disasters and the increase in the occurrence of these in recent times, describing the effects this has had on children. The article calls for social protection systems in the region's countries to be strengthened from a perspective of children's rights.

As usual, the article is supplemented by the views of some experts and the voices of children affected by an earthquake and tsunami. A number of interesting experiences relating to the link between disasters and the protection of children's rights in the region are also described. This is the first online version of the Challenges newsletter, and it includes audiovisual resources in addition to information on related publications and events.



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Social protection for children at times of disaster

Simone Cecchini and Guillermo Sunkel, Social Development Division of ECLAC
Alexandra Barrantes, international consultant

Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly those living in poverty, are highly vulnerable to disasters and have been disproportionately and increasingly affected by their impacts.

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Viewpoints

Peru: notes for reconstruction based on social policy

Mónica Rubio

Former Minister of Social Development and Inclusion of Peru

At the time of writing, Peru is suffering the effects of a natural disaster of unprecedented magnitude. What is known as the coastal El Niño has brought rain, flooding and landslides of mud and rock that have so far left 90 dead, around 20 missing and more than 120,000 other direct victims, with an estimated 800,000 people affected in total. With more than 160,000 homes affected and around 1,400 schools damaged, the human and economic costs of this phenomenon have been enormous.

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The unnatural consequence of natural disasters

MaryCatherine Arbour MD, MPH

Associate Physician at the Division of Global Health Equity Brigham and Women's Hospital Senior Research Associate at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

Disasters are uncertain events that lead to death and injury, damage and disruption. The immediate exposure to a disaster seems almost egalitarian: it can strike seemingly anywhere, and it is frightening for anyone who experiences it. Surviving the initial disaster can be unifying: in the days following the 2010 Chilean earthquake, in which 80% of the country's population were affected and 10% injured, strangers on the street shared stories of their moment-by-moment experiences, fears, losses and relief.

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The voice of children and adolescents



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What do children say after an earthquake and tsunami?

"I'm scared there may be another tremor or strong aftershocks."

boy, Talcahuano

"I find it hard to do my homework if the earth starts to quake."

girl, Talcahuano

"The sea washed my house away."

boy, Constitución

"My house was left leaning over after the earthquake, but we still live there."

boy, Talcahuano

"Hardly any buildings were left standing."

girl, Talcahuano

"We eat less now because we don't have a house and we have to save up for one."

boy, Talcahuano

"I can't have a shower because the earthquake made the shower stop working."

boy, Talcahuano

"We didn't have any water and couldn't cook anything."

boy, Constitución

"We made campfires outdoors. We'd put a pot on the fire and make food there."

boy, Talcahuano

"I lost all my toys. All that was saved was my bed."

boy, Constitución

"All that was saved was a Barbie doll that was my favourite."

girl, Constitución

Source: Cillero, Miguel, Carolina Díaz and Sergio Vivanco (2010), "Terremoto y maremoto en Chile: una visión desde los derechos de los niños afectados", Centre for Human Rights, Diego Portales University [online]
http://www.udp.cl/investigacion/repo_listado.asp?pagina=6

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Chile: a children's emergency support kit that is also fun

The Chile Crece Contigo (“Chile Grows with You”) subsystem of the Chilean Ministry of Social Development has put a number of measures in place to support people who lose all their belongings in a catastrophe.

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UNICEF Chile/ 2015/Álex Fuentes Catrín

A gaming application that teaches players how to protect themselves against natural disasters: Tanah – The Tsunami & Earthquake Fighter

A free gaming app has been developed as part of the “More education, less risk” project implemented by UNESCO in partnership with Save the Children and Plan International, with the support of the European Union’s Humanitarian Aid Office. It aims to teach children how to protect themselves against natural disasters.

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Boys and girls preparing for drought in Nicaragua

Did you know that...?

...half the people given shelter after the earthquake of 16 April 2016 in Ecuador were children?

Source: León, M. (2017), "Protección social de la niñez en el Ecuador", ECLAC project document.

...after Hurricane Matthew, which struck Haiti in October 2016, at least 716 schools were damaged, disrupting the education of 490,000 children?

Source: Otras Voces en Educación [online] <http://otrasvoceseneducacion.org/archivos/195956>

... after the 2010 earthquake, unwanted teenage pregnancy rates in Haitian camps were three times higher than the average urban rate prior to this event?

Source: Plan International, "Por ser niña: el estado mundial de las niñas 2013. El doble riesgo: Las adolescentes y los desastres" [online]
<https://scp.com.co/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Por-ser-nina-eleestado-mundial-de-las-ninas2013.pdf>

...the March 2017 floods in Peru affected more than 248,000 children?

Source: Save the Children [en línea] <http://www.savethechildren.org.pe/>

... as a result of the April 2016 earthquake, more than 120,000 Ecuadorian children's access to education was disrupted due to moderate or severe damage to schools?

Source: National Secretariat of Development and Planning of Ecuador, Evaluación de los costos de reconstrucción. Sismo en Ecuador, abril de 2016 [online]
https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/evaluacion_costos_de_la_reconstruccion_-_libro_completo_1.pdf

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The semester in the region

Mobile Learning Week 2017

Education in emergencies and crises

From 20 to 24 March 2017, a number of activities were carried out in Paris with the aim of strengthening inclusiveness in education, preserving the continuity of learning in conflict and disaster situations, opening up and enhancing learning opportunities for refugees and other displaced people, facilitating the integration of learners into new schools and communities while catalysing innovation in the education sector, and improving the impact of humanitarian interventions.

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Fourth International Congress and Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on Psychology in Emergencies and Disasters

This event was held in Santiago, Chile from 10 to 12 May 2017 and sought to bring together emergency professionals, experts and managers, first responders, academics and students. Working out of this field of psychology, the aim is to help form collaborative professional networks both within countries (especially those of Latin America and the Caribbean) and internationally and to share findings, experiences and contributions.

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2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

This international event was held in Cancún from 22 to 26 May to review global progress in implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. More than 5,000 participants were expected, including policymakers and disaster risk managers.

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Third International Conference on the Protection of Children (Proinfancia), 2017

This event was held in Havana, Cuba from 24 to 27 May 2017. The Conference was intended to enable specialists and researchers from different countries to meet and strengthen collaborative links in the search for solutions to issues surrounding the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents in their respective countries.

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Key documents



Thirsting for a future. Water and Children in a Changing Climate

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Child-Centered Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

[View publication »](#)



Child-centered disaster risk reduction: Contributing to resilient development

[View publication »](#)



The Challenges of Climate Change: Children on the Front Line

[View publication »](#)



Construyendo bases fuertes. Guía programática para la articulación del desarrollo de primera infancia y la reducción del riesgo de desastres

[View publication »](#)



Apoyo psicosocial en situaciones de emergencia y desastres para familias con niños y niñas entre 0 y 5 años. Orientaciones técnicas para equipos de salud, educación y redes Chile Crece Contigo

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Para reconstruir la vida de los niños y niñas. Guía para apoyar intervenciones psicosociales, en emergencias y desastres

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