



***Understanding children's risk and agency in urban areas  
for child-centred urban disaster risk reduction in Asia:  
Insights from Dhaka, **Kathmandu**, Manila and Jakarta***

Plan, IIED, ECO Nepal

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## Research Goal

The research aims to generate an empirical evidence base on children's risk and agency in urban areas that Plan International can use to inform the development of their Country Strategy Programmes (CSPs) and urban DRR programmes in Asia

## Four research questions

- *Which urban children are most at risk any why?*
- *What are the factors that underpin urban children's risk across the spectrum?*
- *How can urban children participate in DRR as agents of change and resilience, and what are barriers and challenges they face in urban areas?*
- *What the implications of this understanding for the development of child-centred urban DRR programmes?*

# Research Method

## Qualitative methods

- A total of **341** children participated in **16 focus groups** (four in each city), including **183** girls (or **53.7** per cent) and **158** boys (or **46.3** per cent) between the ages of 8 and 20, achieving a relatively even gender balance and broad age distribution.
- 3 children categories were targeted: street children, working children and squatter and 'slum' children.
- Key informant interviews: to engage policymakers from relevant government departments and practitioners from local, national and international CSOs and development agencies as well as donors. Respondents were selected based on stakeholder mapping reports developed by consultants in each country, resulting in a total of 34 interviews

## Literature review

Five locations in Kathmandu valley (VOC, Concern, CIWIN, Geneva School, YDRR)

66 Children

39 Boys

27 Girls

14 CSOs

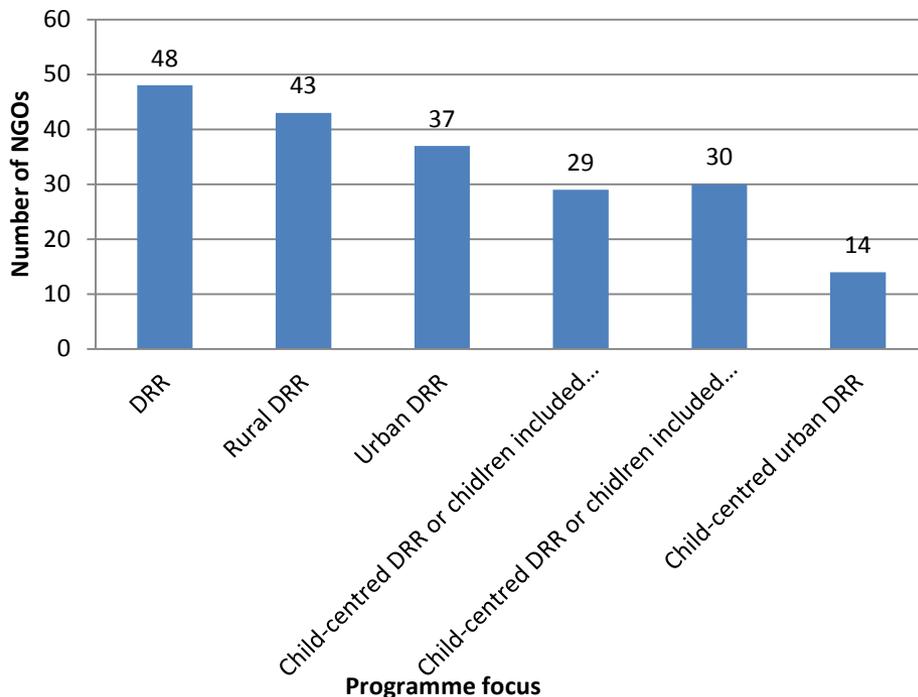
29 Agencies (19 Government and 10 donors)

# City Profiles: Kathmandu

<p><b>National socio-economic snapshot</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population in 2010: 26,846,016 (16.7% urban)</li> <li>• GDP growth rate in 2011: 3.9%</li> <li>• Per capita GDP 2008-2012: USD\$707</li> <li>• Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.25 a day (PPP) (% of population) in 2010: 24.8%</li> <li>• Gini-coefficient in 2010: 32.8</li> </ul>	<p><b>Demographic trends and projections in Kathmandu</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population in 2011: 1 million</li> <li>• Land area: 50.67 km<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Population density per km<sup>2</sup> in 2011: 19,735</li> <li>• Population growth rate 2010-2015: 4.1%</li> <li>• Estimated urban population by 2025: 1.8 million</li> </ul>	<p><b>Slum prevalence</b></p> <p>Percentage of population living in slums: Unknown due to a lack of data, but estimates suggest around 7%</p>	<p><b>Natural Hazards</b></p> <p><i>Slow on-set</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temperature increase</li> </ul> <p><i>Sudden on-set</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earthquake</li> <li>• Heat waves</li> <li>• Cold waves</li> <li>• Flooding</li> </ul>	<p><b>Human-induced hazards</b></p> <p><i>Sudden on-set</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building collapse</li> <li>• Fire</li> </ul>
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# Findings

*There is a growing number of NGOs that are initiating DRR programmes in urban areas, but this is relatively new territory for humanitarian practitioners who are largely accustomed to working in rural areas.*



# Children's ideas for urban DRR

## ***Risk communication and awareness raising***

- *Raise DRR awareness in communities through street dramas, singing, dancing, storytelling*
- *Use multi-media to disseminate messages to children and communities, particularly through the internet (including social media), radio and television*

## ***School safety and education***

- *Better integrate DRR into school curriculums*
- *Develop training programmes to make schools safe and to reduce their risk*

## ***Environmental protection***

- *Clean garbage from drains to prevent floods*
- *Develop better solid waste management services to ensure drains are not clogged and rivers are free to flow*
- *Plant vegetation to prevent landslides and riverbank erosion*

## ***Structural solutions***

- *Partner with governments to build infrastructure, such as drains and stormwater management systems*
- *Build and maintain good all-weather roads with drains and culverts*
- *Retrofit schools and workplaces to enhance resistance to building collapse, earthquakes and extreme weather events*
- *Ensure communities have fire breaks and wide roads to allow fire trucks to enter during emergencies*

## ***Governance***

- *Support a “hand-in-hand” philosophy for working in partnership with vulnerable groups, including children and youth*
- *Strengthen collaboration between vulnerable communities, government and civil society to address their needs and priorities as people (rather than international agencies) define them*

## Findings

*While a growing number of NGOs are initiating urban DRR programmes, these remain largely confined to preparedness, response and recovery*

*Few child-centred NGOs have urban DRR components. However, those that do tend to have limited coverage, indicating a significant programming gap*

*School-based disaster safety management programmes dominate child-centred urban DRR initiatives, but these tend to favour non-structural (i.e. 'software') activities due to the high costs of building retrofits*

## Thematic Conclusions

***Access to quality housing with adequate provision for basic infrastructure and services is a key determinant of child health and disaster resilience.*** Children are more dependent on protective infrastructure and services than other age groups due to their higher levels of susceptibility and vulnerability when exposed to disaster and climate impacts. Meaningful risk reduction will include improving the quality and resilience of shelter, which is often particularly poor in densely-settled urban areas.

## Thematic Conclusions

***There is a need for child-oriented NGOs wishing to address disaster risk in urban areas to expand their remit to advocacy to engaging with governments, particularly local authorities.***

Many of the drivers of risk for children are an outcome of the failure of basic services and infrastructure – which in urban areas are particularly important, and which are frequently within the remit of local governments.

Meaningful risk reduction must engage with these issues, rather than simply providing ‘coping’ mechanisms where these provisions fail.

## Thematic Conclusions

***There is a need to engage with local CBOs who work with the poorest and most vulnerable children, particularly those who live and work in squatter settlements with the most contested rights.*** These organizations are often rooted in the local contexts, strongly informed by local priorities, and able to effect bottom-up action. But they may not adequately take the particular risks and vulnerabilities of girls and boys into account in their activities.

## Thematic Conclusions

***While school-based disaster risk management programmes are relatively prevalent, they do not reach the poorest and most vulnerable children who often do not attend school because they are forced to work or because they cannot afford the additional costs of education.*** This is not to say that school-based programmes are ineffective, but it is to say that the depth of inequality and exclusion inherent in urban areas renders children living and working on the street particularly hard-to-reach.

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## Dealing with urban risk (*Terry Canon*)

- Can relevant, coherent “communities” be identified?
- Minimum conditions to make community work acceptable:
  - How long established?
  - Status - is it recognised as a settlement?
  - How stable is the population?
  - Any existing organisations as entry points/ partners?
  - How is safety and conflict?
- If not viable, what are other possible entry points?
  - Sectors, institutions
- Capacity building is crucial – training, socio-economic knowledge and skills

# *Priority action areas for reducing urban children's long-term risks*

## **Enhance access to quality housing and other buildings with adequate provision for basic infrastructure and services as key determinants of child health and disaster resilience**

- Children are more dependent on protective infrastructure and services than other age groups due to their higher levels of vulnerability and susceptibility when exposed to hazards.

## **Expand remit to advocating with local and national government institutions on behalf of children's rights to an adequate standard of living**

- Addressing the backlog of infrastructure and services will depend on the capacity of households, communities and local governments to act

## **Build capacity of families and communities to cope with shocks and stresses**

- 'Coping' should take on broader meaning in DRR to include the capacity of families to manage shocks and stresses without compromising the well-being of children

## **Collaborate with local CBOs engaged in community development and CBDRR**

- Community organization and action can motivate governments to fulfil their roles and responsibilities, while building the coping capacity of families

## **Foster shared planning processes between children and adults**

- Shared planning processes involving both children and adults have significant potential in community-driven processes, which are based on the principles of participation, inclusion and co-production

## **Design programmes that integrate children into community development and CBDRR planning and decision-making processes**

- Help enable children to participate in local level planning processes that are community-driven and sustainable

## **Target beneficiaries based on better understanding of the differentials in risk between high- and low-income children**

- Little intra-urban data exists that is sufficiently disaggregated by age, sex, income, disability, school attendance, among other important variables

## **Work with government and agencies to develop standardised data collection methods to facilitate aggregation and comparability**

- Use these methods to prioritise communities where the poorest and most vulnerable children live and work

## Rural context

- Defined (boundary)
- Simple social structure
- Memory passed on
- Knowledge of locality
- Knowledge of others
- Endemic power system
- Gender relations?
- Not so cash dependent

## Urban context

- Ill-defined boundary
- Complex social structure and web of power systems
- Lack of :
  - memory,
  - local knowledge,
  - knowledge of others
- Displaced people and migrants
- Different languages/ ethnicities
- “Unruly governance”
- Gender relations?
- Greater work intensity, travel
- Highly cash dependent

**Thank you**



**discussion**