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Children, participation and disasters in Europe: A poor record

*Israel Rodríguez-Giralt, Miriam Arenas
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Introduction

The role of children in disaster risk management (DRM) is an emerging subfield of disaster studies in which Peek et al (2018, 2019) have noted major empirical, theoretical and methodological advances in recent years. Such studies have helped scholars from disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, public health, geography or political science, to name just a few, understand, develop and expand how children and disasters interact with, affect and transform each other. The growth of this field coincides with, and has been encouraged by, two major policy pronouncements: the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) (OHCHR, 1989), which has clearly contributed to a more explicit discussion of children's rights in disaster situations (Hayward, 2012), and the inclusive and participatory turn promoted by the UN's *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (UNDRR, 2015). Accordingly, children are increasingly (and globally) engaged in participatory action projects that aim to enhance their strengths and build their personal and collective resilience (Zeng and Silverstein, 2011).

The main goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the work done in this area internationally, and particularly at the European level. We draw on the Scoping Review undertaken for the CUIDAR project, analysing 261 programmes, policies and practices developed in five EU countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK), and discuss how children and young people are currently involved in DRM. Specifically, we are interested in understanding what assumptions are made about children and young people in DRM, and how these assumptions affect and shape their participation.

Children's participation in disaster risk management

The interest in experiences of children in disaster situations goes back almost eight decades and has been consolidating and grown enormously in the last decade: more than half of the academic production on these topics has been produced since 2010 (Peek et al, 2018). This growing interest reflects, on the one hand, the impact of recent disasters, such as a series of earthquakes in Indonesia and the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), Hurricane Katrina (2005), the Christchurch earthquake (2011) and Japan's triple disaster (2011), as well as a growing concern about the consequences of the climate crisis. Undoubtedly, the pandemic caused by COVID-19 will also have profound effects on research in this field. However, this mounting interest reflects a growing concern about the disproportionate impact that disasters have on children and young people. Not precisely because this is a particularly physically or psychologically fragile group, but because it is a group frequently overlooked in disaster planning and management, a fact that greatly amplifies their vulnerability.

Throughout these decades, there are many disciplines, approaches and methods, not to mention advances in policies and practices, that have improved understanding of the relationship between children and disasters. It is not our intention to make an exhaustive review of all these contributions. There are interesting works already in this regard, the most prominent one surely being the recent review conducted by Peek et al (2018) (see also, Peek, 2008; Peek and Fothergill, 2008; Boon et al, 2011; Lopez et al, 2012; Johnson et al, 2014b; Tatebe and Mutch, 2015). In Peek et al (2018) the reader can find an analysis of the substantive contributions made by the academic world around this topic. Specifically, they identify up to six waves of studies, highly interlinked, on the experience or impact of disasters on children: works focused on mental health and behavioural impact; physical health and wellbeing; social vulnerability and socio-demographic characteristics; socio-ecological context; resilience, strengths and capacities; and finally, voices, perspectives and actions. Many of these perspectives, or thematic axes, as we said, have fed each other, configuring an emerging, dynamic and highly multidisciplinary field. In this sense, and despite the fact that mental health research predominates, a notable increase in research from the social sciences is becoming visible. This has favoured shifting the focus to topics such as the study of the perspectives, voices, experiences and rights of children and young people in disaster situations. Methodologically, the interest has moved towards more participatory, ethnographic and

longitudinal approaches. The CUIDAR project clearly builds on this last wave.

But what accounts for this growing interest in the voices, participation and agency of children and young people in disaster situations? Children and young people are not only an important population group (around 20–50% of the population, depending on the country); they are also a group particularly exposed to disaster risk. It is calculated, for example, that annually around 175 million girls and boys are affected by disasters (see Webster et al, 2009), which undoubtedly encourages research, plans and policies for and with this group. But there are more reasons. As the scientific literature shows, children and young people bring crucial skills, perspectives and knowledge to preparedness and resilience-building in their homes, schools and communities. Children often have the time, energy, creativity and capacity to contribute to disaster risk reduction (DRR), and their involvement in these efforts is becoming recognised by researchers and practitioners alike. Meaningful inclusion of children and young people is, without doubt, a way to improve their lives, but also their future prospects and those of their communities. A good guide in this regard is *Words into Action Guidelines: Engaging Children and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building* (UNDRR, 2020), recently published by the UN following up the guidelines of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (UNDRR, 2015). This contains abundant examples of how children and young people are already raising awareness of safety issues in schools, homes and in their communities.

We have compiled other available evidence in scientific papers published between 2000 and 2015 that directly explore or assess the ‘voice’ and ‘agency’ of children in disaster management. Rather than detail the process followed to review this literature, we simply mention that in total, we reviewed 94 scientific articles published in Oceania (40%), America (24%), Europe (22%), Asia (8%) and Africa (6%). These papers mostly addressed issues of education (the role of schools in disaster situations, educational tools for disaster risk and resilience education, preparedness and drill performance in schools), psychology (coping strategies, stress, emotional work, psychosocial interventions) and communication (risk and emergency communication). However, what is most relevant to this chapter is that this literature provides abundant arguments of the effectiveness of children and young people’s involvement in DRM.

For instance, this literature shows that children have strong potential for raising awareness, contextualising knowledge, using analytical

tools and prioritising actions. They are adept, for example, at creating educational murals, disseminating warnings, designing preparedness measures and planning to protect the environment, their families and the wider community (Finnis et al, 2010; Bolton et al, 2014; Ronan et al, 2015). They are also skilled at organising events such as drama, music, art exhibitions and community meetings to increase community knowledge, and even at building coalitions with parents and other stakeholders and advocating for risk reduction (Benson and Bugge, 2007; Back et al, 2009; Cumiskey et al, 2015). The literature also demonstrates the role children can play as first responders, engaging in search and rescue, providing food, and participating in other emergency response activities (Sunal and Coleman, 2013; Fernández and Shaw, 2015).

Children and young people can also utilise their strengths at analysing and communicating risk (Mitchell et al, 2008), sharing and contextualising knowledge, building credibility and trust, and persuading others to take action (such as using media, theatre, music). Their role as translators, mediators and brokers between generations and communities is highly important. For instance, Mitchell et al (2009) documented the role of young people from the Vietnamese community in New Orleans, following Hurricane Katrina, in assisting the evacuation and relief efforts, as they could translate key information (food distribution, access to relief supplies, etc) from formal English sources for their families. Marlowe and Bogen (2015) have provided evidence of how young people from refugee backgrounds acted as cultural brokers and mediators during the Canterbury earthquakes in New Zealand, ensuring their respective communities had access to disaster-related information and that this information was properly translated and interpreted. Children and young people can also be accomplished social networkers and community-builders, mobilising people and resources (Geiselhart et al, 2008), volunteering, raising funds and providing mutual help and peer counselling.

Younger children's involvement is also particularly relevant in making sense of disasters (Gawith, 2013; Mutch, 2013; Freeman et al, 2015). For instance, children's accounts have proved significant for raising subtle (Harwood et al, 2014) or neglected aspects of disaster situations (Bolton et al, 2014), such as who is affected by the events and how vulnerability is (re)produced during the recovery process (Walker et al, 2012). Bartlett (2008) reports how children brought fresh perspectives and practical common sense to discussions after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, contributing, together with parents, to designing spaces for

children to play and study, and for adult members to socialise and hold social celebrations. Children's significant participation in decision-making processes is also reported in Bangladesh (Martin, 2010; Mitchell and Borchard, 2014), where they devised important interventions such as tree planting, boat building and bridge construction.

Children's active participation also plays an important role in providing emotional processing opportunities for children and young people themselves (Mutch, 2013; Walker et al, 2012), enabling them to cope better with changes to their homes and to make decisions about repairs after a disaster (Martin, 2010; Walker et al, 2012; Whittle et al, 2012). Indeed, there is evidence that significant mental health and wellbeing benefits arise from this involvement (Anderson, 2005; Mitchell et al, 2009), for instance to prevent or manage post-traumatic stress symptoms (Lai et al, 2019).

It is argued that these positive outcomes would not be possible without the development and improvement of a wide and diverse set of methods to work for and with children in disaster risk reduction (DRR) (Seballos and Tanner, 2011; Haynes and Tanner, 2013). This has been noted particularly with the use of artistic and creative methods (Looman, 2006; Gangi and Barowsky, 2009) and with the introduction of more ethnographic and participatory approaches (Plan International, 2010; Mellor et al, 2014). It has been shown that the use of drawing (Sunal and Coleman, 2013; Izadkhah and Gibbs, 2015), mosaic making (Locke and Yates, 2015), comics (Sharpe and Izadkhah, 2014), and in particular 3D activities such as sand play, modelling and sculpture (Mort et al, 2016), facilitates deeper individual and group engagement in disaster preparation, rebuilding and recovery activities (Plan International, 2013; Shah, 2013). Similarly, the significance of telling stories is also important, particularly for the very young (Mutch, 2013), to come to terms with what has happened and share and create a common narrative that contributes to the recovery process and building resilience (Walker et al, 2012; Whittle et al, 2012). As was shown in the case of the 2010/11 earthquakes in Canterbury, New Zealand, with careful facilitation and support, children can draw on their personal experiences, even those that are more traumatic, in a constructive manner (Mutch, 2013). By recalling events in narrative or creative ways, designing and creating artwork and films, children were keen to talk about the vividness of their recall, their shocks about the deaths in the city and their sadness about the damage and changes in their locality, and yet they developed an ability to create some perspective between themselves and the events: 'These activities allowed them to individually and collaboratively draw their

experiences into coherent narratives which they absorb into their own personal histories and which support their return to emotional and psychological equilibrium' (Mutch, 2013: 452).

Similarly, social scientists at Lancaster University have researched the effects of floods on the lives of families and children in three major projects: Hull Floods Project (2007–09), Hull Children's Flood Project (2007–11) and 'Children, Young People and Flooding: Recovery and Resilience' (2014–16). These projects have generated videos, storyboards, games, narratives and models that serve to express the social effects that flooding and flooded homes have on children's lives. By creating a range of opportunities for these stories to be articulated, the Lancaster team was able to work with children on the next step: what needs to be done. In constructing their Flood Manifestos,² a set of practical demands for adult stakeholders at all levels of governance, children and young people moved to become policy actors, participants in decision-making, in civil society.

The role that schools can play in engaging children and young people in disaster management is also given importance in the literature. This includes providing activities to enable processing of emotions and enabling children to gain perspective and distance as part of their recovery from disaster events (Mutch and Gawith, 2014). School is not only where children can be educated and acquire knowledge, habits and skills (Gibbs et al, 2014a; Ronan et al, 2015), but also a place from which preventive culture can be shared and co-produced with the community (Finnis et al, 2004; UNISDR, 2005; Wisner, 2006; Tipler et al, 2010; Selby and Kagawa, 2012; Mutch, 2014). Teachers are seen to have a central role in community resilience, not only by restoring children's roles and routines, providing physical and emotional security (Barrett et al, 2008), helping them to find distraction and develop coping skills (O'Connor and Takahashi, 2014), but also by helping turn the school into a place for empowerment of the wider community (Tatebe and Mutch, 2015).

Similarly, some papers discuss the role and effectiveness of hazard education, particularly of the programmes that focus too heavily on preparedness (Gibbs et al, 2014b; Ronan et al, 2015) or on a single recent disaster, and when centred on hazard identification, emergency equipment and drills (Johnson et al, 2014a). In contrast, researchers advocate not only an increase in the number and frequency of activities (Ronan and Johnston, 2001; King and Tarrant, 2013), but also a diversification of disaster scenarios (Bird and Gísladóttir, 2014) to further embed preparedness and response skills (Martin, 2010). Johnson et al (2014b) have suggested that practice drills and other activities

should be held at unexpected times and locations, thereby requiring the ability to translate skills to less familiar situations. For instance, children who have previously been involved in hazard education also have more realistic perceptions of risk, reduced fears of hazards and increased knowledge of how to build preparedness, particularly when they receive constructive feedback during practices (Ronan and Johnston, 2001; Ronan et al, 2008, 2010, 2015). However, knowledge is still lacking on how and why educational programmes affect or reduce social vulnerability (Barrett et al, 2008; Gibbs et al, 2014b; Apronti et al, 2015), and how disaster education programmes facilitate children's roles in household readiness (Ronan et al, 2015) and their self-protective capacities or likelihood of being prepared for disasters in adulthood (Johnson et al, 2014a). In fact, the main problem identified by the literature is the minimal space given to the voices of children within education. There is still a tendency to use principals, teachers and parents as children's spokespersons.

However, this growing interest in increasing the participation of children and young people in DRM must also be approached carefully and viewed critically. For example, viewing this through a cultural lens might allow us to examine adult imaginaries of child/children when it comes to enabling such participation (Mitchell et al, 2009). As Nikku (2013) argues, children's participation also depends on how their rights and the very notion of childhood is constructed and interpreted. An inadequate concept of children's rights may create tokenistic and 'adultist' ideas about participation (Hart, 1992), and can undermine children's confidence and agency (Fernández and Shaw, 2013, 2014). To this extent, it is important to examine adult imaginaries of children and participation, overcoming the perception of children as a passive and homogeneous group. Similarly, it is crucial to make visible the importance of socio-economic (Grotberg, 2001) and cultural specificities (Sillah, 2015; Taylor and Peace, 2015), as well as gender, disability (Boon et al, 2011; Ronoh et al, 2015a, b), ethnic diversity (Bolton et al, 2014), religion (Haynes et al, 2010; Taylor and Peace, 2015) or location (Gaillard and Pangilinan, 2010), to name a few variables affecting and shaping children's experience and possibilities for participation. Disability and gender are of particular interest in disaster research. For instance, as Bartlett (2008) states, although girls may often appear more resilient, they tend to be more vulnerable when they are denied basic rights and opportunities to participate (see also Haynes et al, 2010). Those with mobility and cognitive disabilities are at particular risk in the event of a disaster (Boon et al, 2011).

The European experience

Although the review of the literature allowed us to discover interesting evidence from some European countries, the truth is that this was scarce, particularly in comparison with other countries affected by major disasters, such as the US, New Zealand, Australia (see Ronan and Towers, 2019), Japan, Bangladesh, Haiti, the Philippines, India, El Salvador or Indonesia. So, to shed some light on this, we also carried out a review of the five countries participating in the CUIDAR project: Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. This is based on documentary analysis supplemented by some focused interviews.

Scoping methodology

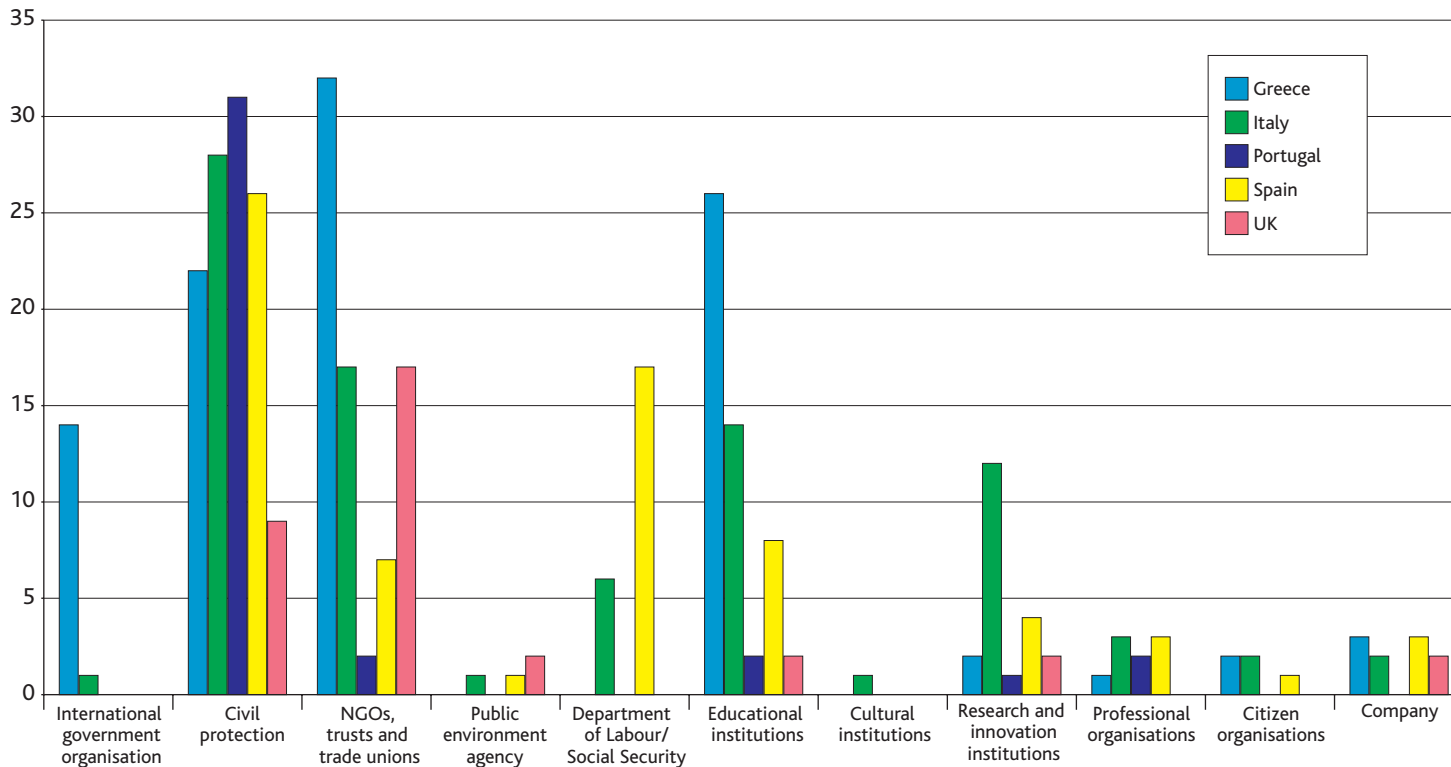
Scoping reviews are a relatively new type of literature analysis (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005). In contrast to systematic reviews and other methods, scoping reviews are particularly recommended to map existing literature – academic publishing, but also 'grey literature', such as research reports and policy documents – in fields that, like this one, are emergent, complex and diverse, and have yet to be comprehensively reviewed (see Peters et al, 2015). They are also useful for clarifying working definitions and conceptual boundaries of a topic or field, and identifying research and practice gaps, thereby creating recommendations for policy, practice and research.

We aimed to scope out and review what was known about the active role of children and young people in DRM programmes in the five participating European countries. To get started, each partner country first conducted an internet search to identify, collect and classify relevant documents (such as websites, documents, reports, guides, exercises, workshops and games). Altogether, we collected 750 documents and materials that matched the inclusion criteria.³ Second, the Scoping Review was used to identify the key 100 practitioners to be interviewed, working in education, civil protection, NGOs, research, industry or as members of citizen groups. These practitioners, experts and/or professionals were crucial for providing the information, confirmation and insights required for us to complete, polish and refine our searches (see Levac et al, 2010).

Main findings

Although there are some important differences between partner countries (see Figure 1.1), our Scoping Review identified that most of

Figure 1.1: Types of organisation running programmes, by country



the programmes were run by public administrations and implemented at a local level by regional and local civil protection agencies. According to some interviewees, this contributes to enhancing the local ownership of these actions, but it can also lead to fragmentation and lack of continuity at the national level. In Greece, for instance, the Institute of Geodynamics at the National Observatory of Athens has signed a Cooperation Agreement with schools to plan and implement activities and workshops for students and teachers about seismic risk. Thanks to this, educational visits can take place and schools can borrow seismological tools for educational purposes. The Greek National Archaeological Museum, the Fire Museum and the Natural History Museum of Lesvos also provide educational programmes for children to promote their awareness and preparedness.

We also identified involvement by NGOs in the development of DRM programmes and initiatives for children and young people. For instance, UNICEF has produced pedagogical materials (2016) to raise awareness about the refugee and financial crises among students in Greek and UK schools, promoting the creation of videos and games to make children aware of poverty, social exclusion and rights violations. Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) in the UK,⁴ such as Hampshire, have also included links to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, formerly UNISDR) simulation game 'Stop Disasters!'⁵ aimed at secondary school-age children and young people. The Lombardy Regional School of Civil Protection (Éupolis Lombardia) Italy and the General Secretariat for Civil Protection in Greece have used the game 'Let's learn to prevent disasters!' that was created by UNICEF and UNDRR for non-European contexts.

Other actors from the private sector, such as insurance organisations (particularly in the UK, Spain and Portugal), but professional associations too, are also playing an important role in the development of disaster education programmes. For instance, Pau Costa Foundation (an international platform on forest fire management) has developed MeFITu – *els boscos mediterrànics, el foc i tu* (Mediterranean forests, fire and you)⁶ – a project for schools close to zones affected by wildfires. The main aim of the programme is for children and young people (but also teachers and parents) to change their relationship with the scorched landscape by experiencing how woods regenerate following a wildfire, thus creating a culture of fire ecology.

The majority of initiatives collected and analysed as part of the Scoping Review were disaster risk education programmes (52.9%) and awareness and information campaigns (34.9%). We also identified a number of support programmes (11.9%) and reconstruction projects

(0.4%), where children and young people are specifically mentioned or addressed.

Educational programmes

These can be divided into two broad categories: safety education and disaster risk education. The former are more focused on security issues and intended to promote a culture of safety and reduce everyday risks, such as risky health behaviour and accidents in schools. Their general aim is to raise children and young people as responsible citizens endowed with safety skills. For instance, in Italy, we found programmes such as ‘Sicurezza in cattedra’ (‘Safety in learning’), an educational and management model developed in the Veneto region by SiRVeSS, the technical body responsible for the promotion of occupational safety in school, which aims to develop a culture of safety among children. In Portugal in 2006, the National Authority for Civil Protection launched the Civil Protection Clubs programme, to stimulate the creation of volunteer clubs in schools to encourage children and young people from 10 to 17 years old to become more active in risk reduction by providing information, training and developing activities. In Spain, almost every regional government has developed its own toolkit to foster a culture of safety among children and young people, such as ‘No badis!’ (Watch out!) in Catalonia; ‘¡A salvo!’ (Safe!) in Castilla León or ‘Prevebús Joven’ (‘Prevention Bus for Young People’) in Andalucía. The target ages for these educational programmes are broad: from online games designed to teach 4-year-old children to identify risky situations and danger signs, to role-playing games for 16- to 18-year-olds.

Disaster risk education programmes generally aim to foster an increased capacity among children and young people to protect themselves and understand and reduce the risk of disasters and emergencies. They are intended to teach children and young people the causes and consequences of disasters and emergencies, but also to foster preventative behaviour and attitudes and reduce impacts at school, home and in communities. They are designed to teach children about basic concepts, such as *disaster*, *risk* and *hazard*, and provide them with safety skills to identify, prevent and respond to specific threats and disasters. The majority of educational programmes are issued by civil protection authorities together with government departments of education to be implemented in schools.

In general, both types of programmes are largely textbook-based and implemented in schools as instructional activities. In most

countries, national civil protection authorities together with ministries of education publish pedagogical guidelines for teachers in primary and secondary schools to implement in the classroom. This is the case with the 'Programa de Educación para la Prevención en Centros Escolares' ('Disaster Prevention Programme for Schools') in Spain, or the 'Referencial de Educação para o Risco' ('Framework for Risk Education') in Portugal, or the 'Scuola Multimediale di Protezione Civile' ('Multimedia School of Civil Protection') in Italy.

These are guidance documents for the implementation of complementary curriculum components related to risk education in all levels of compulsory education. However, most of these programmes are unevenly implemented. Most countries (such as Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece) have legislation relating to safety measures in schools, including mandatory emergency plans, but only in Greece are textbooks on disaster and emergency education distributed to all children for use as the main educational material in every school. In the other CUIDAR countries, only in those schools with enough resources or with teachers sensitised to civil protection issues are such activities and textbooks used in the classroom. For instance, Education Scotland has issued its Ready Scotland⁷ website to bring emergency resilience into the curriculum, but this is not a mandatory requirement for schools.

These guidelines usually start with an introduction to the national system of civil protection that aims to help children and young people recognise civil protection practitioners or first responders in an emergency situation. Together with instructional guidelines on safety at school and home, these programmes usually include lectures and activities on specific disasters. Earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, volcanoes, bushfires and nuclear or radiation incidents are the emergencies most frequently covered. These also tend to include content that can be used and adapted by teachers and schools according to the age groups and subjects in their curricula. These teaching guidelines usually include creative activities such as the organisation of live shows, plays, drawing or art competitions, and often include hands-on activities in civil protection or fire and rescue service premises.

For instance, the LRF of the English counties Hampshire and the Isle of Wight developed 'Susie the childminder' books to help primary school children stay safe and prepare for emergencies.⁸ The stories can be read online and are followed by activities designed to be fun while reinforcing the key messages. Northamptonshire's LRF provides primary school-age children with a toy bear called Edward Paws, alongside fun activities to help them understand what they can do to

prepare themselves and their families for emergencies. Similarly, the Lisbon Civil Protection Service has a programme named 'Crescer na Segurança' ('Growing up in Safety') that includes a mock-up house, 'Casa do Tinoni' ('House of Tinoni'), where school groups learn through hands-on methods about different risks, including the two most significant in the city: earthquakes and urban fires.

In Italy, 'In vacanza con Sunny: una vera frana!' ('On holiday with Sunny: a real landslide!') aims to increase hydrogeological risk awareness and promote a culture of civil protection among primary school children through the creation of interactive learning material focused on the risk of landslides. The material includes a wide choice of adventures by a dog named Sunny, bringing in scientific experiments, games, models to be built, and brochures and guides, to promote civil protection in primary school curricula.

On geological risks we also find 'Sebastiano ti prende per mano'⁹ ('Sebastian takes you by the hand'), a project to enhance children's perception of natural hazards through the language of music and images. An associated CD with eight songs for children and teens has been produced, each with a specific geological risk theme and accompanied by animated video clips, and a theatre representation titled 'Sebastiano all'Opera'¹⁰ was performed by school-age dancers in Florence. For their participatory approach, it is also worth mentioning the Italian project 'Responsabili studenti sicurezza' ('Student representatives for safety') and the 'Vito Scafidi' prize.¹¹ The first is intended to train students as school safety managers, and the latter is a competition calling for innovative projects on school and community safety issues and active citizenship. These complementary materials and events are intended to familiarise children with the work of civil protection authorities and establish a relationship of trust from an early age (3–5 years).

Awareness campaigns

Children and young people are also addressed in a number of public awareness campaigns. Mostly they include self-protection recommendations, intended to raise awareness among the school community about how to identify risks, acquire safe practices and develop skills in civil protection and promote suitable attitudes and behaviours in cases of emergency. These are usually organised by the municipalities of partner countries, in coordination with local and regional civil protection authorities, and are legally enforced. The primary purpose of these campaigns, like educational programmes

in schools, is to foster safety and ensure children and young people cooperate in the effective implementation of emergency plans. These awareness campaigns are therefore strongly linked to emergency plans set at a regional level to reduce specific disaster risks, and include school and municipal emergency plans and safety recommendations for households. As is the case with educational programmes, awareness campaigns and support programmes are therefore highly specific to each country's principal threats.

In Italy, one of the main national prevention initiatives is the awareness campaign 'Io non rischio – Buone pratiche di protezione civile'¹² ('I don't take risks – Good civil protection practices'), organised in public spaces by Civil Protection Volunteers. In Portugal, a yearly exercise named 'A Terra Treme'¹³ ('When the Earth Shakes', based on the US model, 'ShakeOut') takes place each November, promoted by the Civil Protection Authority. Schools, businesses, NGOs and individual citizens are invited simultaneously to take protective measures against earthquakes. The 2015 exercise had thousands of registered participants, most of them in schools. In Spain, children and young people often set off fireworks when participating in 'correfocs' (parades that take place mostly in Catalonia, València and the Balearic Islands, in which people dress as devils, dance, light fireworks and run through the streets) for the Festival of Saint John and other popular summer events. At these times, regional and local civil protection authorities disseminate posters and comic books to alert parents and young people to the dangers of fireworks and provide specific instructions on safe handling.

Other initiatives

Children and young people are also the targets of support actions and programmes as part of disaster response and recovery processes. The majority of these are addressed to children and young people with the intention of mitigating emotional trauma, a highly significant problem acknowledged in most of the programmes. The majority are developed by NGOs in collaboration with research institutions and professional associations, usually of psychologists and social workers, and are shaped as toolkits to be implemented by practitioners, teachers and parents in the field.

For instance, in Spain, 'Érase una vez unos valientes!' ('Once upon a time there were the brave!') is a toolkit developed by the Spanish Association of Psychologists to help children cope with the Lorca earthquake (2011). The main goal of this resource is to help children

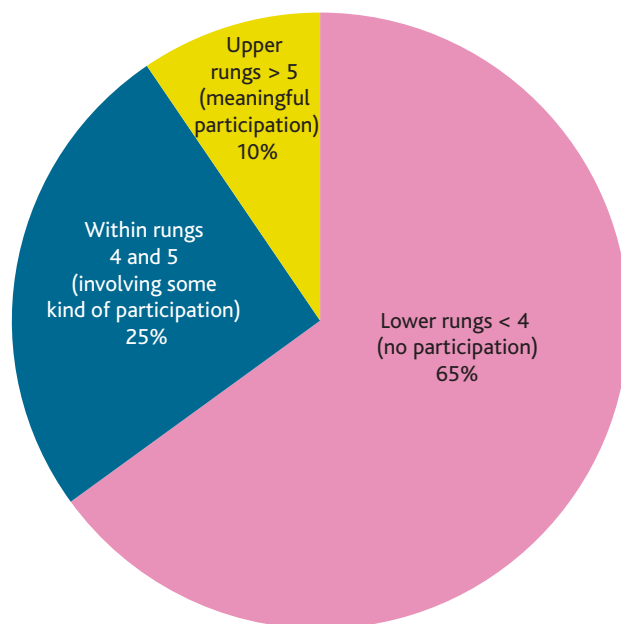
express and discuss their experiences and feelings. In the UK, the 'Journey of Hope' is a programme to help children and adults to cope with traumatic events. It was originally developed by Save the Children in the US after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and it has also recently been tested in Australia, Italy, Spain and New Zealand after extreme events ranging from disasters to violent incidents. In Portugal, CAPIC (Centro de Apoio Psicológico e Intervenção em Crise, Centre for Psychological Support and Crisis Intervention) is a unit of the National Institute of Medical Emergency that specialises in providing psychological support in crisis situations. Their interventions with children occur mainly in the event of wildfires and accidents. Educational materials created by CAPIC include a special backpack equipped with games and materials for drawing and play.

Children's participation within these programmes

Overall, of all the programmes and plans designed for children and young people we analysed, 35 per cent of them (91 out of 261) involved some kind of participation. According to Hart's 'ladder of participation' (Hart, 1992), this includes rung 4: 'Assigned but informed', rung 5: 'Consulted and informed'; rung 6: 'Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children'; rung 7: 'Child-initiated, and directed'; and rung 8: 'Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults'. Of those programmes considered participatory, however, only 28 per cent could be included as more meaningful forms of participation (25 out of 91, 9.5% of the total; see Figure 1.2), that is, within rungs 6 and 7, according to Hart's ladder. It is important to note that we didn't find any instance of programmes within rung 8.

In Spain, we discovered interesting examples of young people participating in recovery processes. The most prominent was 'Quan perdem la por' ('When fear vanishes'), a comic book created by a 15-year-old member of the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages). The story depicts the life of a family about to be evicted from their home, and aims to raise awareness about this problem from the perspective of a child. In the UK, the community work undertaken after the Buncefield industrial accident (2005–07) shows the importance of providing opportunities for children's voices to be heard in the response and recovery phases of a disaster. This project established a young people's forum, together with an art competition, to discuss progress on investigations into the emotional long-term impact of the event on children and families. In Italy, 'Vibrazioni'¹⁴ ('Vibrations') was a radio/podcast experiment about

Figure 1.2: Programmes, actions and plans involving adult-initiated shared decisions with young people, or led and initiated by children or young people



the 2009 L'Aquila earthquake disaster, presented through the voices of affected secondary school students and citizens. Also related to this disaster was a participatory project called 'Ricostuiamo l'Acquilone' ('Rebuild the Kite'), which involved children in the reconstruction of the school garden after the earthquake in L'Aquila. This case is especially interesting because the participation of children was not only therapeutic, helping children cope with the socio-psychological impact of the disaster; it also acknowledged them as social actors who could meaningfully contribute to community recovery.

Among the more participatory initiatives we see different formats. Most tend to address the consequences of specific disasters. Their main aim is to generate a space where the voices of children and young people can be heard, and to provide them with the opportunity to participate in the recovery process, either through the knowledge they gain or because they are actively involved in undertaking risk reduction and recovery activities. But we also identified a number of practices that attempt to foster a preventive culture, in which children and young people are encouraged to educate other members of the family or community. In some activities intended to teach risk reduction behaviour in everyday situations, children and young

people are depicted as responsible actors capable of keeping a watchful eye on their families and teaching them what to do when they are not following civil protection procedures. They are, in effect, turned into civil protection allies, charged with ensuring family safety plans are implemented correctly. Finally, we also identified a few projects in which children and young people participated as co-researchers investigating the causes and impacts of specific disasters before providing innovative solutions.

For example, in Italy, we came across two interesting examples of children and young people as co-researchers in risk reduction and recovery. The first is 'Laboratorio Emergenza' ('Emergency Lab'), a project for vocational school students aged from 14 to 18. Having analysed evacuation points in the earthquake emergency plans of 33 municipalities in the Terni province, they formulated proposals for their improvement and for conveying the municipal emergency plan to local people. The second is 'Radonmap',¹⁵ a school project in which an online map of the Monticello Brianza municipality was created to display levels of radon gas (prevalent in that area) found in school facilities and houses. Students supervised and carried out detection and monitoring of the gas, maintained the website, and delivered an information and awareness campaign to the local population.

In Spain, a competition organised by toy company LEGO® and the NGO FIRST LEGO League is a useful example of more meaningful kinds of participation. This annual international contest is designed to foster entrepreneurship and science skills in 10- to 16-year-olds. For the FIRST LEGO League in 2013, school teams were shown how to work together in an innovative way to prevent, respond to or recover from a specific disaster. For instance, in the Basque Country, a coastal, hilly and rainy region, the teams were trained by various experts in weather forecasting, sea storm alerts and fire detection systems, along with wildfire simulation, effective disaster communication, and the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in disaster management and flood response. The teams developed specific emergency plans, new alert systems, rescue robots, awareness campaigns and many other innovative actions or infrastructures that could improve disaster management. This contest was revelatory for the civil protection officers we interviewed, demonstrating to them the importance of children and young people's participation in disaster management, and their potential for improving emergency plans, prevention strategies and recovery. As some of the practitioners we consulted agreed, this is the path civil protection should follow, with children and young people involved as actors, devising their own solutions for managing a disaster

and, even more importantly, presenting these solutions as economic and social contributions to the community.

Our Scoping Review shows that despite the growing interest in children and young people's participation in disaster management in the five countries analysed, there is still too little space for a more participatory approach. Children are still rarely considered as a group with valuable experience and knowledge that should be taken into account in disaster management and risk reduction. They are frequently included among the most 'vulnerable groups' less able to help themselves in the circumstances of an emergency, and therefore requiring external assistance. Only rarely is any attempt made to clarify why children are vulnerable or what characteristics set them apart from other vulnerable groups. As a consequence, participation, if pursued, remains within a framework of rules and goals determined by 'experts' and other adults, or adopts a rather tokenistic approach.

Indeed, in the programmes and initiatives analysed there is little recognition of children and young people's diversity. Variables such as gender, social class and ethnicity are rarely considered. Disability is included in only a few examples collected from partner countries. For instance, in Greece, the Earthquake Planning and Protection Organisation (EPPPO) has produced guidelines for people with physical disabilities (aged 16–18): 'Proetoimazomai gia to seismo – Odigies gia atoma me kinitikes anapiries' ('Getting ready for an earthquake – Guidelines for people with motor disabilities'). The guidelines provided to individuals with mobility problems address barriers in relation to accessibility.

Overall, the main proxy we find to understand children's diversity is age. However, in terms of chronological age, most initiatives in partner countries are designed for children between 8 and 14 years old. Very young children are practically invisible to emergency planners and policy-makers because most actions are implemented in schools. At the other end, young people over 15 are deemed 'hard to reach' for emergency responders and not usually addressed as a specific age group. Indeed, in the EU project 'Public Empowerment Policies for Crisis Management' (PEP), researchers identified that among young people (aged 13–19) 'problems' included low levels of awareness, inaccurate perceptions and knowledge of disasters, and an inability to gauge which media stories to trust and which were rumours and misinformation. So again, we find narratives and imaginaries that need to be carefully examined as they probably underestimate children and young people's meaningful contribution to disaster management. Indeed, in most of the programmes analysed, children and young

people are seen as a homogeneous and intrinsically vulnerable group – as passive beneficiaries or recipients of care, policies or decisions. These imaginaries clearly inhibit their participation in public and political life and fail to consider this group as socially active and internally diverse. Researchers, policy-makers and practitioners must pay more attention to this evidence and work together to understand and reduce contemporary forms of adultism and ageism.

Challenges for increasing children's participation in disaster risk management in Europe

In summary, our Scoping Review reveals a growing interest in children and young people's participation in disaster management, particularly over the last decade. Among the factors explaining this shift is the influence of the UN, more recently through the Hyogo (2005) and Sendai (2015) international frameworks, alongside the impact of major disasters in the US, New Zealand and Australia, and evidence presented by important NGOs like Save the Children and Plan International from countries such as Bangladesh, Haiti, the Philippines, India, El Salvador or Indonesia. At the European level, however, there is still a significant lag behind the leading countries in this field, particularly New Zealand, Australia, the US and Japan.

We have seen that there is no clear national risk reduction strategy in the European countries analysed. A lack of child participation is also acknowledged by all representatives of civil protection and emergency planning, at all levels. There is still too little space for children and young people (only 20% of programmes) to participate in disaster management, and they are rarely considered a group with valuable experiences and knowledge that should be taken into account. Participation, if pursued, remains within a framework of rules and goals determined by experts and other adults. In this regard, the tokenistic views of most adults hinder participation and, although there is an increasing tendency to address this situation, children and young people are still underrepresented in decision-making processes.

One of the main challenges facing the countries analysed is how to achieve greater coordination between actors, particularly at the local, regional and national scale. This should involve administrations at different levels and the private sector, and most notably NGOs working in European countries, which have accumulated vast knowledge and experience in the field, although often in very different political, economic and cultural contexts (for instance, UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International and the International Red Cross).

Another important challenge is within education, and particularly the empowerment of teachers and schools, as recommended in the Sendai Framework. Schools emerge as focal points in the community post-disaster, as well as important sites of risk reduction learning and action. But it also seems important to extend these beyond schools and formal spaces of education, incorporating children and young people as partners, and encouraging them to take a more active role in the design, development and evaluation of disaster risk education programmes, awareness campaigns and emergency plans. Similarly, it is also important to encourage intergenerational learning, the use of new media to foster communication and informal learning and give more value to the local and grounded knowledge of children and young people, their families and communities. Further research is also needed into the possibilities for employing creative methods for exploring disaster recovery, resilience and planning in the context of children and young people, some of which are explored in Chapter 5.

Related to this, it seems crucial to move from 'hearing' to 'listening' to children. More actions, programmes and plans must be established to include children's voices in decision-making processes and contribute to community-based disaster management. Importantly, what seems to inhibit the participation of children and young people in this field are what we term adult imaginaries or prejudices about childhood, for example, where children and young people are seen as a homogeneous, passive, intrinsically vulnerable group. We have found examples of the agency and importance given to the role of children and young people in disaster situations, both in some of the examples reviewed in this chapter, and especially in the scientific literature. Researchers, policy-makers and practitioners could pay more attention to this evidence and work together to understand and reduce contemporary forms of adultism and ageism. Aligned with this, our Scoping Review also shows the importance of including longitudinal, intersectional and multidisciplinary perspectives on children and young people's engagements in disaster management, particularly to pay more attention to crucial variables such as age, gender, education, disability or culture.

The lack of children's participation may be shaped by the legislative frameworks of partner countries, which generally stipulate that the population should be informed and trained, but make no mention of participation by children and young people (Delicado et al, 2017). Similarly, there is a need for more research on how this interconnection among policy levels, actors and administrative scales might encourage or constrain children and young people's voices,

actions and engagement. As well as scientific research reports, it is also important to approach children and young people's participation from the perspective of children's rights.

Finally, to promote more significant changes in children and young people's resilience-building, Europe might learn from best practices in leading countries, such as Australia, New Zealand or the US, and encourage more innovative, participatory and comprehensive research. As the literature shows, meaningful participation is central to promote and enhance the resilience of children and young people to disasters and to enable disaster responders to meet children and young people's needs, rights and ideas more effectively. Progress in this field has already proved to be central to disaster studies in general, and to disaster policy and practice.

Notes

- ¹ Extensive support with compiling and summarising the programmes that were reviewed for this chapter was provided by: Maggie Mort, Marion Walker and Amanda Bingley (Lancaster University, UK); Anna Grisi, Flaminia Cordani and Federico Cellini (Save the Children Italy); Laurie Gayle (Save the Children UK); Magda Nikolarazi, Vassilios Argyropoulos and Christina Kofidou (University of Thessaly, Greece); Jussara Rowland, Ana Delicado and Susana Fonseca (University of Lisbon, Portugal).
- ² See <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/cyp-floodrecovery/publications/childrens-flood-manifestos/>
- ³ The inclusion criteria applied to the search was based on these principles: (1) the item had to be clearly oriented (partially or completely) to include/dialogue with education of children and/or young people in disaster or emergency management; (2) it could be in any of the countries' official languages; and (3) documents could be current or old. It is worth noting that the sample of documents collected cannot be representative of the total of programmes and actions of disaster management addressing children and young people in the partner countries. Indeed, search results can be influenced by the expertise and skills of each partner, the accessibility of documents and national civil protection procedure.
- ⁴ A Local Resilience Forum (LRF) is a multi-agency forum formed in a police area of the UK by key emergency responders and specific supporting agencies. It is a requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- ⁵ www.stopdisastersgame.org/
- ⁶ <https://mefitublog.wordpress.com/>
- ⁷ www.readyscotland.org/ready-government/education/
- ⁸ www.hants.gov.uk/community/susiethechildminder
- ⁹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=CatOe7cKPbk
- ¹⁰ www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaGDk-k4ztQ
- ¹¹ This prize is dedicated to the memory of a young student from Pinerolo (Turin) who died some years ago after the collapse of his classroom's suspended ceiling. It is awarded to the best degree theses of students from the faculties of architecture and engineering dealing with the structural safety of school buildings.
- ¹² www.iononrischio.it/

¹³ www.ateratreme.pt/

¹⁴ <https://vibrazioni.wordpress.com/>

¹⁵ www.radonmap.it/