

**Statement of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)  
Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO)**

**At the 2023 Americas + Caribbean VIII Platform for Disaster  
Risk Reduction**

**Punta del Este, Uruguay**

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Disasters continue to impact children now and in the longer term. UNDRR registered a total of 175 disasters in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region during 2020–2022. Of these, 88% have meteorological, climatological, and hydrological origins. These hazards accounted for 40% of recorded disaster-related deaths and 71% of the economic losses<sup>1</sup>. Achieving the goals of the Sendai Framework by 2030 requires continuous efforts to strengthen Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) systems through the joint efforts and coordination of all stakeholders.

Not only the number of disasters is increasing, but also risks are becoming more frequent. They are exacerbated by population dynamics, inadequate risk governance, and the accelerating climate, environment, migration, and pollution crisis. Disaster risk reduction, along with the improvement of social services like health care, child protection, education, agricultural productivity, and social safety nets, are keyways to build a more resilient and inclusive economy.

Children are physiologically, economically, and environmentally more exposed to the impacts of disasters and less likely to survive them. UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (LACRO) is committed to continuing to build resilience in the region; we encourage you all to target and increase regional efforts on the most marginalized and at-risk children and young people, often in remote, fragile, affected, and risk-prone areas.

All States must demand and guarantee the right to education. However, during disasters, this right is forgotten because of the urgency. On many occasions, it is not part of the humanitarian preparedness and response; education is key to all humanitarian action. States must ensure, respect, protect and fulfill the right to education, even in emergencies and humanitarian crises.

It is essential to recognize the role of education in disaster risk reduction. Education provides protection, saves lives, creates knowledge, sustains communities, and strengthens resilience and recovery capacity. UNICEF LACRO calls to increase

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<sup>1</sup> WMO, State of the Climate in Latin America and the Caribbean 2021, pg. 27

investment in developing strategies that promote learning and capacity building to enable educational communities to prevent and reduce the effects of a disaster. A prepared community will be able to recover more quickly and effectively in the event of a disaster.

In addition, disasters expose inequalities in natural and human-managed systems. They disproportionately affect poor and marginalized communities, including ethnic and racial minorities, migrants, people with disabilities and indigenous people, women, and children. Therefore, UNICEF LACRO calls to continue working with partners to integrate child centered DRR into development programs, to strengthen individual and community resilience while helping children and young people, racial minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, indigenous people, and women from the LAC region to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to survive, grow and thrive.

In this sense, UNICEF LACRO calls on States to continue strengthening preparedness and response to national child protection systems that can prevent and respond to child protection concerns at all phases of humanitarian action. In particular, to establish effective mechanisms to prevent and respond to child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence during disasters.

It is a high priority to improve DRR through the collaborative development and use of evidence with age and sex-disaggregated data on open-access platforms that enable informed decisions. UNICEF LACRO will continue to contribute through collaboration with partners and direct support, including, for example, developing subnational risk information for the Index for Risk Management (INFORM)<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, we should not forget that *“Children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula,”* as stated in the Sendai Framework.<sup>3</sup> Children and youth have an important role to play in reducing risk; they have proven to be capable of managing hazards with innovative solutions, including mapping hazards with technological tools, identifying those people most at risk, advocating for change, and playing a more significant role in the development of local, subnational, and national plans and processes.

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<sup>2</sup> INFORM methodology: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Methodology#:~:text=The%20INFORM%20Risk%20model%20is,lack%20of%20coping%20capacity%20dimensions>.

<sup>3</sup> Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015–2030. In: UN world conference on disaster risk reduction, 2015, Role of Stakeholders, 36(ii), March 14–18, Sendai, Japan. Geneva: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; 2015. Available: [http://www.wcdrr.org/uploads/Sendai\\_Framework\\_for\\_Disaster\\_Risk\\_Reduction\\_2015-2030.pdf](http://www.wcdrr.org/uploads/Sendai_Framework_for_Disaster_Risk_Reduction_2015-2030.pdf).