Dialogues with Children, Mutual Learning Exercises and National Policy Debates

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Introduction

Addressing disaster risk with a young audience poses particular challenges. As seen in the previous chapter, although the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (UNDRR, 2015) underlines the need to include children and young people as active participants in disaster risk reduction (DRR), governments and practitioners are often reluctant to engage young people in matters that may cause them distress or be above their perceived level of competency. So, with a few exceptions, children and young people are virtually invisible as active, engaged participants in national and international emergency planning processes for disasters (Anderson, 2002; Deeming et al, 2011; Walker et al, 2012, Mort et al, 2018b). Studies have shown that when they are mentioned, they are positioned as vulnerable recipients of aid and consequently problematic for emergency planners (Mellor et al, 2014). Yet understanding children’s perspectives has been demonstrated, by organisations such as Save the Children, to be a vital part of building resilience. The 1990 United Nations Convention on Children’s Rights states that children are community members and citizens in their own right. When it comes to disasters, they have the potential to play an important role in shaping more effective responses at local and national levels (Save the Children, 2011). Most studies of hazards and disasters fail to recognise the role of children and young people as social actors, who are attuned to cultural differences in their community and possess specific knowledge of their local area, knowledge which is shaped by age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic class, disability and educational opportunities (Peek, 2008; Wisner, 2006; Walker et al, 2012).
Putting children’s perspectives into planning and practice in the disaster context, embedding these more widely across European states and regions, was consequently the focus of CUIDAR. Our premise was the need to develop and embed participatory pathways to enable children from all backgrounds and abilities to articulate their experiences, contribute ideas and shape disaster risk policies, plans and procedures with relevant agencies and adults. The exclusion of children and young people’s perspectives from disaster management practice is particularly problematic given the increasing policy emphasis on building individual and community resilience for coping and responding to hazards and disasters. Building effective participatory models for young people’s involvement in disaster planning and policy also opens up opportunities for their involvement across age, gender, social and cultural background and inclusion of children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties (Larkins et al., 2014).

But how can we discuss disasters with children without scaring them? How can we elicit their perspectives on safety and risk, on vulnerability and resilience, if these concepts can be unfamiliar to them? Even though many children would have experienced various forms of hardship, if not disaster, these experiences are often overlooked. How do we support them to interact with adult decision-makers on a level playing field, and avoid the risk of them being lectured to?

To address these questions, CUIDAR created a methodological three-pronged approach to be carried out in the five participating countries. Each stage fed into the next, creating a cohesive methodology, systematically evaluated, that consistently engaged children and adults in a common pursuit of co-created knowledge. Rejecting a one-size-fits-all approach, local teams had the opportunity to interpret the CUIDAR guidelines and develop their own activities. The activities had to be tailored to children and young people of different ages, from different cultures, with varying levels of direct experience with hazards and disasters. They also had to be tailored to ensure the inclusion of children and young people with special needs. The distinct cultures of adult stakeholders also had to be considered and accommodated. Our approach had to be flexible enough to address the local risks children identified, and to varied project settings such as schools, youth groups and community centres.

CUIDAR’s three steps consisted of:

- **Dialogues with Children and Young People** to understand their perceptions of risk, strengthen their resilience by raising their awareness of the available resources in emergencies and empower
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them to communicate their perceptions, priorities and needs before, during and after disasters to practitioners and policy-makers.

- **Mutual Learning Exercises** with children, young people, practitioners and policy-makers to raise awareness and influence local disaster management policies and plans to include the particular needs and capacities of children and young people.

- **National Policy Debates** with decision-makers to communicate the needs, priorities and capacities of children and young people before, during and after disasters and to influence policy and practice.

This chapter explains these three steps: their aims and guidelines, how they were put into practice in different locations and the evaluation strategies we followed. More detailed discussion on the tools and activities involved are given in Chapter 5. For the findings achieved through these endeavours, see Chapter 3.

**Dialogues with Children**

These were structured around a dedicated consultation template, designed by Save the Children Italy, to achieve four main objectives:

- Enhance children’s awareness of their rights (including their right to participate in matters that concern them) and their knowledge of disaster risk and disaster management.

- Build children’s skills to analyse and monitor the various dimensions of disaster risks – including hazard exposure, vulnerabilities, resilience and capacities – in their communities.

- Increase children’s opportunities to lead and engage in DRR actions and to initiate and lead such actions in with their communities.

- Provide a space for children’s voices, supporting them to contribute their DRR perspectives in their communities and advocate for their own needs and priorities.

The guidelines for the Dialogues were designed to be flexible and adaptable for each partner country context, and using the most relevant national and international resources on children’s participation, DRR education and child-centred practice, some of which were identified during the Scoping Review (see Chapter 1). The Dialogues also drew inspiration from the abundant literature, toolkits and guidelines on good practice in consultation with children (Madden, 2001; Save the Children, 2003; de Rijk et al, 2005), in disaster risk management (DRM) in schools (NCEF, 2005; UNISDR, 2007; Educating NZ and
CDEM, 2009; IFC, 2010) and on the involvement of children in risk reduction and response (Benson and Bugge, 2007; Luneta and Tao, 2007; Plan International, 2010a, b; Plan International and UK Aid, 2015; Towers et al, 2015).

While adapting the guidelines for each country, partners also drew on other relevant sources. In Portugal, for instance, the Framework for Education on Risk (Saúde et al, 2015), the Manual on School Safety, Users Manual, and Security and Maintenance of Schools (ME, 2003) and the Prevention and Emergency Plan for Schools (Lencastre and Pimentel, 2005) were used. In Spain, the team devised the content of the Dialogues based on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for children (Kearney, 2015), on Save the Children’s (2010) Child-Led Disaster Risk Reduction in Schools and Communities and Plan International’s Toolkit (2010a). In Greece, the team worked with children with sensory disabilities (that is, children with vision disabilities and multiple disabilities, children who were deaf and hard of hearing children who also had additional disabilities), and also with very young children. A range of theoretical principles was used in relation to the access of children with sensory disabilities and DRR (Nikolaraizi et al, 2016a; Nikolaraizi et al, under review).

We worked from the premise that children’s participation should be a process rather than an event or a one-off activity. Each of the three sections included participatory games and actions to enable children to move from one stage to the next (see Chapter 5 for examples). In this way, the children would have the opportunity to develop new skills, increase their confidence and knowledge and see that their views were valued and respected. Participation is about having the opportunity to express a view, influence decision-making and achieve change. Children’s participation is their informed and willing involvement, including the most marginalised and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them either directly or indirectly. CUIDAR worked to create a foundation for meaningful, ethical and safe participation for children in disaster management.

**Dialogues: targets, contexts and numbers**

In all countries, much attention was given to recruiting children located in areas at risk from hazards or areas that had been affected by disasters in the last decade. Save the Children Italy identified youth groups based on their existing contacts in areas of high risk or social marginalisation. In Greece, as the specific aim was to involve children with sensory disabilities, particular schools were selected on that basis. The Scoping
Review (see Chapter 1) enabled CUIDAR partners to better understand how DRR policies were implemented in their countries and the role of different organisations involved in disaster management, and helped us to identify groups to invite to join the Dialogues.

As shown below (see Figure 2.1), we worked with a total of 552 children and young people in the five countries (63 in Greece, 59 in Italy, 177 in Portugal, 85 in Spain and 168 in the UK) and all the groups were gender balanced with the exception of Italy, where participants were mainly girls. This is probably because the Italian CUIDAR Dialogues took place within informal youth groups and not school classes that are usually gender balanced. According to the 2018 Flash Eurobarometer on Youth (EC, 2018), on average in Europe boys (21%) are more likely than girls (18%) to attend youth clubs, but in Italy that trend is reversed (30% of girls and 25% of boys).

Our range of participants took into account cultural diversity and varied cultural and socio-economic contexts such as areas of both high and low levels of deprivation and social exclusion, urban, coastal and rural areas. In some sites, groups included migrant children, children from minority ethnic groups and disabled children. We took into account that while children have generally been excluded from disaster and emergency management practices and processes, there are additional factors of exclusion. When faced with mixed groups, the facilitators took great care to show respect to all children, and to figure out ways to draw in underprivileged children and affirm their thoughts and opinions. For this reason, CUIDAR staff developed partnerships with local specialised trainers and organisations that have strong relationships with children with special needs.

The Dialogues addressed a diversified set of risks prioritized by the children in the different towns and cities, ranging from ‘natural’ hazards (earthquakes, floods, cold waves, storms, forest fires) to more obviously human-induced risk (industrial accidents, chemical risks) (see Figure 2.2).

The three main age groups were children aged 6–11, 11–14 and 14–18, and the majority of Dialogues took place within school settings (27) and in some cases local youth groups (6). The main difference in working in these two settings derived from the differing perceptions of children’s capacities and potential, and on ways to design activities depending on the participant’s age. While at school, children’s capacities, and views about their involvement, were shaped by expectations of their particular year group, so activities and outputs were designed and judged accordingly. Within the more informal setting of a youth group, age itself was not necessarily going to limit
Figure 2.1: Children participating per country and gender breakdown
Figure 2.2: Risks prioritised by children in the different cities involved
the design of activities. Children are not a homogenous group and their age cannot be the only factor to consider in determining the involvement they should have in matters affecting them. Each child’s level of competency also depends on a variety of other factors – for example, the environment or culture they were brought up in, their access to education, level of maturity, and their physical and mental wellbeing (Save the Children, 2010).

Context and target group diversity, some examples of Dialogue groups

Portugal
After conducting pilot Dialogues in Lisbon, two of the cities identified were locations where in the past, and more recently, disasters have resulted in fatalities. Loures, a town on the outskirts of Lisbon with 27,769 inhabitants, is prone to flooding. The last significant flooding event occurred in 2008, although major floods that occurred in the 1960s still echo in the memory of Loures’ citizens, due to a high number of fatalities. The second city, Albufeira, is a coastal city in the Algarve with about 13,646 inhabitants, many of whom are recent migrants. However, the city doubles its population in the summer months due to tourism and holiday homes. Albufeira is prone to coastal erosion resulting in the collapse of cliffs onto beaches and flooding – events that occurred in 2009 and 2015 with several fatalities. The participating children in both cities included migrant children descended from Roma families and migrants from Bulgaria, South Africa, Cape Verde and Brazil.

UK
The Dialogues were run mainly in areas of high deprivation with high poverty rates, and with marginalised or socially excluded groups in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England. For example, in Glasgow children who participated in the project were exclusively migrant children from Slovakia and Romania. Three of the nine groups participating were from areas affected by floods in the last decade, and two groups included a high percentage of children with English as a second language.

Spain
The Dialogues took place in diverse locations. Ciutat Meridiana in Barcelona gained public attention as the neighbourhood where the highest numbers of foreclosures and housing evictions in Spain have taken place. But the neighbourhood is also known for creating several community initiatives to counteract the effects of the economic crisis. Gandesa is a mostly rural community, recognised as the ‘Forestry City of 2016’, for hosting several initiatives to raise awareness about wildfires.
Sant Celoni is the biggest town in Baix Montseny, the second largest chemical industrial park of Catalonia. Young people, like most of the residents, are used to being involved in tests and simulations of chemical risk preparedness and prevention plans. The town has also experienced accidents, the most significant in 1996 and 2008, both relating to chlorine leaks. Finally, a strong earthquake hit Lorca (measured at 5.1 on the Richter scale) in 2011, which left nine dead and caused massive amounts of damage.

**Greece**

The research team used its expertise in children’s accessibility and disability issues to stage the Dialogues with Children with and without disabilities. These involved children with vision disabilities, children who were deaf or hard of hearing and others who had additional disabilities. In addition, these children came from different ethnic backgrounds, and the Dialogues took place in three cities: Athens, Thessaloniki and Volos.

The Dialogues involved groups of between 5 and 30 children. Larger groups can potentially be more difficult to facilitate and to foster genuine participation. The schools and youth groups allotted varying amounts of time to the CUIDAR partners so that the Dialogues ranged between 4 to 30 hours in total.

The Dialogues were facilitated by a range of actors, depending on local partner needs. In many cases CUIDAR teams needed to play both the role of educator and facilitator: introducing ideas around DRR, building the children’s capacities in DRR skills and tools, and facilitating discussions among the children to allow their opinions and perspectives to emerge clearly and freely. The ‘Ethics and Safeguarding Checklist’ circulated among partners along with the ‘Consultation Guidelines’ recommended that CUIDAR project teams who had no experience of DRR concepts and participatory methods should receive training in facilitation of groups, or trained personnel should be hired. Save the Children provided training to CUIDAR staff during one of the project meetings.

Across almost all sites in the project, a minimum of two facilitators who complemented each other in these areas of expertise, namely DRR or participatory methods, co-facilitated the Dialogues, ensuring that child protection standards were met throughout the process. Where that was not possible, CUIDAR staff co-facilitated the Dialogues alongside school teachers. Interestingly, however, some teachers we encountered were not used to participatory ways of working, preferring a teacher-centred model.
Dialogue facilitation teams: some examples

CUIDAR project staff
In some cases team members ran the Dialogues. They drew on their backgrounds in sociology, education, arts or related fields, and were experienced in working with young people, through research activities, teaching classes or facilitating workshops in informal contexts. Consistent involvement of CUIDAR teams ensured a smooth integration between the different stages of the project, keeping a strong line connecting the project, and ensuring that all feedback from children was collected. It also ensured that adaptations could be made quickly (for instance, adapting activities to the low literacy levels of some children).

Teacher facilitation or co-facilitation
In some countries, especially within the school context, Dialogues were run or co-facilitated with teachers. In Greece in particular, where the workshops involved children with sensory disabilities, qualified teachers who had expertise and knowledge regarding the learning needs of the children had a central role in the workshops (Nikolaraizi et al, under review). On the other hand, we found that where Dialogues with Children with no special needs were co-facilitated with the teachers, the children were more reluctant to give their opinions and to participate actively. In some cases, the role of the teachers was mainly a secondary role, based on setting and maintaining limits for children (for example, to quieten the class) and they generally did not get involved in the participative dynamics. Facilitation by teachers can be more effective if teachers are involved in the session planning and methodology design, and when they fully understand and agree on participative approaches, but this is sometimes difficult to achieve due to the limited time that teachers are often able to give to extra-curricular projects.

Other actors
Depending on local circumstances, other actors took part in the Dialogue provision to share their knowledge on specific topics or to facilitate specific activities with children. In some cases, ‘local experts’ were invited, such as older people or people with intimate knowledge of the locality. Such people helped the children gather collective memories about disasters and significant events that had happened in the city or neighbourhood. For instance, in Barcelona the team invited a social activist from the neighbourhood, who kept a register of relevant past events, and who helped the children build a chronology of weather events and other ‘disasters’ in that area: fires, floods, rat infestations, gales, snow, etc.

Other actors that were invited in many partner countries were civil protection authorities or staff, firefighters, rescuers, ambulance drivers and so on to talk with
children about DRR concepts or what to do in case of disasters. For instance, in Loures (Portugal) the primary school children had a visit from Pedro Vieira (see Figure 2.3), a voluntary firefighter and member of the Civil Protection Service, who discussed what to do when floods occur, how they evacuate people in hazardous areas and rescue those already affected, showing on the map the areas more prone to flooding. He also explained the roles of other civil protection actors, the importance of communication during an emergency, and how all citizens are part of civil protection.

Not-for-profit environmental organisations and community-led associations also shared their expertise about specific topics, especially when children were prioritising risks. For instance, in Glasgow (UK), the children chose to request input from Govanhill Baths (a community-led organisation) and Glasgow Housing Association Community Hub. In Greece, the children visited museums, including the Thessaloniki Science Centre and Technology Museum, the Museum of Emotions and the Museum of Fire in Athens, and engaged with museum staff, asking questions and participating in educational programmes.

The children met these actors either at school or in workplaces, contacting professionals who helped them design and build their communication tools such as graphic designers, professional storytellers, actors, video makers, etc.

Figure 2.3: Local firefighter and civil protection officer at the Dialogue in Loures, Portugal
While including such external actors in the Dialogues was very successful, it is important that they were made aware of CUIDAR’s aims and approach in order to adhere to its participatory nature. In addition, experts might have found that their role in this project was demanding in terms of organisation, preparation, management and follow-up.

**Children’s co-facilitation**

Children and young people make great facilitators with the right support and preparation. Their participation as facilitators should be entirely voluntary, and they should be properly briefed and prepared. Depending on how much experience and confidence they have, they can plan and run sessions themselves or simply collaborate with the team. It is important to negotiate with each young person about what they feel comfortable doing and make sure adults support them throughout the process. In Spain, during the Dialogues with the younger children, the team assigned three roles to the children in each session. Two of them were in charge of distributing the material needed for the session, another two were in charge of taking notes of the main agreements (on paper, a flipchart or the blackboard), and two more were in charge of taking photographs of the sessions with digital cameras. We had a badge for each role that we distributed at the beginning of each session. This strategy did not yield significant results, and the children often forgot their roles during the activities. However, they liked the role of photographer.

Multiple strategies were followed in evaluating the Dialogues. In Portugal, the children filled out questionnaires (the response scale contained five different ‘smiley’ faces), followed by two closed questions around participation issues adapted from a children’s survey on children’s rights and capabilities (Biggeri et al, 2011) and two open-ended questions on what they liked most and least about the Dialogue. Evaluation forms were also given to the teachers. At the start and finish of the Dialogues the children also filled in a personal meaning map (Falk and Dierking, 2000), consisting of a blank page with the word ‘Disaster’ at the centre, on which they were asked to express their thoughts. Before and after maps were then compared (see Figure 2.4).

In Spain, the facilitators gathered the children’s expectations after the first session of the Dialogue, and at the last session the children held an evaluation to share their opinions individually (with a survey) and collectively (with a dartboard on the wall in which they attached stickers according to their opinion; see Europlanet Society, nd). These
tools enabled their thoughts and feelings about the Dialogues’ content, organisation and group dynamics to emerge.

To record, monitor and evaluate the process in Italy, facilitators used a set of posters for each Dialogue, where they noted the main objectives, the children’s expectations, and also photographs of the previous Dialogue and materials produced. At the beginning of each session, the participants walked past the photographs as a way to recap on the previous one, inform anyone who might have been absent and build up knowledge gradually. At the end of every session, the group was asked to evaluate it in writing, saying if their needs and expectations had been met and if it was necessary to make changes. Responses included: ‘we have been very collaborative’, ‘the activities gave us the possibility to participate’, ‘having fun’, ‘we all participate’, ‘the group was engaged and listened’, ‘we influenced the community’, ‘free to speak’, ‘creativity’, ‘I have learned new things’, ‘interesting activities’. Similarly in Greece, according to each group’s needs and through a range of differentiated activities (Nikolarazizi et al, under review), the children expressed their expectations, knowledge and understanding and their role in DRR. In most cases they reported that what they had learned helped them feel more confident in confronting a risk or a disaster.

Figure 2.4: Example of a personal meaning map (Pedro, 9 years old, Albufeira, Portugal)
Mutual Learning Exercises

The Mutual Learning Exercises (MLEs) were developed by Save the Children UK in an effort to put children’s rights in DRR into practice, creating a bridge between the capacity-building activities of the Dialogues and the advocacy work done in preparing for the policy debates. The aim was to create a space for the children, emergency planners, local policy actors and the wider community to meet. This space was to foster equal participation, away from the traditional lectures or presentations in risk reduction education where children are allocated a more passive role, and are rarely heard.

CUIDAR’S MLEs were devised to meet specific objectives:

• To enable practitioners and policy-makers to gain an understanding and insight into children’s priorities and perceptions of risk in urban contexts and their capacities for resilience and participation, taking into account different cultures.

• To engage in more effective lines of communication between children, young people and adults and enable them to influence the local or regional disaster management strategy, empowering children to realise their right to be heard.

As with the Dialogues, since CUIDAR partners were operating in diverse cultural and political contexts, it was necessary to create guidelines flexible enough to accommodate local differences. Save the Children UK therefore referred to specific national, regional and international guidelines (such as Save the Children, 2003) as to how to best involve children in discussions about the issues that affect them and elevate their voices to influence those who hold decision-making power. Thus, the MLEs would showcase the children’s ideas and skills that had emerged during the Dialogues, emphasizing their communication to specific audiences.

The first step to achieving common guidelines for the MLEs was to agree a definition:

Mutual Learning Exercises are the way we bring together various groups of stakeholders to enable a process of collective analysis to help unlock ideas concerning a specific issue or theme, and to find realistic solutions and recommendations acceptable by all involved. (CUIDAR, 2018a: 6)
Ultimately, the MLEs were to create a safe space for children to explore and co-design solutions with adults. Importantly, therefore, the adults had to be sensitised to children’s rights to participation and to the importance of listening to their voices. If this was not done, exposing children’s views in such events would be not only tokenistic, it would be counterproductive. Thus, the activities were facilitated by someone with the ability to build safe and child-friendly relationships, and in spaces allowing children to be on the same level as adults.

**Mutual Learning Exercises: targets, contexts and numbers**

The MLEs were generally held in the localities where the Dialogues had taken place, mobilising nearly all the children and young people who had previously participated, local stakeholders and other members of the community (parents and other relatives). In each country, several MLEs were thus organised. One requirement for the fair participation of children in such exchanges is that they take place in friendly venues, enabling spaces, where children feel comfortable. As a result, and even though schools are traditionally more associated with conventional learning processes, schools ended up being the most common MLE locations, as they felt familiar to the children. In Spain and Portugal, however, out-of-school locations were deliberately chosen to give the children a different experience, away from a context where they have a subordinate role. Care was taken that these alternative locations were child-friendly and had some public profile, such as municipal libraries and museums. This helped the children and young people feel they were doing something relevant and important in a civic space. It changed their attitude, and in some cases their teachers expressed surprise that their students appeared much more engaged and mature than at school. Except for the younger children, who had their MLE at the fire service’s educational facilities, the other events in Spain were organised in key cultural buildings made available by the city council. Children and young people were especially interested in these out-of-school locations. For instance, in Barcelona, the children wrote in their photo-call messages (see below) that they liked everything, especially visiting the Catalan Fire and Rescue Service, and that they wanted to return to the Fire Prevention Room (see Figure 2.5).

The MLEs were mainly led by children and young people, with the co-facilitation of a CUIDAR team member, since in some cases this made the children feel more comfortable. In Greece there were additional needs in making sure that the events were accessible for all
students with sensory disabilities. Given that these were conceived as bottom-up, child-led events (adults were called to intervene only when an explanation or occasional support was needed), stakeholder identification and invitation was generally done during the Dialogues, where the children were encouraged to assess who/which were the influential powers within their community and to lead the invitations. Invitations led by children were especially helpful in getting the adult stakeholders to confirm their presence, particularly for those in high-ranking positions, since it is more uncomfortable for them to defraud the expectations of children.

Overall, there were 22 MLEs in the participating countries, involving approximately 300 children and 150 stakeholders comprising:

- Policy-makers: council members, town mayors, local members of parliament, regional ombudsman.
- Practitioners: civil protection staff, resilience officers, emergency planners, local Red Cross groups/representatives, psychologists, police officers, fire department staff, journalists, other technical staff (that is, firefighters, forestry specialists, park rangers, etc).
- Educators: teachers and head teachers, Department of Education staff, members of parents’ associations.
- Community members: parents, local or community group representatives, and other students (who had not taken part in CUIDAR Dialogues).
The types of hazard or disaster chosen by children for discussion often matched local concerns, either derived from previous disaster events or from significant risk perceptions (see Table 2.1).

In some cases, besides addressing a specific kind of disaster risk, other topics were added to the discussion, such as the management of fear and anxiety (Athens, Sant Celoni, Lorca), children’s rights and opinions (Athens), and communication strategies for children (Gandesa, Lorca, Salford, Rochdale).

Different strategies were followed for evaluation. For example, in Spain, the adults, children and young people were given time at the end to share their thoughts and feelings about their experience. In Sant Celoni, the adults and young people were separated and, supported by the facilitators, made their evaluations of the MLE through small group discussions. Then, coming back together,

### Table 2.1: Locations and types of disaster addressed in MLEs

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<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
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<th>Earthquakes</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rochdale</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
everyone voluntarily shared their thoughts. In the other locations, the children and adults used post-it notes at the end of the event to write down their thoughts on what they had learned, pasting them onto a wall. In all Spanish locations, the children and young people also had a ‘photo-call activity’ while having lunch: they wrote down any kind of message related to the activity, disguised themselves and took photographs (see Figure 2.6).

In Glasgow, UK, facilitators conducted a post-event survey of adult stakeholders. In Loures and Albufeira, Portugal, the team created an online survey (mostly open questions) targeted at teachers, adult stakeholders and 9th grade participants (aged 13–14), and performed focus group evaluations with the 4th grade children (aged 9–10). In Loures the team also had a post-event discussion with three participants from the 9th grade (aged 13–14) (the others were unable to participate), and a few months later, the team interviewed the head teacher in order to assess how far the recommendations made by the young people had been implemented.

In Italy, youth groups in both Crotone and Ancona created a ‘pledge form’ to put into the attendees’ folder given out at the beginning of the event. In these forms, stakeholders were asked to record how they would go about involving children in their everyday work, and the concrete steps they would take to make this happen. In Crotone, the young people decided to take a picture of the attendees holding up their pledges in front of the CUIDAR banner. In Ancona the youth

Figure 2.6: Young people in Lorca, Spain, writing post-it notes during the MLE
group decided to have a poster/wall where stakeholders could leave their thoughts and reflections, but also their pledges. At the end of the MLE in both locations attendees filled in an evaluation form prepared by the young people along with CUIDAR facilitators. It asked three simple questions: Had the exercise been useful? Had the exercise promoted the participation of all attendees? Had the exercise been interesting? At the end of the evaluation form, there was space for some free text comments.

**National Policy Debates**

The National Policy Debates were designed to communicate the needs, priorities and capacities of children and young people in disasters and to influence policy and practice. As the Scoping Review described in Chapter 1 revealed, the lack of political support, institutional fragmentation, inadequate curricular implementation strategies and insufficient awareness of children’s rights constitute serious barriers to child-centred DRR in the countries analysed. Hence, the CUIDAR Policy Debates should constitute both a moment of communication of children’s perspectives and sensitisation regarding the importance of increasing children and young people’s participation in policy development nationally. This was done by organising a key event with national policy-makers, comprising of several exchanges between children, young people and adults and between stakeholders from different sectors. Results from the Dialogues and the MLEs were showcased and discussed. This cross-fertilising dynamic favoured the exchange of ideas concerning the ideal forms of including children and young people’s needs, priorities and capacities in disaster management.

The Open University of Catalonia created a set of broad and flexible guidelines for all partners, assuming the high-level Policy Debate as a step in a long-term process of awareness building, where policy-makers and mass media were gradually engaged before, during and after the event. The outputs and evidence, gathered during the Dialogues and MLEs, were integrated into the Policy Debates agendas, in order to maximise their visibility and attract policy-makers and practitioners to participate. The Debates were therefore child-friendly, and when possible, co-designed with the participating children.

A key part of the Debates was a sensitising activity to provide an opportunity to present the children’s and young people’s previous work to adult stakeholders (see Chapter 3). The events were structured around two goals (see Table 2.3): inspiring and engaging. Inspiring the adult participants was achieved through identifying best practice regarding
children’s participation from fields other than DRR, to show how children can be successfully heard. Engagement was achieved by including a moment of active participation of all attendees, such as roundtable topic discussions, culminating in collective assessments of the proceedings.

**Targets, contexts and numbers**

The five Policy Debates took place in 2017, in Athens (Greece), Rome (Italy), Lisbon (Portugal), Barcelona (Spain) and Manchester (UK) (see Table 2.2). The adult participants ranged from representatives of civil protection and emergency responders to local, regional and national policy decision-makers. Most of these were representatives from the areas of civil protection, emergencies, risk, resilience and security, from local, regional and/or national level. There were high levels of attendance from organisations devoted to risk reduction education (environmental agencies, associations and NGOs, etc) and of educational practitioners and social services officers. This wide audience resulted from a targeted ‘invitology’ (understood as the strategy to decide in every national context who should be invited to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date and venue</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Children and young people</th>
<th>Adult stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1 June 2017, Earthquake Planning and Protection Organisation (EPPO), Athens</td>
<td>Children’s Roles in Risk Reduction and Disaster Management</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>10 November 2017, Palazzo Chigi, Rome</td>
<td>Children and Emergencies in Italy</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>31 May 2017, Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon</td>
<td>Children and Young People’s Participation in Disasters Risk Reduction</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>19 October 2017, CaixaFòrum, Barcelona</td>
<td>How to Promote Children’s and Young People’s Resilience? Participation and Disaster Management</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>13 October 2017, Etihad Stadium, Manchester</td>
<td>Take Care: Building Children’s Resilience in Emergencies</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>147</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
achieve the main goal of the event – to sensitisise a high-level audience and affect policy development in this area – and how to reach them) and careful communication, with some partners designing specific flyers and posters to advertise the events.

The sensitisation aspect of the event was accomplished mostly through this active presence of children presenting their ideas and experiences with their participation in the previous steps of the project. In the case of Greece, where children were not present (due to the fact that some were as young as six years old and others had complex needs), their messages and needs were communicated by the CUIDAR team and their teachers with the support of presentations including their drawings and other forms of expression (see Figure 2.7).

It was not possible to include all the children who took part in the Dialogues and MLEs: some were too young to withstand a whole day event or to travel across the country unaccompanied by their parents, and some groups were large, so they selected ‘ambassadors’.

Each Policy Debate reflected both cultural contexts and the wishes of the children and young people involved who had at least one preparatory session to plan the event and decide what they wanted to present there. It was also important to include a dedicated leisure activity before or during the event. For instance, the children enjoyed a visit to Manchester City Football Club stadium (in the UK), and the official residence of the Prime Minister of the Italian Republic in Rome.

Figure 2.7: Models built by children in Thessaloniki, Greece
To stress the power of children’s participation, almost all events drew on examples of best practice in this field (see Table 2.3). Members of local civil protection services and emergency organisations shared their experiences in disaster management, whereas NGOs presented their activities in advocating for children’s rights. In Italy, Portugal and the UK the children and young people engaged directly with stakeholders. In Spain, since the children could not stay during the whole event, they only participated as presenters, showcasing their work in the Dialogues and MLEs. Methodologies employed during the Debates ranged from hands-on workshops to ‘world cafes’ or discussion roundtables around predefined topics (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Inspiring and engaging moments in the National Policy Debates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Inspiring</th>
<th>Engaging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>During the first session, members of the University of Thessaly and special education teachers from the participating schools presented to the invited policy-makers and professionals the background of the CUIDAR project, described the workshops that took place, and underlined the role of children with sensory disabilities. They inspired them to reflect about their own contribution for the enhancement of children’s participation in activities related to DRR.</td>
<td>Four interdisciplinary working groups, which consisted of the members of the research team of the University of Thessaly and invited professionals and policy-makers (Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religion Affairs, General Secretariat for Civil Protection, National Emergency Centre, National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, Fire Service, Earthquake Planning and Protection Organisation (EPPO), Greek Ombudsman, Independent Authority and museum directors) shared their experiences and ideas regarding the role that they can play to enhance children’s roles and participation in policy-making and planning of programmes and activities related to DRR, with a special emphasis on disabled children. The members of all teams presented these ideas in a plenary discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>The Italian National Policy Debate took place at the Sala Monumentale of Palazzo Chigi, the official Rome residence of the Prime Minister of the Italian Republic (the first part of the event), and later at Con I Bambini Foundation, the head office of an Italian social enterprise dedicated to combating children’s educational poverty. The children were very motivated to participate in such an important venue, feeling that their views would be taken seriously since they had the chance to express them not at school but in Rome, and within a government building. The event was titled ‘Children and Emergencies in Italy’ and was conceived as a debate among different actors about the roles and responsibilities of Italian administrations in protecting and promoting children’s participation before, during and after emergencies. In the morning session, adult stakeholders, such as the National Civil Protection Director of Operations, the Lazio Region civil protection director, the delegate of the National Municipality Association (ANCI), the Marche Region civil protection official, two mayors and the Marche Region Children Rights Ombudsman discussed the inclusion of children in emergency planning, followed by children’s presentations from their workshop findings.</td>
<td>(continued)</td>
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</table>
Dialogues with Children, Mutual Learning Exercises and National Policy Debates

Table 2.3: Inspiring and engaging moments in the National Policy Debates (continued)

| Italy (contd) | Engaging: During the afternoon session, a workshop between the children and adults was designed to actively engage the policy-makers, experts, practitioners and parents invited to the national event to build a Manifesto/Children's Charter. The adults invited were some of the stakeholders of the morning event, in particular the policy-makers and adults who had no experience in children's participation. 'The Jigsaw' (de Rijk et al, 2005) was conducted, a cooperative learning methodology developed in the US during the 1960s. This emphasises structuring interactions between heterogeneous groups of students; each is assigned part of a task to prepare. As in a jigsaw puzzle, the work done by each group is essential for the full understanding and completion of the final product.

The participants were divided in five groups of 9 or 10 people, and each person was given a piece of paper with a statement. Each group had the same statements, so participants could discuss the same issues among a group of adult 'experts', children, policy-makers, parents and other stakeholders. Each group had to discuss the statements and prepare for a plenary presentation. While each group presented their work, the full picture started to take shape, as in a jigsaw. This is a highly structured and interdependent learning situation, since the only access that each member has to the full picture depends on listening to others.

Portugal Inspiring: The event started with two panels of presentations, the first addressing risk reduction education projects from local Civil Protection Offices, the second participatory initiatives with children and young people developed by NGOs in Portugal.

Engaging: In the afternoon, young people and invited adult stakeholders sat at five discussion tables, adapting the 'world cafe' model (Carson, 2011) to discuss specific issues about advancing children and young people's participation, addressing topics that emerged from the discussions and the pledges generated through the Dialogues and the MLEs: (1) participatory risk education; (2) children and young people as active participants in disaster management in their communities; and (3) children and young people as active participants in disaster management in their schools. At the end of the discussions, there was a general presentation of the results achieved from each table.

Spain Inspiring: The keynote speech by Alice Fothergill, a leading researcher on children's role in disasters from the US.

Engaging: One roundtable of three experts debating on how to increase participatory practices with children and young people in DRR in Spain. It was situated as an attempt to find an answer to the gaps identified by the CUIDAR project in the Scoping Review (see Chapter 1), namely, the absence of collaboration or shared knowledge between experts and practitioners in the fields of childhood and youth participation and civil protection. The roundtable was moderated by a journalist with specialist expertise in emergencies who had participated in the MLE in Lorca. The experts were the Deputy Director of Emergency Coordination and Management of the General Directorate of Civil Protection of the Generalitat of Catalonia, an expert in children and young people's rights, and the delegate of the Spanish Forum for Urban Prevention and Safety.

(continued)
All teams designed mechanisms for evaluating the impacts of the National Policy Debates. In Greece the adult participants were asked about their expectations just before the event, via a short semi-structured interview, repeated afterwards. In the UK delegates were asked to fill in a survey beforehand and after the event. In Portugal and Spain, the teams sent an online survey to the participants instead. In Portugal, the UK and Spain, the children and young people were included in post-event evaluation, either through online surveys or through visits by the team to schools. In Italy, UndeRadio StC Italy children’s radio interviewed the morning session participants. CUIDAR staff and the children also had informal conversations with the stakeholders in the morning event venue, to capture their feedback and ideas about the Policy Debate.

**Conclusion**

Our approach was carefully designed to give a voice to children, to ensure their participation, and to make their perspectives known to
adults. Working in stages, we built layer upon layer of opportunities for children to discover, research and engage with the topics of disaster, vulnerability and resilience, to explore the risks their own communities face, to create knowledge in articulation with experts and practitioners and to convey their needs and perspectives to decision-makers. We moved gradually from the local to the national level.

Working in different countries and different communities within countries has taught us that following common guidelines is important for transparency and ethical practice, but also that adaptations often have to be made. Researchers (and practitioners) have to navigate diverse legal and regulatory frameworks (see Chapter 1), adjust to the rules of specific settings (schools, youth groups) and make alliances with diverse gatekeepers (teachers, school directors, civil protection services, local authorities).

Throughout, we have learned that to be successful, the whole process needs to be as flexible and responsive as possible, and highly sensitive to age and contextual differences. This may require adding extra sessions with children to prepare, evaluate, design, and so on, or to change the initial planning. We have been constantly aware that children are not a homogeneous group. Even when working with the same age groups, there are differences that have to be taken into account: gender, social class, language, cultural background, literacy level, disabilities. Activities have to be adjusted to be inclusive, to draw contributions from all children and young people, to build on different strengths and abilities.

The same goes for working with adult stakeholders. Although it is invaluable to involve practitioners and decision-makers in the activities with children and young people, their different roles have to be acknowledged and mobilised at appropriate times and places. It is also important to devote time to preparing adults for working with children, especially to challenge ‘adultist’ imaginaries and to adjust their expectations and attitudes before they meet and engage with children.

Finally, evaluation is crucial. Not just to assess the success in reaching the objectives that have been set, but also to fine-tune practices and procedures, to innovate and to improve. It is not enough to conclude that participants, young and old, are happy and content with the activities. It is also necessary to assess if they learned something from the experience, and in what ways they are willing to change their attitudes and practices regarding DRR.
Notes

1. This chapter draws from the deliverables of the CUIDAR project, namely, the final reports of Work Package Reports 3, 4, and 5: www.lancaster.ac.uk/cuidar/en/

2. This template and guidelines for the Dialogues with Children can be found in Work Package Report D.3.2: www.lancaster.ac.uk/cuidar/en/project-outputs/

3. More details about the design of the MLEs can be found in Work Package Report D4.2 at: www.lancaster.ac.uk/cuidar/en/project-outputs/

4. More details about the design of the Policy Debates can be found in Work Package Report D5.3: www.lancaster.ac.uk/cuidar/en/project-outputs/