



Save the Children

## TWO-WAY LEARNING:

Building shared responsibility between children and adults to support disaster resilience.

**When it comes to disasters, why do adults continue to question the capacity of children to make informed decisions about matters that affect them?**

Children's lives have been changed dramatically by the effects of the 2019/20 bushfires and COVID-19, which have created destabilising and uncertain times. Through our disaster recovery programs – Journey of Hope and Our Voice – Save the Children have been working alongside impacted communities supporting children and their families. Through this work, we know that children are resilient and masters of their own lived experiences. However, they have expressed to us that they are frustrated that their capacity to help with rebuilding and preparing for future disasters has not been tapped into. Adults and government have a critical part to play in ensuring children and young people are viewed as active citizens and support them to contribute meaningfully to societal change.

Case studies from these programs highlight the importance of two-way learning in ensuring all stakeholder priorities are met. By allowing children and young people to have their voices heard, they demonstrate their strengths in contributing to emergency management planning, developing their own emotional resilience, and ultimately becoming agents of change in their schools, families, and the broader community.

### Approaches that generate impact: Case studies from Our Voice and Journey of Hope

**What approaches will help change the narrative around involving children in disaster risk reduction so that adults stop questioning their ability to participate and start recognising the benefits and contributions they can make to their communities?**

To provide the best support before, during and after a disaster, children need to be seen as individuals with their own unique needs and concerns. Oftentimes, children are viewed as an extension of their parents or caregivers, but we know through our work that children need to be seen holistically within their family environment and community context.



#### OUR VOICE

Children as drivers of change in their communities

##### Preparing adults to meet children where they're at in recovery

Save the Children's *Our Voice* program supports local councils, service providers, and communities to engage with children and young people, enabling them to become powerful agents of change and influence emergency plans. Sessions are delivered by two experienced facilitators over four stages, tailored to suit the needs and objectives of children, young people, and local council. Facilitators also train adults in decision-making roles on authentic and impactful participation for children.



It was nerve wracking at first, but it was good to have my team beside me and once we got going it was nice to have my voice heard, which was an experience I really hadn't had in my community before.

— Our Voice participant from NSW



#### JOURNEY OF HOPE

Creating safe environments to test coping strategies that can be shared throughout the community

As the immediate emergency passes and families begin to rebuild their lives, Save the Children's facilitators work with small groups of students in schools, giving children the space to identify and share positive coping mechanisms and build their resilience. *Journey of Hope* helps children and caregivers cope with collective trauma, identify triggers and stressors, develop their natural resilience and coping strategies, and strengthen their social support networks. The program provides activities that help children identify their own coping strategies and gives them the space to learn from their peers.



My eldest deals with high anxiety. She was previously unwilling to engage in any supports but has now said, 'the Journey of Hope Facilitators taught me that asking for help is a strong thing.

— Parent from East Gippsland, Victoria