

Children

Drivers of change in Safe Schools





How disasters are affecting Cambodia, Indonesia and Nepal



Indian Ocean Tsunami

South-East Asia has a high incidence of disasters caused by natural hazards, which have only intensified over the past two decades. As school attendance and enrolment is high across many countries in the region, it is crucial that school safety and resilience to disaster events become a focus for programming.

Cambodia is one of the most disaster liable countries in South East Asia. Between 1987 and 2007, flooding in Cambodia affected over nine million people, with damage estimated at USD 327 million. Flooding and disasters across consecutive years from 2009 to 2013 significantly affected the livelihoods and safety of vulnerable families, in particular school children. An estimated 21 per cent of schools in Cambodia are located in flood prone areas, putting them at risk each year. Cambodia's primary school dropout rate of 14% has been exacerbated by flooding, as it became one of the main causes of increased dropout rates and a decrease in student learning outcomes. It is estimated that 40-50 per cent of the total number of students who are forced to drop out of school do so due to flooding.

Since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which claimed the lives of over 167,000 people in Indonesia alone, disaster risk reduction (DRR) has become a national priority. However, Indonesia faces a number of challenges, both structural and non-structural, in the education sector and DRR. More than 90 per cent of public primary schools were built in the 1970s, and fail to measure up to contemporary design and construction standards. It is estimated that there are more than 110,000 severely damaged classrooms requiring urgent retrofitting and rehabilitation.

At a time when the frequency and magnitude of extreme climatic events is rising, a growing number of the school children in Nepal are increasingly exposed to earthquakes, floods, landslides and other natural hazards. Over the past 25 years, there has been an increase in the number and severity of disasters. In the 1988 earthquake, hundreds of schools were abandoned. The central Nepal flood in 1993 swept away hundreds of schools and other infrastructure and the Terai flood in west Nepal in 2006/7 and the Koshi flood in 2008 highlight the vulnerability of schools and school children. The earthquake in east Nepal in September 2011 damaged over 2,000 schools, depriving an estimated 45,000 children of quality education.

Putting the Hyogo Framework for Action to work

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015 is the first plan to explain, describe and detail the work that is required from all different sectors and actors to create safe and resilient communities. The HFA outlines five Priorities for Action, and offers guiding principles and practical means for achieving disaster reduction and resilience. Its goal is to substantially reduce the impact of disasters by 2015 by building the resilience of nations and communities.

Safe Schools contributes to the achievement of the HFA Priority for Action 3, of which a number of positive results can be identified and measured against the four indicators under this Priority. **First**, a number of educational materials on risk reduction and resilience can be shared internationally, and are available for localisation and contextualisation. A digital application from Indonesia will be publicly available to download, and will be available in English. There are also plans to translate the application into other languages such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish and French.

Second, school curricula are being holistically-infused to include Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), resilience and recovery concepts and practices.

Plan Indonesia developed a module for teachers on how to integrate DRR into subject disciplines such as social science, natural science and languages in upper primary school. This module has been acknowledged and approved by local authorities. In Cambodia, DRR and climate change booklets have been developed by ActionAid, UNICEF and Plan Cambodia to support the mainstreaming of risk education and resilience in school curricula. In addition, DRR and climate change adaptation, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices, Safe School Guidelines, first aid and simulation exercises have been taught to students in 12 target schools.

Third, research methods and tools for multi-risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis have been developed and strengthened for the education sector. Plan Indonesia and Plan Nepal conducted structural assessments of all schools that implemented the Safe Schools programme. The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport in Cambodia is in the process of conducting school high risk mapping in 12 of 25 provinces and cities countrywide.

Last, public awareness campaigns and tactics were implemented to stimulate a culture of risk reduction and resilience, with outreach to both urban and rural communities, and child-centered and led. A series of interactive talk shows on local radio and national television in Indonesia promoted Safe Schools and DRR, in which children participated as resource personnel. Child ambassadors from all three countries have also been selected to promote Safe Schools locally, regionally and globally.



Children from an elementary school in Jakarta learning from Safe Schools digital application

Children leading the way in creating Safe Schools

The Safe Schools programme across the three countries addressed both structural and non-structural problems. The programme has used knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience through a range of curricular and co-curricular activities in schools and communities. Multi-stakeholder partnership at different levels, from national to sub-national, was key to building a culture of safety and resilience. The shaping and changing of the culture of school safety is complex, and requires a robust approach with different levels of engagement. In particular, child participation was critical. Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction (CCDRR) and resilience requires intensive inputs including capacity building and perspective change in programming.

Success in CCDRR is characterised by a number of key attributes. It requires commitment, from both local authorities and communities, and a good working relationship between the stakeholders. Community and school members, particularly teachers, need to be confident in the students' capacity. The creation of 'champions' at the school level, and activating students as local, regional and global advocates, were among other critical elements. Working in partnership with local organisations and authorities enabled the mainstreaming, localisation and contextualisation of school safety practices, knowledge and legislation.

Structural changes in **Indonesia** include: more safe desks and chairs that include blunted corners and edges; disaster prepared classroom doors; landslide-retaining embankments; improved sanitation and disaster-prepared facilities. These activities were achieved through Gotong royong or the Indonesian mutual assistance system, in which community activities are completed collaboratively and communally. Plan Indonesia also developed a Safe Schools digital application. Yuni, a female student who used the application, says the game was interesting and easy to understand. She even insisted that her teacher download it. "It is cool. I want to play again with my friends at home. We can compete each other", says Amar, a male student and participant.

The application was created to deliver Safe Schools messages particularly targeted at children in primary and secondary schools. The application is freely available to download from Google Play and Apple Store (Search: Safe Schools). In addition, local authorities in Indonesia have demonstrated increased support for Safe Schools, committing budget support for the replication and scaling up of the programme across all schools in certain districts.

In **Cambodia**, the programme made significant contributions to addressing the challenges and gaps identified, particularly to the development and dissemination



young students involved in their school's search and rescue team perform a simulation exercise in Myanmar



Students in Aileu District, Timor Leste take part in an evacuation drill

"I thought that the Safe School Guidelines are a very important tool for high risk schools because they can motivate school principals, relevant stakeholders and communities to participate in Safe Schools related activities. In addition, the Safe School Guidelines are a key element of education quality assurance and specifically, it is a really helpful for The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport for integrating Safe School Guidelines into the national curriculum as lessons are properly and carefully developed by experts."

- Mr. Sok Boreth, MoEYS official, Cambodia.

of Safe School Guidelines. Departments within the Ministry of Education received support from Plan Cambodia in promoting school safety across processes and institutions. For example, ministerial officers participated in capacity building workshops on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and the Comprehensive School Safety Framework. Plan Cambodia also collaborated with the Government of Cambodia and other International and local NGOs to mainstream DRR and climate change adaptation in school curricula.

Said, a 9-years old from Rembang Central Java, remembers, "I'm happy to have attended this event and be able to meet important people such as high level government officials. I wanted to share my opinion to those who attended the meeting [and remind them] to not underestimate us as a children. Even though we are still young, we can make a difference; we can be actively involved in disaster risk reduction. Do not forget us, as we are the future of our nation".

A few children from Indonesia and Cambodia were also selected to participate in regional and global advocacy events in Jakarta and Geneva. Children in Indonesia, who participated in the 5th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, shared their experiences on Safe Schools in a side event to advocate for Safe Schools.

IEN Sophoeurn, a girl from Cambodia and leader of her school's Children Council, participated in the 4th Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Geneva, Switzerland. She shared her experiences in implementing Safe School activities in a featured event of the Global Platform on DRR. "I appealed to the world to pay attention and continue supporting the current and future DRR and climate change adaptation actions of children in



Youth representatives from Cambodia with Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Geneva, 2013

schools and communities on behalf of Cambodia. I noticed that the world now pays more attention to the appeals of the children around the world. Besides sharing DRR from Cambodia, I also learnt from the Global Platform. For example, Indonesia mainstreams DRR and climate change adaptation activities for children living with disabilities, particularly deaf children".

In **Nepal**, the Safe Schools programme collaborated with existing DRR stakeholders including the government, United Nations and NGOs to adopt the Comprehensive School Safety Framework. The programme commissioned a policy mapping on Safe Schools in Nepal that documented the progress, gaps and cases of success. The report was shared with the relevant government agencies and DRR stakeholders and led to preliminary dialogues and a draft discussion paper on a Safe Schools Policy.

In addition, a core group of 20-30 children, both boys and girls, were selected to be Safe School Champions and advocates in their communities. This core group plays a leadership role at their schools, engaging their peers in trainings, simulation drills and sessions to transfer DRR knowledge and awareness. Some of the core group also attended stakeholder workshops, where they are invited to make presentations.

Many of the target schools in Cambodia were also successful in mainstreaming DRR in the curriculum, specifically within the social studies subject. In addition, target schools were provided with copies of a student DRR booklet, a teacher's guide and posters on pre- and post-disaster scenarios. The student booklet was used in all target schools for the 2012-2013 school year, consisting of ten lessons covering hazards and disasters relevant to the Cambodian context. The booklet and teacher's guide were developed by ActionAid and The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, and used by Plan Cambodia to avoid duplication and identify areas for adaptation.

"I am interested in all parts of the trainings especially the activities that should be done before, during, and after floods (as my area is at-risk of flooding) based on the DRR booklet. Preparedness before flooding: I am aware of many important things such as how to stockpile food; especially where and how to access flood information or weather broadcasting. Emergency response during flooding: I learnt how to evacuate vulnerable people with disabilities, pregnant women, elderly and children to a safe hill. Particularly, how to prevent children from possible epidemics, poisonous snake attacks and so on. And, I also learnt how to provide first aid assistance to injured people.
- Mr. Teuk Samnang, Lbeuk primary school principal, Cambodia.

In Cambodia, Children Councils, present at every school, conducted monthly meetings to review progress and work plans on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), climate change adaptation, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities and child right action plans. Children Councils also conducted peer-to-peer activities with other students, act as teachers and drivers of change in their school communities.

"I and my group members conducted peer-to-peer activities five times a month and held Children Council monthly meetings in order to identify and select priority topics to promote to the students in my school. I am very happy to see my friends become aware of and implementing DRR, WASH and child rights activities in school. The children now know how to access and support school safety activities."
- Boeun Him, leader of the Children Council at Lbeuk primary school, Cambodia.

Summary

Plan believes that the implementation of the Safe Schools programme is effective, participatory and sustainable. The approach of working in partnership with local partners as well as strategic partners at national levels could offer a blueprint for future programme effectiveness. One of key lessons for future programmes is to ensure that a clear sustainability strategy is in place from the beginning to minimise dependency after the period of implementation.

In addition, children have the capacity and motivation to act as facilitators and drivers of change. They can act as powerful drivers both within their school and the wider community. Recognition of children's capacity and ensuring their participation in DRR activities is key to promoting Safe Schools.

Furthermore, a lesson learnt on policy design and advocacy at a national level is that forming a coalition and working collaboratively is a priority. Building a culture of safety and resilience in education is a process and outcome of joint collaboration and commitment of DRR stakeholders including civil society, community members and children.

The Safe Schools programme is already being replicated within these countries and beyond. In Indonesia, certain districts are replicating, funding and implementing Safe Schools initiatives, while in Cambodia, the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport and partner NGOs are planning to replicate under the Safe School Guidelines. The Safe Schools programme of Plan Asia has been replicated in more than 14 countries and benefits around 2,543 schools and 318,999 children aged 7 to 18, both in urban and rural settings.



From vulnerable student
to a Safe Schools Champion:
**How a young girl in
Nepal is becoming a
community leader.**

Sabina is a student 15-year old student in Grade 9. She lives in Makwanpur District, Nepal and is currently studying at the Pashupati Secondary School. She had a very poor understanding of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), much like many children and young people in Nepal. That is, until last year. After her participation in Plan Nepal's Safe Schools programme, she received training in, and gained knowledge of, disaster preparedness, DRR and vulnerability and asset mapping to help reduce the overall impact of disasters in her community.

Nepal is one of the most disaster-affected countries in the world. At a time when the frequency and magnitude of extreme climatic events is rising, a growing number of the school children are increasingly exposed to earthquakes, floods, landslides and other natural hazards. Unsafe schools are a reality, with an earthquake in east Nepal in September 2011 highlighting the vulnerability of schools and children. Over 2,000 schools were reported damaged, which deprived an estimated 45,000 children of quality education and forced them out of school.

However, the Safe Schools programme is quickly proving that children can take on leadership and advocacy roles in their communities to be on the frontline of DRR.

Sabina understands structural and non-structural mitigation, two key concepts in DRR and Safe Schools. She and her peers have already started non-structural mitigation in their own school, homes and villages. She is also a DRR educator, sharing her knowledge and training with students, community and family members on disaster preparedness, including earthquake safety rules. Sabina wants to be a role model and leader not only in her village but also in her community and school.

At present, under Plan Nepal, the Safe Schools programme in Makwanpur District is directly benefiting over 12,000 students, teachers and parents. Participants in the project such as Sabina have received trainings in child-centred disaster risk reduction, search and rescue, first aid, case story writing and school disaster management planning. Sabina is also quickly becoming a national leader and advocate, participating in the Students' Summit on Earthquake Safety in 2013 held in Chitwan, Nepal. Students from Nepal, Japan and Bangladesh shared stories, lessons and knowledge on Safe Schools and DRR.

"Training on DRR is what I think everyone should do in a disaster prone country like Nepal. The training that I received from Plan is really practical and has enhanced me with life saving skills. Now, I am well prepared on how to deal with and respond to disasters like earthquakes and landslides. I now feel secure, confidence and protected."



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