



Research report summary

Critical factors for post-disaster educational continuity in urban floods in South and Southeast Asia

April 2018

Summary

In South and Southeast Asia, recurrent hazards including floods and related hazards disrupt society, the economy and the environment. The impacts of floods invariably compromise individual and collective development. Floods cause deaths and injuries, temporary and permanent migration, and worsen pre-existing resource shortages, price inflation, and unemployment. Floods also pose significant challenges for education systems. Schools usually pay a high price in terms of the impact of destruction and damages to infrastructure and facilities.

Within this context, the research project investigated the critical factors for educational continuity in urban floods in South and Southeast Asia. The research studied three countries (Bangladesh, Vietnam and Thailand) which are recurrently affected by urban floods. The research specifically sought to extrapolate the main blockers and enablers of educational continuity in schools. Towards this goal, primary, lower secondary and higher secondary schools were selected for analysis in each country.

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Authors:

Dr Jason von Meding, University of Newcastle, Australia; Dr Iftekhar Ahmed, University of Newcastle, Australia; Dr Amanda Howard, University of Sydney, Australia; Dr Giuseppe Forino, University of Newcastle, Australia; Dr Indrajit Pal, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand; Professor Humayun Kabir, Dhaka University, Bangladesh; Nam Hai Dao, National University of Civil Engineering, Vietnam; Hang Thai, Posts and Telecommunications Institute of Technology, Vietnam. Advisors: Dr Marla Petal, Save the Children; Prof Kevin Ronan, Central Queensland University; Prof David Johnstone, Massey University; Nick Ireland, Save the Children; Dave Greenhaigh, Save the Children; Karimi Gitonga, Save the Children

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Published by:

Save the Children Asia Regional Office
Strathmore Building 3rd Floor
352 Tanglin Road,
Singapore 247671
Email: esdresearch@savethechildren.org

Save the Children Switzerland
Sihlquai 253 | CH-8005 Zurich
Email: info@savethechildren.ch

Background

With disasters in flood-prone areas causing frequent disruption to education, the wellbeing of students at school has been a focus of collaborative global action. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) (UNISDR, 2005), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) (UNISDR, 2015a) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015-2030 (UNDESA, 2015) have prioritised the safety of school sites, students' continued access to education, and using education to assist countries in improving their DRR efforts.

Based on priorities of both the HFA and SFDRR, Save the Children has further promoted the enhancement of DRR in schools through the CSS Framework. This framework provides instruments to guide multi-scale and multi-sector government policy and planning within the education sector to be inter-related with priorities of SFDRR and SDGs.

Actions required to help implement the SFDRR and SDGs

Despite this progress in DRR and disaster management over the last decade, systematic approaches to incorporating effective practices and policies into the education sector are still lacking. Measures such as access to national and sub-national level risk information; school-based risk assessment; risk reduction planning and implementation; teaching and practicing safety measures for emergencies and disasters; and planning for educational continuity, do not take place on a systematic basis (Save the Children, 2016a).

Floods are a major humanitarian issue and a barrier to the implementation of the SFDRR and of SDGs. Actions are required including (i) reducing exposure via structural, non-structural measures, effective land-use planning, and selective relocation; (ii) reducing the vulnerability of lifeline infrastructure and services (e.g., water, energy, waste management, food, biomass, mobility, local ecosystems, telecommunications); (iii), implementation of monitoring and early warning systems; and iv) measures to identify exposure and assist vulnerable areas and households, and diversify livelihoods (IPCC, 2014).

Methods and measures

Qualitative methods were used to provide an in-depth perspective on floods as experienced by different stakeholders. This approach allowed the researchers to analyse the impact of floods on individual and collective life and livelihood practice, as well as on the environment and the economy. In order to understand local vulnerabilities and related existing coping strategies, it is essential to consider the perspective of those who experience the impacts of floods.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with students, parents and guardians, and teachers and managers of three schools in each of the countries. Key policy informants were also interviewed in each country regarding the particular policy context.

Findings

- The research found that urban floods have wide-ranging impacts on school communities. While some policies exist for reducing flood risk in the school education sector, they need to be significantly improved.
- The research also identifies policy and operational blockers and enablers of school-based educational continuity.
- The findings suggest that researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners working on ensuring educational continuity after urban floods need to deeply engage with the physical, institutional, and organisational context of the schools, as well as with the vulnerabilities and capacities that school stakeholders experience in their everyday life.
- This research provides insight into how diverse and nuanced research, policies, and practice can support efforts towards school education continuity in Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Thailand. It constitutes a baseline for further initiatives and actions in South and Southeast Asia, building on previous work by Save the Children.
- The findings contribute to a better understanding for schools in each country as well as governments, NGOs and international organisations that aim to genuinely engage with the issues of school education systems in South and Southeast Asia.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research project, key recommendations useful for practitioners operating in the field have been identified. These cover enabling environment and policy, safer school facilities, school disaster management, and risk reduction and resilience education. These recommendations are organised according to the enabling environment, and three pillars of Comprehensive School Safety (CSS):

Enabling environment and policy: Strengthening communication and coordination between and among school stakeholders and governments; integrating DRR into education sector policies; advocacy for policy to reduce everyday vulnerabilities of communities.

Safer school facilities: Raising the ground floor and adding floor levels; improving drainage systems and irrigation channels; promoting safe storage of teaching and learning equipment and supplies; strengthening early warning systems.

School disaster management: Promoting standard operating procedures for safe family reunification; adopting a flexible education calendar; promoting an adjustment in exam schedules; providing first aid boxes.

Risk reduction and resilience education: Promoting disaster awareness, preparedness, and safe behaviour; supporting adaptive capacities of school stakeholders and local communities.