



DRREIS

Disaster Risk Reduction Educational Initiatives For Schoolchildren

A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR UPLANDS AREAS OF VIETNAM

CECI (Centre for International Studies and Cooperation)

DRREIS (Disaster Risk Reduction Educational Initiatives for Schoolchildren):

A Best Practice Guide for Uplands Areas in Vietnam

by

CECI

(Centre for International Studies and Cooperation)



“Praise the bridge that carried you over.”

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DRREIS OUTLINE

This document presents lessons learnt and best practices concerning Disaster Risk Reduction Educational Initiatives with Schoolchildren (DRREIS). DRREIS employs a Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) approach to natural disaster.

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DRREIS forms an important component of CECI’s Building Community Resilience to Disasters (BCRD) in Upland Areas of Viet Nam project. Here, CECI works with ethnic minority communities, specifically in Nghe An and Kon Tum provinces.

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INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW & PHILOSOPHY

IMPORTANCE & PURPOSE

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1. INTRODUCTION TO DRREIS CONCEPTS

The purpose of this document is to record and disseminate experiences, results, and best practices derived from the project activities in order to create an effective guide to implementation of DRR curriculum at the elementary and secondary school level.



This document is written for NGOs, INGOs, educators, government and other development practitioners who are specifically interested in community-based approaches to disaster risk reduction (DRR).

WELCOME TO DRREIS

Children are the key to any lasting, sustainable DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) initiative. Therefore, educational efforts are of the utmost importance.

1.1 Report Summary

The first section of this report is a survey of Disaster Risk Reduction Educational Initiatives in the Schools (DRREIS), covering the what, where, and why of DRREIS, including an informative step by step how to guide to implementing DRREIS in uplands areas. CBDRM supported activities and their relationship to DRREIS are also addressed in this component. The second section addresses specific needs and includes recommendations, in light of lessons learnt by CECI, to overcome obstacles that hinder DRREIS implementation in uplands areas. Part three is concerned with detailing the unique environmental, cultural, social and economic conditions of the upland areas of Vietnam, and their impact on DRREIS implementation. Part four outlines specific techniques and practices in uplands areas, including learning objectives and IEC (information, education and communication) visual tools. The final section details best practices for DRREIS in uplands areas, stressing the importance of cultural competency gained from cultivating a deep understanding of the prevailing social context. An empowerment perspective is recommended, employing ToT (training of the trainer) techniques, as well as the use of visual communication tools in order to elicit high levels of student participation.

The importance of repetition and review through multiple training and mentoring activities is also addressed in order to ensure maximum comprehension and retention of key DRREIS concepts. The importance of including parents, extended family, women and other vulnerable community members in the DRREIS intervention is stressed. Finally, the sustainability of any DRREIS initiative requires the cooperation of all key stakeholders, specifically educators, educational institutions, and government policy, which determines the content of Vietnam’s national curriculum for elementary and secondary schoolchildren.



1.2 Why is DRREIS important to CBDRM?

One of the most important outcomes of CBDRM is long-term, sustainable changes to perceptions and behaviours related to natural disasters. Focusing education and awareness raising initiatives on the younger generation is key to reaching this development goal.

CBDRM is a community-based, awareness raising approach to disaster risk reduction; educational activities are therefore an essential part of any successful CBDRM project.



1.3 What is DRREIS?

DRREIS (Disaster Risk Reduction Educational Initiatives for Schoolchildren) is the educational component of CECI’s BCRD project. Located in the Nghe An and Kon Tum provinces of Vietnam, this project targeted mountainous communes populated by vulnerable rural ethnic minorities. The initiative is aimed at providing workshops and training to both elementary and secondary school children.

1.3.1 Introduction to DRREIS Concepts

The CEI BCRD (Building Community Resilience to Disaster) Project takes a community-based, grassroots empowerment approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR). It achieves its goal through three chief practices. First, the project undertakes the VCA (Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment) process, leading to a DRR plan tailor made for each village. Secondly, the program establishes and assists communities in the implementation of simple, low-tech EWS (early Warning Systems) and communications protocol. Last but not least, education and awareness-raising activities are undertaken at all community levels. This report focuses on the DRREIS component of CEI’s educational initiatives, customized for delivery to elementary and secondary schoolchildren within our targeted communities: Kon Tum Province: Kon Ray district and Tu Mo Rong district; Nghe An Province: Quy Hop district. Of these communities, the most relevant statistic to DRREIS implementation has been ethnic composition; in Kon Tum province, approximately 95% of the population is comprised of the Se Dang ethnic minority group, while in Nghe An province, roughly 75% of the population belongs to the Thai ethnic minority.

1.3.2 Educational Philosophy

DRREIS takes a participatory, grassroots approach to education. There are three key branches to the DRREIS intervention:

Relevancy

refers to the need to tailor the educational information specifically for the children living in uplands areas; there is no sense in, for example, educating them in evacuation or preparation techniques for slow onset floods, typical in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta areas. However, landslides and flash floods are commonplace in uplands areas. It is important to teach children the importance of avoiding sites where such landslide or flash flood risks are elevated during heavy rains. It is also important to carefully consider the broader socio-cultural implications of such educational initiatives within vulnerable uplands communities. These factors include spiritual belief systems, cultural traditions and traditional styles of interpersonal communication, which may depart from those of Vietnam’s Kinh majority population.

Relevancy is created through the dissemination of DRR knowledge of use to uplands areas in a manner that honours and incorporates cultural traditions into the DRREIS framework. Additionally, implementers must find creative ways to strategically work together with these communities in order to overcome the inevitable structural hurdles to delivery found in such isolated rural communities.

Participation

is the second element of DRREIS, and is achieved through the use of highly interactive, enjoyable DRR educational activities for the children, including games, contests, quizzes, and drama skits. The development of these activities also occurs in an interactive, participatory way: the activities are carefully developed in consultation with

CEI’s community partners, and are pre-tested within sample target communities before widespread dissemination. Most crucially, participation is maximized through the ToT (Training of the Trainers) approach to knowledge dissemination, whereby the children themselves play a crucial role in educating their peers about DRR, as well as their own families.

Reiteration

Children, by virtue of their youth and malleability, are perhaps the most receptive members of their community to awareness raising activities such as DRREIS initiatives. In our experience, for uplands areas, CBDRM approaches present a dramatically different way of preparing for and managing disasters. Lasting change happens in small increments, gradually over time, and communities often find the process very challenging. By targeting awareness raising activities to children, we help create a new generation of community stakeholders who are aware of the importance of DRR activities, thus insuring sustainability of BCDRM concepts within their communities in the long-term.

Reiteration of key DRR concepts is required in order to instill long lasting changes in perception leading to new behaviours and insure maximum knowledge retention. Changing habitual behaviours takes considerable time and requires much patience. The target set by DRREIS educators in both provinces has been 3 hours of DRR training offered in 2 - 3 sessions. At least one hour was spent in DRR-related parent-teacher-student meetings (Kon Tum province) and in the presentation of drama skits to parents (Nghe An province). Educators are committed to offering DRR as an extracurricular school activity on an annual basis to all students.

1.3.3

Background

The BCRD’s DRREIS program was developed by researching DRR educational initiatives in the schools previously undertaken by various agencies in Vietnam and abroad. Prior to developing its activities, CECI consulted with Plan, Save the Children, World Vision and the Viet Nam Red Cross in order to learn from their approaches to teacher training and extra-curricular DRR activities. The information gathered provided a useful foundation in the preparation of CECI’s DRR education strategy. In particular, CECI collaborated with Plan on the development and application of a classroom exercise on DRR. The materials consisted of questions and answers on DRR for use by the student trainers. The package consisted of a teacher manual, a booklet for student trainers, and a flip-chart to use in front of the classroom, which featured questions and answers and simple images about DRR. CECI also sent teachers from its project site in Nghe An to Plan’s project site in Quang Tri to be instructed in use of these tools. Kon Tum teachers later received the training in Nghe An from the teachers who attended the Quang Tri workshop, an example of the project’s extensive use of ToT (Training of the Trainers) approaches to knowledge management. Plan and CECI also obtained permission from UNICEF/ UN-ISDR to translate the Riskland game on DRR into Vietnamese and tailor its content specifically for use in uplands area classrooms. The game was pretested in different sites in Plan and CECI project sites before mass printing and distribution.

1.3.4

Importance & Purpose

There are four main goals to the DRREIS component:

DRR General Knowledge Transfer

First, classroom activities aim to raise awareness of disaster risk reduction and climate change through education for local at risk youth. (See the CECI BCRD IEC Toolkit Guide for more information).

Evacuation and Rescue Protocol

Secondly, the DRREIS assists in the transmission of evacuation and rescue protocol to children through simulation drills and other experiential learning activities, such as rescue scenarios and first aid training.

Support Community VCA Activities

Thirdly, the DRREIS helps to inform and supplement VCA activities within the community at large. The VCA (Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment) is a grassroots initiative that involves all community members, taking care to include vulnerable individuals, such as women, the disabled and especially children. (*Viet Nam Red Cross /Netherlands Red Cross. Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA): Manual for Viet Nam Red Cross Practitioners. Hanoi: Viet Nam Red Cross, 2010*). Through the DRREIS, children are better able to raise their voices and participate in the VCA process

in meaningful ways. The most important goal of the DRREIS is, of course, creating lasting, sustainable change in behavior towards natural disasters. In many cases, uplands communities have historically adopted a passive attitude towards natural disasters, in part due to perceptions that disaster mitigation and prevention was beyond their control. The DRREIS project empowers youth to take a proactive stance towards natural disaster; as the next generation, they hold the future in their hands and are key to the successful, long-range reduction of risks caused by natural disaster.

1.4

BCDRM Supportive Activities & Their Relationship to DRREIS

Awareness raising and knowledge dissemination are important elements of community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR). Educational workshops are offered to the community at large, and encompass everything from

Integration with other BCDRM activities

communications protocol and EWS (Early Warning System) implementation to the dissemination of printed instructional materials

(“propaganda”) on DRR. Evacuation drills present communities with an opportunity to “learn by doing; enacting likely scenarios, allows the community to identify shortcomings and fine tune evacuation and emergency response procedures. Additional educational activities include first aid training,

offered in concert with the Viet Nam Red Cross.

For example, in Kon Tum province, schoolchildren not only observed but also played an active role in commune disaster simulation drills. In one scenario enacted at the Dak Ro Ong commune, Tu Mo Rong district, a 5th grade class is the last class to leave school and must cross over a temporary bridge. While they are crossing, the water levels rise, sweeping away the bridge and two of the schoolchildren. Three students and one teacher are stranded, unable to cross. In this scenario, the roleplaying students and their teachers, along with community health care workers, rehearse water rescue techniques employing lifesavers, lifejackets, rope and other rescue equipment. After the rescue is completed, the drowning students are given first aid care (resuscitation). Other students, not part of the simulation, observe the event from a bridge, and after the drill is complete, everyone returns to the classroom for a debriefing and discussion concerning the simulation drill.

1.5 DRREIS: A How to Guide

1.5.1 Structure & Schedule

The DRREIS intervention began in March of 2010 in both project sites and was completed by the end of October 2011. In a period of six months, the target goal of offering 2-3 DRR training sessions to approximately 2,000 schoolchildren in the CECI project sites in Nghe An province was met. The goal in Kon Tum province: that virtually all of the 740

elementary and secondary schoolchildren in the 4 project schools (2 elementary and 2 secondary; 36 classes total) would receive a few hours of DRR training, was also achieved.

1.5.2 ToT Approach

This rapid implementation was successfully carried out due to the adoption of a ToT (Training of the Trainers) approach to dissemination. The benefits of this approach are twofold: firstly, as no one person is responsible for all of the training, knowledge transfer occurs rapidly. Secondly, a ToT approach encourages ownership and heightens student motivation. The most motivated schoolchildren themselves are selected as trainers, and encouraged to form groups in which they complete their DRR knowledge transfer to their peers.

The ToT approach was rolled out in the following manner: first of all, the appointed head teacher from Chau Dinh commune (Nghe An province) along with a few of her colleagues received DRR educational training during a workshop offered by Plan at their project site. The head teacher then reported back to her principal (head of the district schools), who made appropriate administrative decisions to support implementation, such as appointing a DRREIS leader, and handpicking the other schoolteachers to form the DRREIS delegation. After the team of 30 teachers had been assembled and trained, topics and course objectives were mapped out. Local government approval was obtained, and the developed curriculum was submitted to CECI for approval.

The ToT (Training of the Trainers) approach was adapted for the training conference in Nghe An province and for the school environment at large. A training course/workshop on the DRREIS initiative was held in Quy Hop during the summer break, giving the Nghe An teachers the opportunity to disseminate their knowledge to the Kon Tum educators. In this workshop, the Nghe An teachers mentored, trained, shared ideas, brainstormed and gave the Kon Tum teachers the opportunity to put their newfound knowledge into practice.

After this conference, DRREIS implementation began in earnest. In both project sites, key students were selected based on their superior presentation skills and knowledge of DRR. Their skills were assessed based on their understanding and knowledge retention surrounding the DRR IEC tools - including the flip charts created by CECI, and the Riskland game developed by UNICEF/UNISDR and adapted by CECI and Plan for the uplands environment. In one elementary school in Nghe An province, for example, two students were chosen as leaders for each of the 9 groups, comprised of 18-24 children per group. The project participants from the elementary school system all came from grades 3,4, and 5. DRR knowledge was evaluated by asking questions such as, "How do you know when disasters are coming? What are some of the warning signs?" The DRR training was offered three times in order to select the most capable student trainers, who were then assigned smaller peer groups to work with. The curriculum materials were refined after user testing during the initial sessions, and questions that best utilized the DRR visual learning tools (such as the flip-charts) were further developed. For 1st and 2nd grade

students, due to their young age, the ToT approach was deemed impractical. For very young students, teachers assumed the role of trainer directly.

1.5.3 Curriculum and Activities

Parents also reaped the benefits of this approach, as a 3-hour workshop was conducted at the end of



the project in Nghe An province. Parents observed their children take part in a trivia game in which DRR questions were hidden inside paper flowers, which the children selected. These questions were taken back into

smaller groups where the children could discuss and formulate answers to later present to the assembly. Children also performed a drama skit concerning disaster, which proved to be very instructional for both the participant actors and the parent observers. In the Kon Tum classrooms, teachers took the flip-charts and Riskland game and brainstormed as a group in order to further innovate the DRR curriculum in ways that would be most appropriate for the local context. For secondary students, teachers developed a quiz competition exercise, which spilt the classroom into two teams. Within a set time period, students were asked to select a slip of paper with a type of natural disaster or a related DRR concept written on it from inside a basket; the student then had to decide if the concept was natural or human induced. After the allotted time was up, students checked the categorizations for accuracy. The team with the most correct answers posted received a prize.



In all cases, the DRR knowledge that informs the DRREIS initiative is tailored to a youthful audience and delivered using highly interactive processes. It was determined by the principal DRREIS teacher in Nghe An province that knowing how to cross streams safely was of utmost importance to her constituency; knowing when it was safe to cross and when it was important to stay away was carefully discussed during class time. In some cases, children are advised to stay home from school, or alternatively, if already present, to remain in school

instead of departing for their residences. In support of this goal, children are instructed on how to read the river gauges that CECI had previously installed as part of its EWS (Early Warning System) flip-charts. CECI's BCRD project also installed signboards in areas prone to landslides; children are informed about these signs and told that these areas were to be avoided during heavy rainfall, which exacerbates the chances of landslide occurrence. Similarly, large trees are to be avoided during such weather conditions as they become unstable and can potentially fall, causing bodily injury.

Look for changes in attitudes and behaviour. Assess for success: assessment helps identify knowledge gaps, chart retention and assist in the development of more effective curriculum.

Another DRREIS objective is the improvement of safety practices concerning sources of electricity during flood scenarios; children are instructed to stay away from power lines and sources of electricity if high water levels or heavy rains are in occurrence. The flip charts also provide visual diagrams educating students of the importance of not swimming when river water levels were dangerously high.

Older students in grades 4 and 5, able to grasp more sophisticated information, are instructed about how to warn others about dangers to health and property, and are taught means of preparation and disaster mitigation in an age appropriate manner. Awareness has been raised in this age group concerning some of the larger issues surrounding such catastrophes. The students are now able to identify the complex causes of natural disaster, such as climate change, weather patterns, and human activities such as deforestation.

1.5.4 Examples of IEC Materials Used for DRREIS Dissemination

What do you see in these two pictures?

Name the ways in which you can obtain up-to-date information on disaster or extraordinary weather.

TÀI LIỆU TRUYỀN THÔNG PHÒNG NGỪA RỦI RO THIÊN TAI CHO TRẺ EM VÀ CỘNG ĐỒNG



**CHÚNG TA THẤY GÌ TRONG 2 BỨC TRANH TRÊN ?
CHÚNG TA THƯỜNG NGHE THÔNG TIN BÃO LŨ HOẶC CÁC HIỆN TƯỢNG THỜI TIẾT BẤT THƯỜNG BẰNG NHỮNG CÁCH NÀO ?**

5

What do you see in these two pictures?

What should the community do for disaster prevention?

TÀI LIỆU TRUYỀN THÔNG PHÒNG NGỪA RỦI RO THIÊN TAI CHO TRẺ EM VÀ CỘNG ĐỒNG



**CHÚNG TA THẤY GÌ TRONG 2 BỨC TRANH TRÊN ?
CỘNG ĐỒNG CHÚNG TA CẦN PHẢI LÀM GÌ ĐỂ PHÒNG NGỪA THIÊN TAI ?**

6

What do you see in these two pictures?

What should the community do for disaster prevention?

TÀI LIỆU TRUYỀN THÔNG PHÒNG NGỪA RỦI RO THIÊN TAI CHO TRẺ EM VÀ CỘNG ĐỒNG



CHÚNG TA PHẢI LÀM GÌ ĐỂ NGÔI NHÀ CỦA MÌNH KHÔNG BỊ HƯ HỎNG NẶNG SAU KHI CÓ BÃO HOẶC LŨ ?

7

What will you remind children and your relatives in order to ensure their safety from natural disasters such as floods or storms?

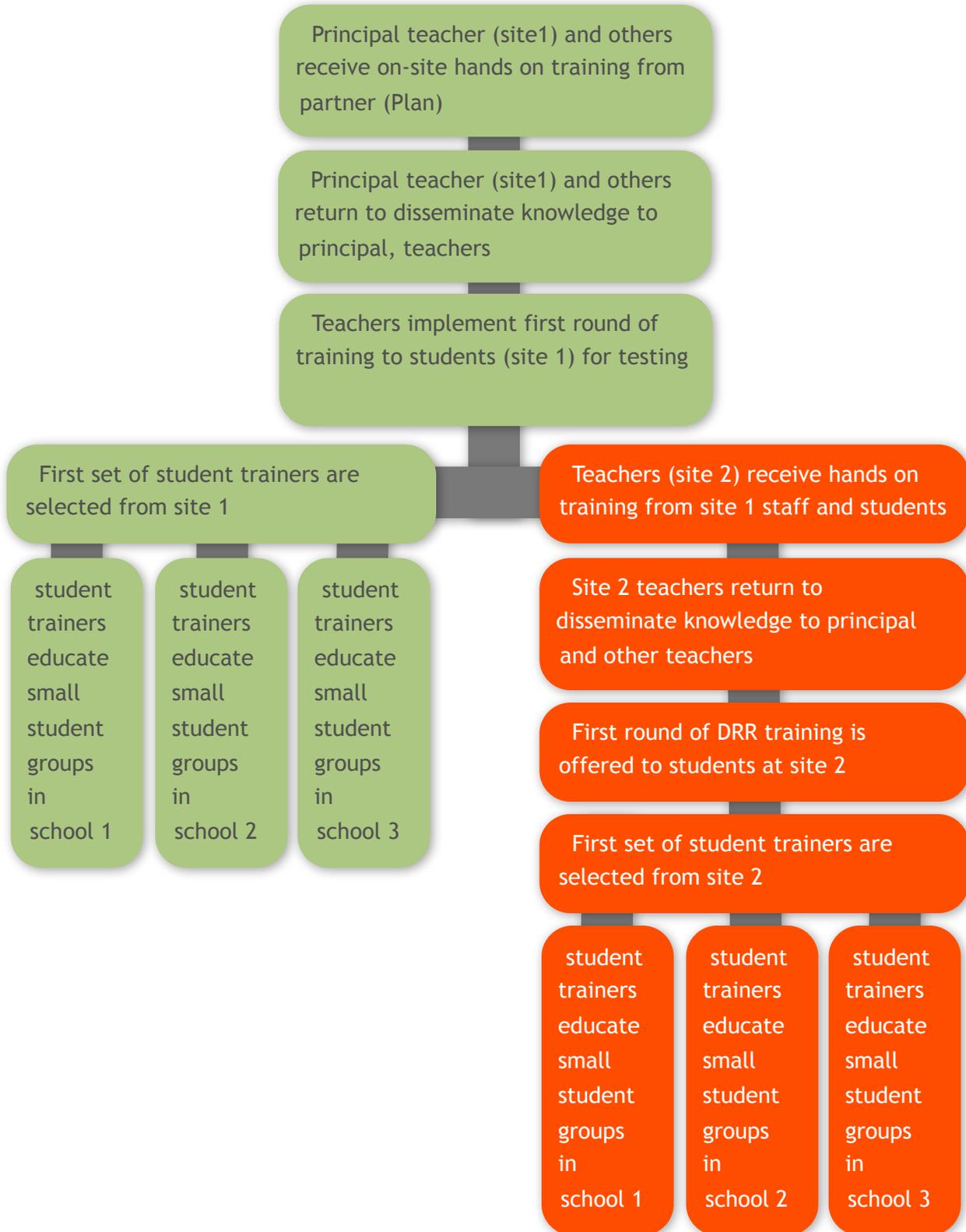
TÀI LIỆU TRUYỀN THÔNG PHÒNG NGỪA RỦI RO THIÊN TAI CHO TRẺ EM VÀ CỘNG ĐỒNG



CHÚNG TA PHẢI DẶN DÒ TRẺ EM VÀ NGƯỜI THÂN ĐIỀU GÌ KHI THIÊN TAI VÀ BÃO LŨ XẢY RA ĐỂ ĐẢM BẢO AN TOÀN TÍNH MẠNG VÀ SỨC KHỎE CỦA HỌ ?

8

1.5.5 Flow Chart Illustrating ToT Knowledge Dissemination



1.6 Post-Intervention Outcomes

In Nghe An province, there has been noticeable lasting change in student behaviour, resulting in less risky activities occurring during dangerous weather conditions.

During heavy rainfall, teachers have observed that students will avoid crossing hazardous streams and stay at home in safety.



Conversely, they are also able to assess when it is safer to stay at school (it is important to note that all of the schools in the district are designated safe places during storm situations, and are equipped with first aid kits,

lifejackets and lifesavers; teachers also all have completed a basic first aid course. Lower level primary school children now know not to touch electricity or outlets, and will ask for help from the teacher when they need to use power sources. Older children are aware of

the larger issues surrounding environmental stewardship, and will collect garbage in order to properly dispose of it, and have even become community advocates for tree planting and forest conservation.

**Education is empowerment;
through DRR education, children
feel capable, confident and
prepared to face adversity**

In Kon Tum province, the high degree of child and youth participation in community disaster simulation drills have led to a better understanding of DRR. Children who took part in these drills feel more confident and empowered; they are better aware of how to, for example, cross dangerous streams. In addition, their first aid training has made them feel more capable of assessing emergency situations. They now know when to seek assistance, in addition to providing very basic first aid in the event of bodily injury.



LESSONS LEARNT



CULTURE & LANGUAGE

ENVIRONMENT & ISOLATION

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

2. LESSONS LEARNT

2.1 Special Conditions in Uplands Areas



The unique geographical, cultural and socioeconomic conditions unique to uplands areas present special challenges to DRREIS delivery. The following lessons learnt chronicle these hurdles to effective DRREIS program implementation and delivery, along with how such difficulties can be overcome and indeed integrated into the project. Vulnerabilities are heightened in uplands areas, but as these communities are resilient and experienced in dealing with the difficulties natural disaster present, they have also developed unique capacities and coping mechanisms that must be lauded and incorporated into the DRREIS philosophy.

2.1.1 Different Cultural Environment

Language & Literacy

In many upland communities, traditional ethnic minority languages, such as Se Dang in Kon Tum and Thai in Nghe An, are the predominant means of communication

between community members.

Estimates of literacy rates in Vietnam place the total adult literacy rate (2005-2008) at 93% (UNICEF Info By Country http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/vietnam_statistics.html retrieved on



October 31, 2011). However, in rural

communities, this figure is very high. Research conducted by AUSAID in Lao Cai province, for example (Lao Cai being a previous BCDRM CECL project site) discovered that none of the adult women were literate in two of the most remote villages in the district (Australian Agency for International Development by the Centre for International Economics: Vietnam Poverty Analysis. Canberra and Sydney: AUSAID 2002).

It is important to note that true bilingualism is concentrated mostly in the younger generations as school children have been educated exclusively in Vietnamese over the past ten to fifteen years. The majority of men understand Vietnamese and many also read and write Vietnamese, but many women, in particular older women, know only their own language.

Because schoolteachers in uplands areas almost always come from the Kinh ethnic majority, it is important to note the difficulties of introducing culturally integrative curriculum. Although the teachers are readily willing and eager to work within their student's culture, there are serious structural barriers to such activities. As teachers are from outside the community, their knowledge is limited, and as most leave after a few years for other positions, their ability to culturally integrate is limited. Additionally, many teachers in the DRREIS initiative have indicated that they occasionally must seek clarification and additional translation assistance from Se Dang or Thai officials regarding certain DRR terms. This willingness to ask for outside assistance is to be lauded and reinforces the collaborative nature of DRREIS.

Cultural Belief Systems & Customs

Traditional Se Dang culture emphasizes the primacy of the group over the individual even more than Vietnamese society as a whole; educators at the Kon Tum project site have mentioned that their students are often modest and shy, reluctant to speak up in class and attract attention to themselves, as this can be culturally interpreted as arrogant or boastful behaviour. As a result, teachers must employ creative, culturally aware means of soliciting input and response from their students.

Traditional culture often intersects with the DRREIS initiative in ways that is difficult for an outside INGO to anticipate. As part of the educational initiatives in Kon Tum, schoolchildren observe and participate in an evacuation and medical emergency simulation drill. At the Dak Ta Lung commune drill, a young boy participated by portraying a victim injured during a landslide incident and in need of medical attention. Although his mother agreed to his participation, after the drill, she suffered intense fears that such activity might tempt fate and attract future bad luck. Therefore, she requested an animal sacrifice to propitiate the spirits. Her request was honoured; a pig was sacrificed, paid for by the local commune office with additional support provided by CECL.

The DRREIS process stresses the importance of integrating local cultural traditions into the intervention. Cultural specificities, especially indigenous knowledge and practices surrounding disaster, should be respected as part of a community's cultural heritage, a precious knowledge resource.

As an example, in Canada, First Nations cultural practices are integrated into the social service framework. During many social Many traditional minority cultures worldwide are under threat due to rapid modernization. Groups seeking to undertake DRR-related educational work within rural communities who wish to integrate indigenous knowledge systems into their work may wish to investigate the work done by JANI (Joint Advocacy Initiative Network), specifically its “Survey on Indigenous Knowledge on Disaster Prevention and Adaptation to Climate Change” (DWF October 2009). During social service conferences, meetings and training sessions concerning First Nations communities, elders are invited to inaugurate the event by offering prayers, blessings and performing traditional ceremonies. Similar activities could occur to launch the DRREIS in localities where such traditions are important. This step would assist in assuring community ownership of the initiative and ensure an acknowledgement and integration of traditional beliefs into the resulting DRR plans.

2.2 Socioeconomic Conditions Effecting DRREIS

2.2.1 Isolation: Geographic & Socioeconomic

Geographic

Although all of CECI’s project sites are within a 30 km radius of a city, all of them can be classified as isolated due to extremely poor road conditions. In many

cases, roads are damaged by the quarries and mining companies that exploit the region’s natural resources. These companies make minimal, if any, repairs and forego maintenance. In some cases, communities use private roads built by the mining companies not maintained or managed by government. River crossings are makeshift and, during the rainy season, often inundated by flooding. It is difficult for outsiders to grasp the hurdles that poor transportation creates for the individuals who reside in these remote villages.

A recent newspaper article in the Quy Hop district stated that:

“In the rainy season, water level may reach approximately 1.4 meters; people living near the river must carry their kids piggyback through his. Those living far must also take a bicycle with them; as a result, the parent must cross the river 3 times per class session. Those who cannot send their children to boarding school may cross the river up to 9 times per session. Nevertheless, people are making an effort to help their kids attend classes.

We met Ms. Vi Thi Lien, Thai minority, Ban Thinh village, as she was on the way to the Chau Dinh elementary school. She told us that she must carry a bike as well as carry her kids piggyback up to 18 times a day to go across the Nam Chong river. In July and August, because of difficult living conditions, school authorities frequently allow kids stay at school during lunchtime.” The Community - Key Role in Disaster Prevention - news item by Hoàng Thị Hoa, TTXVN/Vietnam+, 28/09/2011).

Socioeconomic

Geographical isolation, coupled with an ethnic minority background, tends to be correlated with a lower socioeconomic status:

“Ethnic minority people are amongst the poorest in Vietnam. Ethnic minorities make up 14 per cent of the population but account for 29 per cent of poor people in Vietnam.” (Vietnam poverty Analysis Report prepared for the Australian Agency for International Development by the Centre for International Economics, Canberra and Sydney, 9 May 2002).

In Dak Koi commune (Kon Ray district, Kon Tum province), 44% of the population is classified poor; 23% of the villagers in Dak To Lung are classified poor. In the Tu Mo Rong district (also Kon Tum province), Dak To Kan commune, 56.6% of the population lived in poverty: in Dan Ro Ong, the percentage is 73.5% while in Van Xuoi the total is 48%, or nearly half the population (CECI VCA Summary Reports). The statistics are similar in Nghe An province, pointing to a much lower standard of living in these rural areas when compared to Vietnamese society as a whole. As a result, communities have reduced resources to cope with disaster, resulting in less ability to plan for and mitigate the effects of natural disaster. Additionally, communities that rely on subsistence farming are less able to prioritize their children’s education, however much they might want to, when the practicalities of survival become pressing.

BEST PRACTICES



EMPOWERMENT PERSPECTIVE

COOPERATION & RESPONSIBILITY

SUSTAINABILITY & DURABILITY

3. BEST PRACTICES

3.1 Empowerment Perspective

The CECI BCRD (Building Community Resilience to Disaster in Uplands Areas of Vietnam) takes a community-based empowerment approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR). The DRREIS initiative, which is the part of the BCRD program aimed at youth education, is organized around the principles of any successful community-based intervention. It employs an empowerment perspective to encourage grassroots participation. Such approaches are successful because self-determination and community ownership are an integral part of the process; therefore, sustainability and cultural relevancy is more likely to occur than in a top-down, hierarchal approach.



3.1.1 Cultural Competency

One of the main tenets of the CECI BCRD project is the assertion that indigenous knowledge is integral to applying community-based approaches to DRR. Cultural specificities and indigenous knowledge surrounding disaster should be respectfully regarded as part of a



community's cultural heritage. Many traditional minority cultures worldwide are under threat due to rapid modernization. Groups seeking to undertake culturally sensitive DRR work within rural minority communities may wish to investigate the work done by JANI

(Joint Advocacy Initiative Network), specifically its "Survey on Indigenous Knowledge on Disaster Prevention and Adaptation to Climate Change" report (DWF October 2009).

Clearly, any outside intervention such as the DRREIS must also respect and work with culturally specific views and practices surrounding DRR that may seem, to outsiders, as unscientific and irrational. For example, the Xo Dang people in Kon Tum province determine their safe place for evacuation through divination. The village leader will perform a complex hand clapping sequence in order to select the correct location with the help of the spirits. Once the appropriate site is selected by divination, animal sacrifices and rituals are performed to sacralize the selected location. Understandably, after such selection, the Se Dang are reluctant to change their evacuation site. It can be difficult for cultural outsiders, who might conclude logically that another site is more appropriate, to understand and accept the validity of this process. It is important that outside agencies work hard at finding ways to appreciate, understand and value these practices, and incorporate them into any educational initiative.



3.1.2 Visual Communication is Important

Visual communication tools, used in a participatory way, form the cornerstone of the DRREIS initiative. The Riskland game, for example, is modeled on the familiar "Snakes and Ladders" game, but is organized around important DRR concepts. These ideas are conveyed not only through the written word but also through the eye-catching and graphically pleasing game board itself. Additionally, flip charts have been created by CECI and Plan staff to be used in training. These charts feature detailed illustrations of DRR concepts, from depictions of landslides and floods, to instructional illustrations of pre-disaster preparation and evacuation procedures. This visual approach to communication is not only found in the DRREIS educational component, but is also a part of the BCRD project approach as a whole (*BCRD Lessons Learnt*, p. 17-19).

3.1.3 Learning by Doing

All of the DRREIS activities involve a high degree of participation; this is congruent with the BCRD project philosophy. "Learning by doing" is an



excellent creative approach that has been found to be successful by various technical experts in CBDRM (Community-Based Disaster Risk Management). (*CECI: BCRD Lessons Learnt; Garcia, Lolita Caparas, JICA*

Project Expert Team, "Community Based Disaster Risk Management" presentation at the Disaster Prevention Engineering Workshop, Danang, July 2011). We recommend that any educational initiative take an interactive approach, avoiding lectures and didactic processes in favour of a more effective, collaborative process.

3.1.4 Provide Adequate Training & Mentoring Opportunities

Feedback from educators at both project sites stressed the importance of first aid training. Both the teachers and the students benefited from learning simple yet effective emergency triage techniques. We recommend expanding the first aid component in future DRREIS initiatives.

For the Kon Tum project site, the simulation drills proved to be most important in terms of offering children training in rescue skills. CECI field staff, local trainers, government officials and educators all found that Messages need to be repeated to “ensure that key messages and training techniques” are not forgotten:

“In Kon Tum province, after having suffered the consequences of Typhoon Ketsana (Storm no. 9, 2009), the key awareness-raising technique that was of most value was the simulation drill, which occurs at regular intervals in the community.” (CECI BCRD Lessons Learnt, p.20).

Communities participating in the BCRD project from Kon Tum province have made a commitment to conduct simulation drills at a regular basis, and are actively working with the schools to ensure the participation of children.

3.2 Cooperation & Shared Responsibility

Cooperation and Shared Responsibility Educational initiatives such as DRREIS must be actively supported by all community stakeholders in order to guarantee project longevity and sustainability. This includes government policy creators, local government officials, educators, school administrators, parents, and of course the children themselves. Relationship building, integral to any community-based initiative, is a process that cannot be rushed; true collaborations take time to unfold, but are well worth the effort invested. We recommend that special consideration be placed on the

participation of women and other vulnerable, often disempowered community members. By scheduling a drama performance for parents and extended family members, a window of opportunity is created within which additional DRR awareness raising and/or community dialogue can be opened up with these vulnerable family members. Secondly, in the interest of cultural integration, we also recommend that village elders, who perform an important role within Se Dang culture, be included in the DRREIS initiative.

Thirdly, we also strongly suggest that any NGO involved in DRR educational initiatives join ongoing efforts to advocate that the Ministry of Education and Training incorporate DRR lessons into the official curriculum. This integration is essential. Currently, all DRR educational activities must take place as an extracurricular activity. Moreover, there is no standard DRR curriculum offered countrywide; in some areas, students receive adequate DRR training; in other regions, students receive no education at all in disaster risk reduction. CECI, in concert with other NGOs working in the field of DRR, strongly recommend the adoption of a national DRR curriculum containing strategic regional adjustments, to be delivered during regular school hours.

3.3 Address & Plan for Funding & Budgeting of DRREIS

During INGO project implementation, mentoring and assistance should be provided to the schools in budgeting for DRREIS development and implementation. The creation of the

DRREIS curriculum, the training of teachers, and the creation or procurement of IEC materials are all time-consuming and costly endeavours. We recommend that assistance extend beyond simply providing the funds to accomplish these goals. As the end goal of these initiatives is project durability after NGO involvement ceases, we recommend actively mentoring the local schools, district and commune governments in order to provide them with experience in budgeting for future DRREIS activities.

3.4 Development & Revision of DRREIS Curriculum

3.4.1 Curriculum Recommendations

The following recommendations for additions to the DRREIS curriculum have been made by DRREIS educators, CECI field staff workers, and the program evaluation team. CECI views the DRREIS curriculum as an organic, evolving entity that can and should be creatively adapted and expanded upon by the communities it engages with. Such innovation will not only lead to excellence, but will also insure that communities assert ownership of the initiative, thus ensuring the project’s continuance.

Add Mapping Activities

We recommend that the interactivity and creativity of the DRREIS intervention be expanded in order to allow child participants the opportunity to express themselves through tactile experiences such as drawing. Children can, for

example, draw their own hazard maps, and also map out their evacuation route in the event of disaster. The VCA Manual published by the Viet Nam Red Cross also contains a transect walk exercise that could be incorporated into the curriculum, particularly for secondary school children. (*VCA Manual, Part II, p. 41-43*).

Consider Using Media to Heighten Impact

using Media to Heighten Impact
Similar to Plan's work involving video in DRR education, the Nghe An educators have recommended adding a digital photography component. This would allow educators the opportunity to have students go out and photo document natural disasters such as landslides and flooding, as well as the root causes of such catastrophes, such as deforestation. Students will create their own, community-specific DRR visual communication tools, with the added bonus of learning photographic skills.

Add Psychological Resilience to the Curriculum

Psychological resilience has been defined as the "capacity to maintain healthy, symptom-free functioning, or resilience, following PTEs [potentially traumatic events]." (*George A. Bonanno, Sandro Galea, Angela Bucciarelli, and David Vlahov (2005). Psychological Resilience After Disaster. Psychological Research, Vol. 17 no. 3*). Psychological resilience is a capacity that must be nurtured in order to ensure successful risk reduction in the event of a disaster. We recommend that the students be encouraged to self-define resilience, using concrete

examples from their own experiences. Allowing them this opportunity will naturally result in culturally appropriate psychological capacity building.

Disasters pose a grave threat to each individual's happiness and mental health. Educational initiatives should recognize and support the importance of cultivating strong and healthy minds in order to create resilient communities. Adult participants in the BCRD in uplands area project who received first aid training mentioned, during the current project assessment period, that they found the case studies addressing the psychological dimension of injuries (i.e. shock, trauma) most enlightening. We recommend adding a similar component to the children's first aid training curriculum.

Raise Awareness of the Physiological Impact of Disaster

Any educational intervention concerning the psychology of trauma should address the physiological effects of crisis (known as "fight or flight" syndrome) and how the adrenaline surge experienced during moments of crisis can assist or impair the brain's ability to make good decisions during a disaster. Common symptoms can be listed (i.e. racing heart, rapid shallow breathing, heightened senses, etc.) This component can include the participants sharing their experiences of how they experienced such symptoms during past disasters. Ways to calm down can then be identified by the participants (i.e. deep breathing, stretching, etc). Such physical activities are enjoyable to children, especially those in elementary school.

Raise Awareness of the Psychological Traumas Disasters Create

Disasters are catastrophic events that can cause huge losses for individuals and their communities. Family members die, become disabled or seriously injured; entire homes are swept away; livestock can drown, and entire crops destroyed. These losses inevitably cause grief and distress amongst the survivors. Presenting basic information on PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and the general psychological impact of disaster-related trauma upon communities would be educational for children. Children can be encouraged to identify their own successful coping mechanisms (seeking comfort from parents and grandparents, talking amongst each other, etc.) as well as their unhealthy ones (anger, acting out, depression/sadness, etc.). Mapping out adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies would empower children to make better choices when dealing with the psychosocial stressors disasters create.

Strengthen Cultural Integration

We recommend further incorporation of traditional cultural practices within any DRR-related education project targeted at uplands communities. As an example, in Canada, First Nations cultural practices are integrated into the education curriculum at both the elementary and secondary school. Schoolchildren attend powwows (a traditional festival involving singing, dancing and feasting), dancing competitions and drumming circles, and elders are invited to speak to the children, offering prayers, blessings and



other traditional ceremonies. Similar activities in the uplands context are important and show respect, provide cultural validation and allow traditional viewpoints to be further integrated into the DRREIS initiative.

3.4 Add Evidence-Based Approaches to Evaluation

Perhaps the most important recommendation is that any DRREIS initiative must adopt an evidence-based approach to evaluation. Administering a Knowledge Attitude and Perception survey as a benchmark (pre-intervention) and at other strategic times during the project (mid-point and post) will allow project coordinators the opportunity to assess knowledge, identify gaps and further refine curriculum in order to maximize knowledge retention and insure all learning objectives are met. Such evaluative tools are invaluable for funders, policy-makers and program evaluators, as they can provide important, empirical statistical data on the program effectiveness and outcomes. CECI recommends that any DRR educational initiative obtain a copy of CARE's KAP (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice) survey (*see bibliography*). At the time of press, CARE and Plan are working jointly on a second DRR-related KAP survey. These surveys can provide ideas and serve as a point of departure in the creation of a program-specific, relevant evaluation tool.

4. CONCLUSION

DRREIS (Disaster Risk Reduction Educational Initiatives in the Schools), is an essential part of CECI's BCRD (Building Community Resilience to Disaster) in Uplands Areas of Vietnam. This project report has presented its best practices concerning the importance and philosophy of DRR education, introduced basic DRR educational concepts and approaches, and has made recommendations specific to uplands areas of Vietnam based on CECI's own experience and lessons learnt.

The goal of this report is to assist other NGOs, educators, government authorities and related stakeholders interested in implementing similar programs in the region.

It is CECI's sincere hope that this information will prove useful to others interested in increasing community resiliency towards disaster in a community's most vulnerable, yet valuable members: children and youth.

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