



PRESS RELEASE

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**Consortium partners' representatives are available for interviews*

Amidst complex humanitarian crisis in ASEAN: Girls' and boys' right to education shall continue to be prioritised through Safe Schools Initiative beyond 2020

Bangkok, Thailand, 3 April 2019 – Education is one of the first activities suspended in times of disaster and crises. Damaged school buildings and access route increase risks of psychological stress and physical injuries to girls and boys, making them more likely to drop out of school. ASEAN continued effort to ensure girls' and boys' right to education is paramount for the region.

Children's right to education continues to be denied amidst natural calamities and human-induced disasters despite the region's achievement in making primary education compulsory across the region. In 2018 alone, AHA Centre records that the region saw 424 disasters affecting 27 million people and costing economic losses of 1.3 billion USD. ASEAN leaders recognised the importance of disaster risk reduction (DRR) in education sector and therefore, established ASEAN Safe Schools Initiative (ASSI) in 2013.

On 3-4 April 2019, the 3rd ASEAN Regional Conference on School Safety has convened a meeting of ASEAN Governments, including the Education and Disaster Management sectors and other stakeholders, to reflect on the progress of school safety initiatives within their countries and strengthen their commitment.

ASSI consortium partners comprised of Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision and Mercy Malaysia, have provided a technical support to the ASEAN governments to implement the region's school safety initiative. Vanda Lengkong, Disaster Risk Management Head of Plan International Asia said, "as we witness complex humanitarian crises in the region, the consortium partners remain steadfast in our commitment to the enhancement of ASSI. A wide range of technical expertise in ASEAN can be called up to support ensuring the protection of girls and boys before, during and after disasters beyond AADMER Work Programme and ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020".

In 2018, ASEAN endorsed the establishment of a regional cross-sectoral coordination platform for the ASSI that consists of representatives from the Ministries of Education and National Disaster Management Offices to coordinate the different school safety initiatives and promote the programme's sustainability.

Dr. Marla Petal, Senior Technical Advisor for Disaster Risk Reduction at Save the Children, hopes that with this regional cross-sectoral coordination body, ASEAN will collectively resolve to address emerging risks around school safety. The changing climate, urban risks, and conflicts increase children's vulnerability, discontinue learning activities and hinder the ASEAN efforts to achieve a resilient Education sector. "The conference will incorporate these concerns to be discussed and I hope that concrete steps to tackling them arise of this important meeting," Dr. Petal states. "Destroyed schools and interrupted education exposes girls and boys to the risk of abuse and gender-based violence given the pre-existing social norms."



More than 60 percent of ASEAN population are youth and children, an important segment to include, empower and engage while building the ASEAN community. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) advocates that boys and girls have the capacity to cope with shocks and stresses.

It has become evident that children across the 10 ASEAN countries are able to identify hazards within their schools, take action to mitigate them, and organise DRR campaigns through different outlets of communication. “With DRR training in school, I can help build the capacity of my peers and transfer DRR and climate change adaptation knowledge”, said a 12-year old girl from the Philippines.

“The pertinent question to ask now is how to find the means to scale-up the initiative. ASEAN’s partnership and collaboration with wider stakeholders, including the private sector, academia and youth, is vital and can be instrumental in generating more investment to build the resilience of children as they cope with disasters”, added Meimei Leung, the Asia Pacific Regional Director of Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs, World Vision. She also emphasizes the importance of periodic reporting that includes national achievements based on disaggregated data across gender, age and disability, and securing budgetary commitment that will foster better school safety policy implementation in the ASEAN countries. This will facilitate knowledge sharing and adaptation of sound practices.

The conference will provide a space for recognising the ASEAN School Safety Champion, launching the ASEAN Guidelines for School Safety Country Progress Reporting and promoting innovative approaches, tools, publication and case studies.

Continuous access to education is a right of all children and a top priority in emergencies. Regardless of the circumstances, ASEAN must put more collective effort to meet children’s right to education now and beyond 2020.

ENDS

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About Plan International



Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, our supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood. And we enable children to prepare for – and respond to – crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

We have been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years and are now active in more than 70 countries.

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. For one hundred years, in over 120 countries, we have protected hundreds of millions of children around the world and given them the chance to realise their potential. We give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn, and protection from harm, so that every last child is able to survive, learn, and be protected. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

About World Vision

World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities, in nearly 100 countries, to help them reach their full potential by overcoming poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

Everything we do has just one goal: the sustained well-being of children, especially the most vulnerable. We work with families, communities, and partners to ensure that children enjoy good health, are educated for life, experience the love, and are cared for, protected, and participating.

World Vision works around the clock to bring hope and life-saving relief to the most vulnerable, especially children whose lives are threatened in the wake of disasters. We help poor communities to take charge of their futures. We provide small loans and training that boost family livelihoods. We work with policymakers to change the way the world works for children.

About Mercy Malaysia

MERCY Malaysia is a not for profit organisation focused on providing medical relief, sustainable health-related development and risk reduction activities for vulnerable communities in both crisis and non-crisis situations in over 30 countries. Established in 1999, MERCY Malaysia recognises the value of working with partners and volunteers, as well as providing opportunities for individuals to serve with professionalism. We uphold the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and NGOs in Disaster Relief, and hold ourselves accountable to our donors and beneficiaries.