

FOSTERING AWARENESS OF RISKS FOR A SAFER AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

The Application of CHILD-ORIENTED PARTICIPATORY RISK ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING [COPRAP]

Tool from the Philippines

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Basic Introduction to the Selected Tool

The escalating rate and unprecedented level of disasters is evident across the globe, but no more so than in the countries of Asia. The impacts of disasters are natural as well as manmade, and have grown considerably in recent years. People in developing countries irrefutably suffer a greater burden, considering their multi-faceted vulnerabilities manifested in their physical, attitudinal and socio-economic conditions. The burden is doubled among the most vulnerable groups, especially children. Hence, the Center for Disaster Preparedness (CDP) has recognized the need to promote children's participation in disaster risk reduction and develop their capacities as agents in development efforts. Considering that they are directly affected every time a life threatening event occurs, it is essential to know how they perceive such events, rather than treating them as helpless individuals. The CDP's research team realized the potential role that the younger generation can play in identifying the various hazards present in their communities, identified feasible measures that might be taken to address their vulnerabilities and thus developed a tool called **Child-Oriented Participatory Risk Assessment and Planning (COPRAP)**. Furthermore, the children were also provided opportunities to identify their specific roles before, during and after a disaster. Young children aged 7-13 years old, living in the flood prone area of Barangay¹ Banaba, San Mateo, Rizal were particularly involved in this project.



The composite participatory toolkit included six new tools involving children and youth, developed from their activities: (1) Make me a Portrait, (2) Dangerous Things, (3) My Needs Before, During, and After a Disaster (4) Top 5 Problems, (5) Suggested Solutions, and (6) Our Suggestions to Those in Authority. These tools helped the children recognize risks, develop solutions to reduce those risks, and identify concrete actions.

Project Brief

The CDP remains firm in its advocacy of a child-oriented DRR approach. Under ProVention Consortium Research Grants, the CDP individuals received funding for an action-research project known as "MOVE" (Mobilization of Children and Youth to Offset Vulnerabilities for Empowerment). This was aimed to mobilize young people for capacity building to achieve awareness raising, skills enhancement and values formation so they can become empowered actors in disaster risk reduction. This was carried out in the community of Banaba, where a core group of children and youth ages 9-17 years old who were living in a high-risk flood zone were identified for the activity. These group of young people was named *Buklod ng Kabataan* [BK] (Children Bonded Together) and became one of the lead implementers of the research project activities. In the span of 14 months, the children and youth were attuned to vulnerability reduction and environmental protection concepts as well as involved in risk reduction activities including participatory risk assessment, DRR action planning, and DRR training and advocacy.

¹ Barangay (village) is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippine society.

Relevance of the Tool

The COPRAP tool was utilized to combat the high susceptibility of Barangay Banaba to hazards, by none other than the children themselves. The children, contrary to traditional adult notions that they are mere beneficiaries of assistance, were given an empowering role as DRR actors. With the aid of the said tools, the young generation was endowed with an opportunity to articulate their ideas about disaster risks, including community problems and solutions. Participatory and creative methodologies were utilized, such as role playing, drawing, interactive discussion and workshops to allow them to determine the elements-at-risk affecting them, to identify safe and unsafe locations, to determine appropriate behaviors and responses before, during and after a disaster and to address other potential threats. The tool helped the BK identify existing vulnerabilities, such as improper waste disposal, heavy rainfall leading to river flooding, lack of employment opportunities, high prices of rice and other commodities, densely populated housing, and health risks.

The tools also enabled the community to identify its own resources, and thus to develop its capacity for increasing its overall coping mechanisms. The tools, therefore, lead to the next process of community action planning, in which is the identification of areas that require priority action before, during and after a disaster situation. The series of discussions that transpired among the BK members while implementing the tool, also created an avenue for experience sharing. The past actions that the participants took to deal with emergency situations, as conveyed through their interactive dialogue, provided all the participating young people with relevant lessons and concrete good practices that will allow them to better cope with disaster risks in the future.



The young people were able to successfully execute the COPRAP tools most relevant to them, including Hazard Maps, Safe and Dangerous Places, My Needs Before, During and After a Disaster, Make Me a Portrait, Top 5 Problems and Suggested Solutions.

Integration of Tool in the Project Method

One of the objectives of the action-research project was to promote awareness of disaster risk reduction among young people. Since it was proven in a previous action-research project that a child-friendly participatory risk assessment process is vital to understanding the perceptions and roles of young people, the COPRAP tools were used in the MOVE project. The objective of strengthening the stakeholders' knowledge regarding the culture of safety and issues related to vulnerability and capacity enhancement, is aligned with one of the priority goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). The integration of the said tools made it possible for both girls and boys to learn the overall concepts related to hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities and subsequently to plan to mitigate those risks to help the entire community live in a safer place. Thus, COPRAP was identified as a significant training tool for young people.



Impact on the Community

Through the use of COPRAP tools, the children and youth were able to further strengthen their role as agents of change in their community. The results of the risk assessment process, which presented a concrete picture of the community's vulnerabilities, did not only benefit young people, but the whole populace. Being familiar with the hazards that can adversely impact their community allows them to collectively think of viable response measures that might help mitigate the damages disasters might cause. In the field of DRR, awareness raising is a crucial proactive measure for promoting a zero casualty scenario.

The community members were encouraged to embrace the child-centered DRR framework. With the concrete outcomes evident from the COPRAP training, young people were provided with an opportunity to be treated as able partners in promoting disaster safety and resilience. The capabilities demonstrated by the BK members in the risk assessment process helped to correct the traditional adult mindset that children are just beneficiaries. This meaningful project provided the young people an avenue for proving their worth and challenging common perceptions. Tangible outputs, such as the CBDRR action plan, justified the notion that children and youth can make substantial contributions in the planning and decision-making process for the welfare of the general populace.

The community members, especially parents, also viewed this initiative as an effective means of keeping young people out of trouble (i.e. smoking, drinking alcohol, and other misconduct). Holding training events such as COPRAP hones the knowledge and skills of the younger generation, helping them recognize that these efforts not only improve their individual circumstances, but also contribute to the public welfare. Getting children and youth to pursue development-oriented initiatives at an early age will be helpful in the future when they assume leadership and management roles. Furthermore, their social skills were enhanced over the course of the project. They came out of their shell and were able to nurture closer relationships with other children. In general, community members were pleased with the way the activity was implemented since the processes and mechanisms employed were participatory and interactive in nature.

Impact on the Implementing Staff

The successful implementation of COPRAP tools as part of the BK's capacity building activities became a fundamental channel for the staff to work toward their aim of mainstreaming children's participation in CBDRR work. Through the dynamic participation of young people and the guidance of some community members, the staff was able to gain further knowledge and experience on issues and concerns relating to vulnerability reduction and capacity enhancement for disaster preparedness. Since ideas and lessons came directly from the actual experiences of community members, they helped the staff establishing stronger mechanisms for guiding the formulation of realistic disaster risk reduction plans. The active sharing which enabled young people to convey their thoughts on hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities played a crucial role in identifying interventions suitable to the local context. Specifically, through the use of these tools, the staff was also able to contribute to the development of additional mechanisms that will ensure children's rights in CBDRM work.

The endeavor also allowed the staff to apply a pro-people approach to its development work. They were able to build on the children's existing knowledge and mobilize them to effectively address the immediate issues affecting them. From the planning up to the implementation phase, the children played a crucial role. The "voices" of the children were placed at the heart of the initiative, leading to the development of the children's capacities to contribute to the achievement of a safe and habitable community.

References

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