

SCHOOL WATCHING WORKSHOP ***Methodology, Evaluation & Case Studies***

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Introduction to the Tool

School Watching Workshop – An effective tool was introduced by MERCY Malaysia as a long-term effort under the umbrella of the School Preparedness Programme to promote disaster preparedness in schools all across Malaysia. The “School Watching Workshop” is a participatory risk assessment tool, where participants from the schools are involved in identifying the risks, vulnerabilities, capacities and resources to cope up with the risks in the school environment. “School Watching” evolved from the conventional “Town Watching” exercise, implemented as part of community or neighborhood planning efforts in the context of larger administrative units (such as municipalities or cities) to identify risks and vulnerabilities. Town Watching as a training methodology has its roots in Japan and is used to strengthen resilience by focusing on how communities can deal with a disaster before it strikes. School Watching is adapted to make school communities more resilient.

Project Brief

The School Watching tool was used in a groundbreaking project to create national-level awareness of disaster risk reduction efforts in schools. This project has put MERCY Malaysia at the forefront of the emerging field of risk management. This programme has also provided a platform for effective collaboration between MERCY Malaysia and the Malaysian Ministry of Education. School Watching Workshops (SWWs) form the first component of the School Preparedness Programme to raise awareness of disasters, and they are implemented in collaboration with the Education, Policy and Research Division and the School Division of the Ministry of Education. There are two modules of the SWW: School Watching Workshop Training of Trainers (SWW ToT) and School Watching Workshop with Students (SWWS). The target of both SWW modules is to promote a culture of disaster preparedness and increase the capacity of schools and school communities to respond to disasters. In addition, this programme has also helped teachers to develop Emergency Preparedness Plans for their school. These plans are endorsed by the Ministry of Education. Through SWW activities, participants are taught to identify and prioritise actions that both students and teachers can take to reduce their vulnerability to disasters at school.

Relevance of the Tool

Malaysia is prone to floods and the changing climate makes the country more susceptible to unpredictable disasters. Since children are the most vulnerable group in the community, efforts must be made to inculcate a culture of disaster awareness, preparedness and management. Children spend a large part of their time in school and it is therefore important that schools, which are to be “Safe Havens” for children, are prepared for such emergencies. Schools must therefore improve their resilience.

The main objectives of the School Watching Workshop are to:

- Promote a culture of disaster preparedness
- Increase the capacity of schools and students to respond to disasters

School Watching is perceived to be an effective tool as it helps sensitise schools as well as communities at large to the importance of evaluating the risks in their environment. It gives these vulnerable communities opportunities to share their experiences, views and opinions for the purpose of finding solutions to mitigate the risks. School Watching Workshops facilitate the development of informative maps of the current situation in schools. Put all together, these activities help to collect

ideas from teachers and students on the mitigation of risks, and thereby support the development of a consolidated action plan to be utilised before, during and after a disaster.

Methodology of the Tool

School Watching Workshops are implemented in the following manner.

Step 0: Learn about disasters

In this step, school communities are sensitised to risks by learning basic information about disasters, vulnerabilities, and safety measures to mitigate such risks. The school communities are also informed about the School Watching concept. The modules are developed as follows:

- Educate your school community about disasters
 - Mechanisms of natural hazards
 - Historical events
 - Causes of local vulnerabilities
 - Countermeasures
 - Safety tips to prepare for disasters
- Introduce the School Watching concept
 - Objectives
 - Schedules of activities
 - Expected results

Step 1: Know our town/Field survey

Each group will need an instant camera, a notebook and a map of the area where they are going to conduct their field survey. The group members are assigned specific roles, such as group leader, navigator, photographer, note-taker, map drawer and presenter of the final results.

Each group walks around the school (or the part of the school that is assigned to them) to identify and study strong points (e.g. useful facilities, evacuation routes, etc.), weak points (blocked drains, low lying areas where water can build up, etc.) and other important elements important to disaster reduction. Participants take notes and photos of five positive points and five of negative points. Observations should be made from the viewpoint of the school community, which has to live in the school everyday and evacuate in the case of a disaster.

Step 2: Develop a map

The groups transfers their field observations and assembled information onto a large-scale map, using colours to make it easier to understand and attaching photos taken during the field survey (see Photo 1).

Step 3: Conduct group discussions and give presentations

Group members discuss the problems they have identified and consider possible solutions for effective disaster reduction at the school. Mapping, sharing thoughts and talking with each other around the large-scale map helps stimulate and facilitate active discussion. The outcomes of these discussions are arranged in a table.

Hazards	Solutions	Responsibility of

Table 1: School Watching Table

Each group then presents its map and table to the rest of the participants. The group discusses: “What are the potential problems?” “What are possible countermeasures?” “Who should be responsible for implementing those countermeasures?”

Participants identify one problem that can be solved at the school level and develop an Action Plan to solve that problem. This includes step-by-step instructions for solving the problem, identification of the person responsible for solving the problem, and a deadline for when a solution will be achieved. The trainers and other groups are encouraged to ask questions and give feedback.

Risk Reduction Activities	Target Group	Timeframe	How it will be achieved?	Resources available	Resources needed	Responsible person

Table 2: Risk Reduction Action Plan

Impacts of the Tool

The impact of the tool was measured as of December 2008, when 406 teachers and school counsellors and 296 students participated in workshops throughout Malaysia. All the primary and secondary schools were selected in consultation with the District Education Office and the State Education Departments of the respective states. The questionnaire was conducted to examine and document the impact of the School Watching Workshop on the participants. The impact was evaluated by measuring the degree to which awareness and preparedness had risen among the key stakeholders after the workshops were conducted. From the evaluation forms sent to SWW participants several months after the SWW was conducted, researchers learned that 92% of the respondents had conducted at least one disaster preparedness activity at their school. More than 50% of the respondents agreed that the SWW had raised their awareness of risk mitigation and changed their attitudes about the preparedness process, helping them shift from a reactionary attitude of response to one that involves a risk reduction planning process. Also, 56% of the respondents indicated that the SWW helped to raise their awareness of risks, hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities and in turn, had encouraged them to initiate disaster preparedness at school.

The feedback also indicates that the information participants received from the SWW was in fact shared with their families. Nearly 75% of respondents indicated that their family had some level of understanding of disaster preparedness and almost 80% had either already discussed with their families what to do in an emergency after the workshop or intend to do so in the future. This shows that the SWW is an effective tool for spreading knowledge about disasters and preparedness to communities through teachers and students.

This survey showed that a majority of the participants in the workshop have already implemented some kind of disaster preparedness measure at their school based on the knowledge and skills learned during the workshop. From this result, we could say that one of the objectives of SWW – to motivate participants to train other students and teachers at their school as well as to increase awareness of disasters and disaster preparedness among the participants – was achieved. This also goes a long way toward promoting a culture of disaster preparedness, which is one of the objectives of the School Preparedness Programme.

Resources/References

Ogawa Y., Fernandez A.L., Yoshimura T. (2005). Town Watching As A Tool For Citizen Participation In Developing Countries: Applications In Disaster Training. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 5-36

School Watching Workshop: Programme Report – December 2008 (2008). Kuala Lumpur: MERCY Malaysia

School Preparedness Programme: School Watching Trainers' Manual (2008). Kuala Lumpur: MERCY Malaysia

Case Studies

Case study 1: SK Sri Gading, Johor Darul Takzim

SK Sri Gading is a primary school located in Batu Pahat, Johor. This school had experienced severe flood from 23 December 2006 until 3 January 2007, resulting in loss of school equipments such as computers, books and other teaching materials.

Disaster preparedness activities conducted at school after attending the SWW:

- Disaster education and awareness raising activities with students and teachers
- Evacuation drills with the school community (see Photo 2)

Case study 2: SK Kuala Pari, Perak Darul Ridzuan

SK Kuala Pari is a primary school located in Ipoh, Perak. This school experiences annual flooding during the rainy season due to overflows of the nearby river.

Disaster preparedness activities conducted at school after attending the SWW:

- Disaster education and awareness raising activities with students (please refer Picture 3)
- Establishment of a Disaster Preparedness Committee
- Vulnerability and capacity mapping around the school with students

Case study 3: SK Desa Tun Hussien Onn, Kuala Lumpur

Disaster preparedness activities conducted at school after attending the SWW:

- Disaster education and awareness raising activities with students and teachers (see Photo 4)
- Video presentations and IEC materials prepared for students
- Special talks on disaster preparedness with students



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

Case study 4:

THE TOWN WATCHING EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN SAN MATEO, RIZAL, PHILIPPINES

By Jesusa Grace Molina, Center for Disaster Preparedness

The Banaba community's perennial experience with flood and river bank erosion encouraged the populace to become educated about disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies that would contribute to the development of a safe environment for all. One of the preparedness measures carried out was a participatory risk assessment. Town watching was among the tools successfully utilised by the community to perform this assessment. The core group of children and youth, named Buklod ng Kabataan or BK (Children Bonded Together), were the primary actors in the town watching activity. This group was comprised of individuals aged 9-17 years old who were mobilised to undertake efforts related to vulnerability reduction and environmental protection. The formation of the group was realised through the ProVention Consortium applied research grants program implemented from October 2007 to December 2008. The research program aimed to enhance the knowledge, skills and disaster risk reduction attitudes of young people so that they could become competent partners in development work.

The town watching tool created an avenue for young people to develop better knowledge of the hazards present in their neighbourhood. The awareness they acquired allowed them to understand the threat that various risks pose to their property, livelihoods and lives. This activity raised their awareness of both the dangerous and safe places in their communities as it encouraged them to walk around identifying weaknesses and strength.

The BK members were divided into two groups and asked to examine their community, particularly those areas identified to be at highest risk. Each group was told to assign individuals to serve as leader, photographer, documenter, and presenter. As they walked around their community, the BK members became quite adept at identifying the hazards that contribute to their vulnerability. These included the widespread disposal of garbage in their neighbourhood, houses made of light materials and built near the river, exposed electrical wiring that could cause fires, and open pig pens which emit a foul smell and could lead to health risks.



Other than the mentioned threats, these young people also identified the capacities they might be able to mobilize should the need arise. These included existing community resources, such as the elementary school and village chapel, which can be used as evacuation centres, flood markers, reading centres for awareness-raising activities, sandbagging and planting of bamboo trees, and the presence of Buklod Tao, an active people's organisation. From their observations, they created a community-based hazard map highlighting the aforementioned vulnerabilities and capacities. Apart from making the map, they also discussed the issues that increase their vulnerability, measures that could be adopted in response to their conditions, and the concerned stakeholders who would need to be mobilized to address these problems. The BK emphasized that improper waste management should be treated as a priority concern given its sizeable contribution to flooding and the outbreak of disease. To address these problems, the young people thought of several possible solutions, including clean-up activities, extensive awareness campaign strategies with civic organisations and NGOs, and coordination with local authorities for better implementation of laws concerning DRR and environment. Besides non-structural measures, the BK also stressed the importance of enhancing drainage facilities and strengthening river banks, tasks that need to be undertaken by the responsible government agencies.

The experience of forming this BK group testified to the role that young people can play as capable actors in DRR. Like adults, they possess the ability to become reliable agents of change if given the opportunity. What they have achieved has proven that they can make important contributions to safe and sustainable development for the present and future generations.