

Promoting Disaster Preparedness and Response at School Level in Myanmar

Background

Cyclone Nargis had not only a severe impact on population with approximately 140,000 either dead or missing and nearly 20,000 injured (in some villages up to 80% of the total population died), but as well on the education sector, damaging or destroying between 50-63% of schools (approximately 3,600-4,500 schools with 1,200 totally destroyed schools). The Village Tract Assessment (VTA) showed that 57% of schools were left with unusable latrines, raising serious concerns for public health. There was widespread loss of school furniture, teaching and learning materials. The Humanitarian Community activated the Cluster Approach and focused during the emergency relief phase on reestablishing access to formal and non-formal education for all children through repairing damaged schools, providing temporary safe learning spaces, and distributing various education materials including essential learning kits, school-in-a-box, teacher kits, text books, furniture and blackboards. This emergency relief phase can be considered as completed by end September 2008 and the Education Cluster is shifting focus to the yet to be accomplished goals of the Education Cluster Response Plan, mainly school re-construction and emergency preparedness and response capacity building. The preparation for the coming focus on these two topics started beginning of August with many organizations preparing their support for school reconstruction.

At the same time a working group on Disaster Preparedness and Response Education was formed within the Education Cluster with the support of UNESCO, and met four times between 26 August and 1 October 2008.

Objectives/Goals of the Disaster Preparedness and Response Education Working Group

The Education Cluster looks at Disaster Preparedness and Response Education (DPRE) as an integral and very important part of their emergency education response in order to reduce the impact of any future disaster.

The objectives/goals of the DPRE WG are the following:

- ❖ Recommend to all education stakeholders existing resource materials and best practices on DPRE relevant to Myanmar
- ❖ Promote DPRE to become a national priority and normal practice implemented in all schools of Myanmar
- ❖ Facilitate the organization of training, seminars, workshops and potentially model implementation of DPRE at school level

Strategies of the DPRE Working Group

The Education Cluster believes that the most effective level to achieve less damage (human and material) is an intervention directly at school level.

In order to ensure that every school in the Nargis affected areas (and later on every school in Myanmar) is preparing themselves well for a future disaster, the DPRE WG will promote the following 3 areas:

1. Every school is setting up their Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan

This entails every school (teachers/headmasters, students and parents/community members) going through a process of:

- ✓ Risk assessment
 - ✓ Capacity assessment
 - ✓ Identification of concrete actions to improve the schools preparedness and response capacity
 - ✓ Set up a concrete plan, implement the plan and evaluate the implementation
- at this moment, there is no ready existing material available in Myanmar nor is any organization working on establishing such guidelines for schools and train the schools
 - the DPRE WG will promote the establishment of such a program and play an initiator role in potentially organizing and funding events like presentations, seminars and workshops
 - the DPRE WG will advocate for DPRE becoming an essential part of any Child Friendly School under the dimension 4 'A CFS is a school which is healthy, safe and protective' (the Myanmar National Education Plan is aiming at all primary schools to be Child Friendly Schools by 2015). Good quality DPRE is helping to achieve Dimension 4 of the CFS Concept.

2. Complimentary self study materials are available to all children as part of the Life Skills Curriculum

There is an existing Life Skills Curriculum used in all primary schools in Myanmar and soon as well in all secondary schools. In that Life Skills Curriculum there is one lesson on natural disasters and how children can protect themselves.

This lesson already provides knowledge and skills to children however more would be helpful. Taking into account that adding another lesson might be a major undertaking and putting further strains on the already heavily charged school curriculum, the additional skills building could be delivered in some complimentary reader friendly material for self study by the children themselves which can be shortly introduced by the teacher during that lesson on natural disasters and made readily available in each school. Ideally for primary school children this should be materials with not too much text and could be in the form of a story illustrated in 'comic-style'

- the DPRE WG will advocate for major organizations to produce such child friendly materials at the primary school level and, if possible, also at the secondary school level.

3. The Education Stakeholders of Myanmar do have access to a DPRE Resource Pack

The Education Cluster has the role of providing technical support to its members. In order to fulfill its role in relation to DRR/EPRP and in view of a wide variety and high number of existing materials, the DPRE WG will identify existing resource materials which are relevant for the Myanmar context, and share with all members and interested parties an annotated bibliography on selected materials and make them available in electronic copies on the website of the Myanmar Humanitarian Community/ Education Cluster.

Recommended materials will encompass following areas:

- ✓ Risk Assessment
 - ✓ School Disaster Preparedness Plan
 - ✓ Drills and Practices
 - ✓ Teaching/Learning Materials for the use in classrooms
 - ✓ Recovery and Support
- the DPRE WG will make these materials not only passively available on the Education Cluster website but as well actively introduce and share them with Education Stakeholders in Myanmar.