

NOT RISKING IT: CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Report from the Virtual Lab
November 2020



“Integration and cooperation at all levels is key in strengthening overall community resilience”

Ministry of Education

“Damages incurred from disasters and climate change has far exceeded Malaysians’ risk reduction capabilities”

National Disaster Management Agency Malaysia (NADMA)

“Moving from government to governance – empowering secondary stakeholders as primary ones (children and youth) is necessary – they can be PART of the solution as highlighted by their strong and vocal activism”

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

“Climate change and COVID-19 work hand-in-hand; there are compounded risks on children and climate change impacts on education is multi-faceted”

UNICEF

“We are living in an age of the greatest pandemic the world has seen for the last 100 years, the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a pandemic which we need to fight together, and for all that to happen we need all sections and sectors involved”

MERCY Malaysia

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Executive summary

Participation and contribution of children and youth towards climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives and in policy-making processes are integral in ensuring that the future generation is not only more prepared and resilient but also assume a prime role as “agents of change” towards the development of the country.

Responding the CCA – DRR nexus with issues of sustainable development, children’s rights and protection, and the COVID-19 pandemic, require urgent attention. This lab addressed challenges and gaps in CCA and DRR policies and implementation in Malaysia, and recommended for the country to have its own comprehensive strategic and action plan for transformative CCA and DRR in ensuring coherence, synergy and impact. Challenges and gaps highlighted through the thematic discussions are as follows:

Policy and Legal Frameworks:

1. Exclusion of vulnerable groups.
2. Specialized and contextualized approach.
3. Lack of children and youth-sensitive CCA and DRR policies/guidelines.
4. No cohesive CCA and DRR policy/laws.

Financing:

1. Most funding available are reactive in nature (e.g. disaster relief) and are not for preparedness efforts.
2. Low financing opportunity, as financing CCA and DRR are not seen as ‘good investment’.

Multi-stakeholder and cross-sector coordination:

1. Stronger and seamless cooperation is needed from all stakeholders representing various sectors.
2. Great need to bridge findings and data from all sectors for better data-centric planning.
3. Voice of children and youth need to be empowered through various communication space.

The challenges and gaps do come with opportunities for all stakeholders to work on, and they include:

1. Community based engagement as a means to ensure inclusion of children and youth from indigenous, disability, lower socio-economic, and rural/semi-urban community groups.
2. Utilization of existing platforms that are already in place but only require improvement for efficiency and effectiveness, for example:
 - a. Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development’s Children Representative Council; and
 - b. Ministry of Education’s Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia.
3. Utilization of social media and technological platforms/applications.

Some of the achievements and best practices that Malaysia can leverage, replicate, scale up and improve include:

1. Production of publications on CCA and DRR in local language with simplified scientific language by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).
2. Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ)'s continuous environmental campaigns and programs at the city level.
3. Yayasan Sejahtera's livelihood programs, which indirectly benefits the welfare of children and youth.

The identified challenges and gaps were addressed by experts from the lab by linking strategic and complementary inputs to mainstream and localized transformative action plans – promoting participatory approaches through direct engagement with policy and practice actors together with engagement with the youth and children group.

Recommendations and key actions highlighted during the lab are summarized in the table below:

THEMATIC FOCUS	RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME
Policy-making	Amendment of existing CCA and DRR policies and guidelines.	To integrate climate change and DRR aspects into national law/ policies and inclusion of children and youth as key stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-ministerial collaboration • NGOs • Private sector • Academia 	High	1 - 2 years
Engagement platform	Digital and physical platforms created to foster and mobilise children and youth climate champions and science communicators.	Digital medium (social media and virtual platform) and implementation of DRR and CCA clubs/ societies in schools. Both aim to inculcate continuous DRR and CCA learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources • Technology sector • Subject matter experts (local champions, NGOs, academicians, and private sector) 	High	1 - 3 years
Formal education	Digital and physical platforms created to foster and mobilise children and youth climate champions and science communicators.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standardised CCA and DRR curriculums. 2. Introduce related extra-curricular activities. 3. Development of capacity building opportunities for teachers and training resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Finance • Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation • Ministry of Education • Learning institutions • Private sector 	High	3 - 5 years
Community engagement	Training programs	Collaboration with National Environmental Health Action Plan (NEHAP) Malaysia and other organizations championing this agenda.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEHAP • Ministry of Health • District/City councils • NGOs • Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources 	Medium	1 - 2 years
Learning resources	Make available diverse resources such as books, videos, films, etc. in local languages and adapted into local context.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and youth • Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) • Creative agencies • NGOs • Private sector • Academicians 	Medium	1 - 2 years

About the lab

MERCY Malaysia and UNICEF Malaysia partnered to advocate for stronger CCA and DRR efforts, especially for children and youth in the country. This partnership and its objectives are consistent with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction that broadly articulate intensified actions on CCA and DRR respectively in the education sector.

The increasing frequency and severity of hazards observed within this region testifies to this global predicament, and Malaysia has not been spared from the impacts of the climate crisis, which further exacerbate threats from the COVID-19 pandemic and many other interlinked risks and hazards – these are a threat to children's basic rights.

Uncertainties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt across many sectors and by all segments of society thus system wide transformation is a much needed reform to ensure emerging threats such as biological hazards, climate related extreme events and its cascading effects are factored in the planning, policy, development, research and implementation related processes.

As the evidence has clearly shown, the climate crisis and environmental degradation act as threat multipliers to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The CCA and DRR research and policy context in

Malaysia has witnessed some progress in the areas of national advocacy for policy change, development of tools and guidelines, documentation of good practices, advocacy for strengthened local action, and strengthening of local networks.

Despite the progress achieved so far, the region is still facing many challenges and gaps especially within the context of ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable groups like children and youth, especially those from minority backgrounds including those in poverty, indigenous peoples, migrants and children with disabilities.

Active participation and contribution of critical demographics such as youth and children and vulnerable groups especially those that are economically disadvantaged, people with disabilities, girls and women needs to be amplified within the current climate adaptation and disaster management system.



Whilst children may not have been directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the indirect impact from efforts undertaken to contain the pandemic that is the closure of schools and adoption of remote learning, will not only widen the existing gap and inequity within the education system but also illuminate other critical issues pertaining to health, welfare, physical and mental wellbeing of children.

These impacts on children and the education system as a whole due to COVID-19 act as a warning to everyone – while the impacts from COVID-19 have been devastating, the potential impacts from the climate crisis could be much worse if action is not taken now.

Addressing the CCA and DRR nexus amidst the worsening climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian agenda require urgent attention. And, most importantly, Malaysia needs its own strategic action plan for transformative CCA and DRR in ensuring coherence, synergy and impact.

OBJECTIVES

1. Form overall understanding of the country's response to the climate crisis status quo through dialogue mapping in preparing towards the establishment of concrete outcomes at the end of the lab.
2. Heighten policy and practice action through inclusive transformative CCA and DRR processes to support existing local and regional initiatives (e.g. NADMA Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023, AADMER Work Programme and the Asia-Pacific Action Plan).
3. Amplifying the voice of children and youth, as well as of other stakeholders in integrative CCA and DRR policy process through long-term collaboration between stakeholders with MERCY Malaysia and UNICEF Malaysia.
4. Establish action plan on the expansion and next course of action from this event and its partner.

Opening remarks

DRR AND CCA - OPPORTUNITIES IN DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE MEASURES

Dato' Dr. Ahmad Faizal Perdaus

President, MERCY Malaysia

The inevitable reality of climate change is a scientifically proven fact and the diverse range impact of this reality involves complex interaction of variables and factors, which affects all of humankind and nature. It is an issue that concerns everyone and yet the brunt of the impact of climate change will be felt and lived by the future generation that is the children and youth.

MERCY Malaysia has actively worked in the disaster risk reduction and management sector through the approach of the total disaster risk management cycle since 2004. In the last 7 to 8 years, MERCY Malaysia has recognized the need to address DRR in tandem with climate change adaptation as the interconnected relationship between both events pose an opportunity to develop sustainable and innovative measures.

COVID-19 poses not only health challenges but also economic challenges. We also have to prepare ourselves (organizations) for the perfect storm – pandemic, climate change and other extreme weather events. No more than before that these scenarios are likely to happen in Southeast Asia.

Whilst organizations and entities participating in this lab are leading the CCA and DRR agenda, and are subject matter experts in their respective domains, low-levels of awareness and knowledge on this matter shows that there is much work that remains to be done and this is an endeavor to be undertaken by the multiple and diverse stakeholders participating in this lab.



TOWARDS STRONGER CHILD-SENSITIVE DRR AND CCA ACTION

Dr. Rashed Mustafa Sarwar

UNICEF Representative to Malaysia and Special Representative to Brunei Darussalam

A recent report from UNDRR shows that 91% of major disaster events are related to extreme weather and can have devastating impacts on children, families, income and developmental progress towards their future lives. Like many countries, Malaysia unfortunately has not been spared the impacts of climate crisis.

Annual incidents of haze resulting in temporary closure of schools, illegal dumping in Kim Kim River due to poor waste management, extreme flooding and water supply shortage issues, to list a few examples. As we are all joining here together, I strongly believe that we passionately and practically care about our climate and our children.

Fixing the environment is not a one day or even one-year business; it takes decades. We should not lose the opportunity to talk and act upon it. CCA and DRR for our children are important.

UNICEF believes that the way is through stronger child-sensitive CCA and DRR. CCA and DRR research and policy context have progressed in the last few years in areas of national advocacy and policy changes, development of tools and guidance and documentation of good practices. Despite the progress, the region faces challenges and gaps. This includes protection of vulnerable groups such as children and youth in the East Coast region, the B40 group, and of indigenous origin.

We have to extend our attention and support to children that are harder to reach in terms of geographical and citizenship status aspects. The world is no longer what it was a few years back and this poses a unique set of challenges for children and youth today. If we were to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and fulfill child rights according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we have to equip children and their families with skills, knowledge and tools to bounce back from environmental stressors and shocks.

2020 has been a challenging year full of learning opportunities. I am very optimistic and a strong believer that together we are empowered to address these challenges.

Summary of keynote address

CCA AND DRR – BY AND FROM COMMUNITIES

Datuk Dr. Aminuddin Hashim

Director General, National Disaster Management Agency Malaysia (NADMA)

The COVID-19 pandemic is another dimension of an emerging risk and hazard that requires integrated disaster risk management planning and management. Whilst both convergence and divergence in classification of disasters exist, the magnitude of direct and indirect impact of disasters also depends on the vulnerability level of the population. Findings from a study concluded that in Malaysia, vulnerability towards occurrence of a disaster is influenced by poverty, awareness, perception, attitude, experience, and social relations.

Community resilience involves gauging of various structural, non-structural, economic, socio-economic and cultural factors. Cultivation and inculcation of climate and disaster resiliency in communities is a continual process that requires participations, engagements and collaborations of various sectors and stakeholders. At the core of success and impact of any DRR/CCA policy lies the acceptance and adaptation of these measures by and from the community.

NURTURING CLIMATE AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY THROUGH EDUCATION

Dr. Azhar Ahmad

Director, Educational Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Education

Children and youth are two of the most vulnerable groups most exposed to the impact of climate change. While the current national and global narratives are more focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system and its effects on the development of children and youth, the pandemic is also exposing existing vulnerabilities and gaps within the current education model and framework, which will be exacerbated due to the changing climate. Strengthening the capacity and knowledge of both students and teachers through a comprehensive CCA and DRR curriculum, training and inquiry based learning approach are imperative.

Children and youth should not be seen as passive recipients - instead their voice and thoughts should be nurtured through education for them to rise as advocates for climate change and responsible behavioral agents and communicators. To achieve this objective, multi-sectoral partnerships should be accelerated for comprehensive and inclusive climate strategies in both the academic and non-academic fields.

INTEGRATING DRR AND CCA AS A NEW PARADIGM IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Dr. Animesh Kumar

Deputy Chief of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Regional Office for Asia and Pacific

The three key climate and DRR global frameworks and agreements – the Paris Agreement (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change); the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; and the Sustainable Development Goals, all aim to collectively inspire a safe and prosperous world. While climate change is now recognized as the single largest driver of disaster risk, the world needs to be safe from disasters in order for it to be developed sustainably. However despite the interdependence of these documents and their plan of action, the fragmentation observed from the silo approach adopted by countries in the implementation of tools and actions, hinders the effectiveness of policies and programs on ground.

Thus, new paradigms in disaster risk management is integral in ensuring integrated disaster and climate measures takes into account of risks and sustainable development as the core of implementation. This integrated DRR and CCA approach is also of both participatory and inclusive in nature. The empowerment of stakeholders as primary actors in this climate crisis cannot discount the role and contribution of children and youth.

The visceral display of involvement of children in the global climate protest in 2019 clearly shows that the climate crisis issue is something that concerns and is of utmost importance to this demographic. Thus, the onus is on all other stakeholders including the government, on how the energy, voice and contribution of children and youth can be effectively and equitably incorporated into policy and decision making processes. The four key areas where children and youth can play a role are (1) data; (2) technology; (3) communication; and (4) innovation.

The COVID-19 crisis with its multifaceted impacts on all walks of life is a very clear example on why countries must move from managing risks in a silo government approach to an inclusive governance approach where all key actors and stakeholders can and must participate.

Climate related disasters are increasing and their impacts are growing. Like COVID-19 has shown us, other risks are lurking that could trigger the next mega disaster. A whole of society approach demands that we include those that have the largest stake in the future of our planet.

Setting the stage

Hafiz Amirrol

Head, Strategic Management Unit, MERCY Malaysia

PREAMBLE

The increasing frequency and severity of hazards observed within this region testifies to this global predicament, and Malaysia has not been spared from the impacts of the climate crisis, which further exacerbate threats from the COVID-19 pandemic and many other interlinked risks and hazards.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

Globally, nearly 160 million children live in areas of high or extremely high drought severity, with over half a billion children living in extremely high flood occurrence zones. Extreme heat will become a growing and a regular problem in many parts of the world. Public education on how to manage it will be vital.

Household air pollution leads to 4.3 million deaths annually, and 13 per cent of these are deaths of children under five-years old. Rising global temperatures have made many regions suitable for transmission of malaria, one of the world's leading killers of children under the age of five. This condition increases suitability for dengue fever and are likely to intensify due to the ever changing climate.

ISSUE STATEMENTS

1. Climate change will fundamentally alter Earth's climate system in many ways that threaten children's physical and mental wellbeing.
2. Today's children and future generations will bear a disproportionate share of the burden of climate change, which will affect child wellbeing through many direct, indirect, and societal pathways.
3. The uncertainties associated with climate change and its mitigation—coupled with the fact that the costs of climate change mitigation policies need to be paid now, but the benefits will accrue in the future—make it difficult to enact appropriate policies.

HYPOTHESIS

When we invest in children, we invest in the future. Investing in a child's health, development and their environment bring benefits throughout life, and across generations.

CALL FOR ACTION

1. Advocate for stronger CCA and DRR efforts, especially for children and youth in the country.
2. Intensify actions on CCA and DRR in the education sector towards Malaysia's own strategic action plan for transformative CCA and DRR.

Exploring DRR and CCA measures through a child-centric approach (regional and global perspective)

Seonmi Choi

Regional Advisor Environment and Climate Change
UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

WHY A CHILD-CENTERED APPROACH TO CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT?

1. Children are more exposed to the larger impacts of climate and disasters. As an example, children are more susceptible to majority of climate-sensitive diseases.
2. During their early life-stages including during fetal development and puberty, children are already susceptible to climate and environmental risks.
3. Children are more exposed to climate and environmental risks than adults. This include risks of physiological and behavior change.
4. They are dependent on caregivers.
5. Children will bear the brunt of climate change far longer than adults, given their younger age and number of years ahead of them.
6. It is their right to have a healthy and sustainable environment.

GLOBAL CLIMATE MOVEMENT BY CHILDREN

1. Global Week for Future Climate Strikes were organised leading up to the Climate Action Summit.
2. On 20 September 2019, more than 4 million people protested, many of them children and youth, in about 4500 locations across roughly 150 countries.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history
2. Climate change threatens children's survival, development, nutrition, education, and access to health care – all of which are enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (commonly abbreviated as the CRC or UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children.

The Convention defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national legislation.

As of 8 September 2020, 196 countries are party to it, including every member of the United Nations except the United States.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

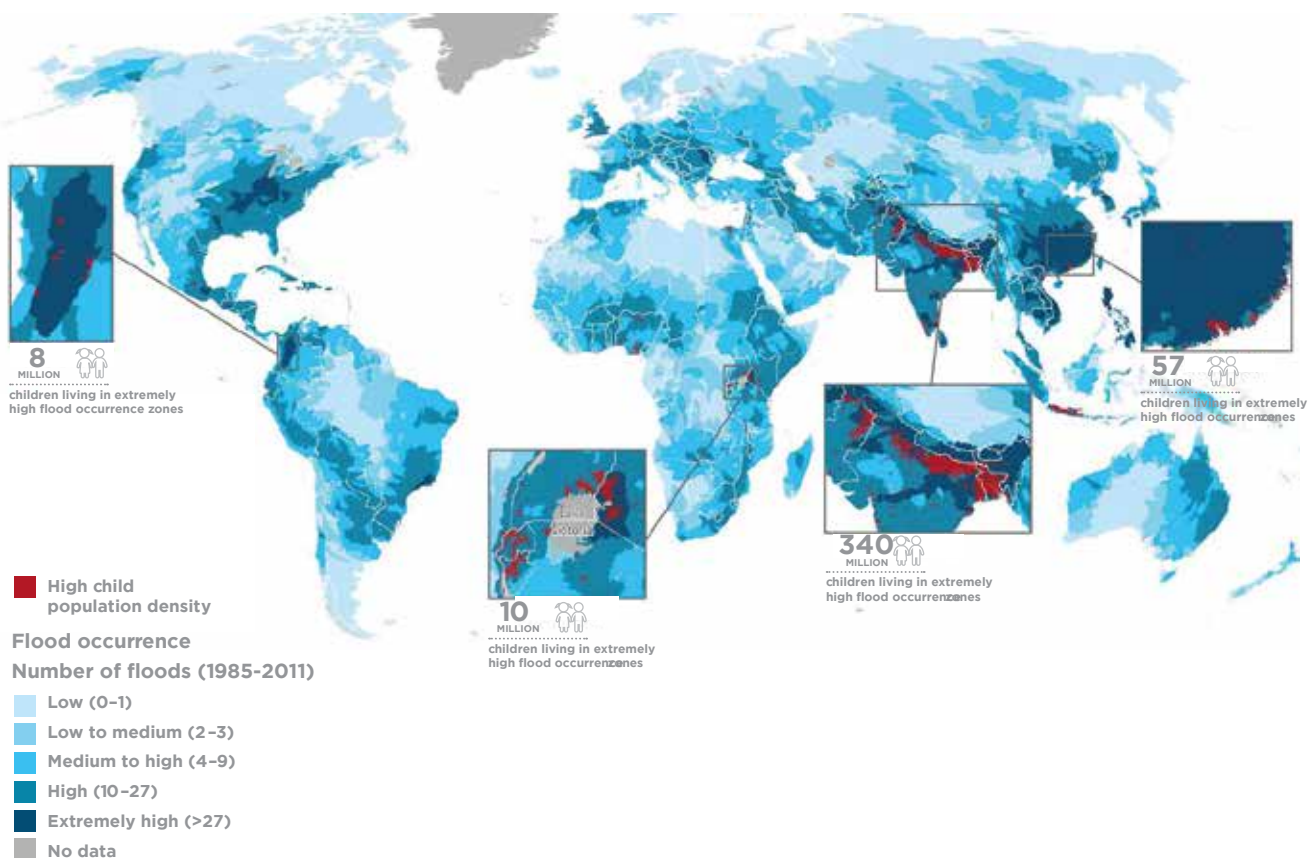
The UN Human Rights Council resolution on the rights of the child through a healthy environment is committed to develop ambitious mitigation measures to minimize the future negative impacts of climate change on children to the greatest extent possible by holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels/ pursue efforts towards 1.5°C.

It also supports the development of adaptation plans and to make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development in order to take effective measures to ensure that the effects of environmental harm do not affect disproportionately. The resolution also aims to strengthen the collection of disaggregated data, while monitoring childhood exposure and assessing children's rights impact of proposed policies.

THE GLOBAL SNAPSHOTS:

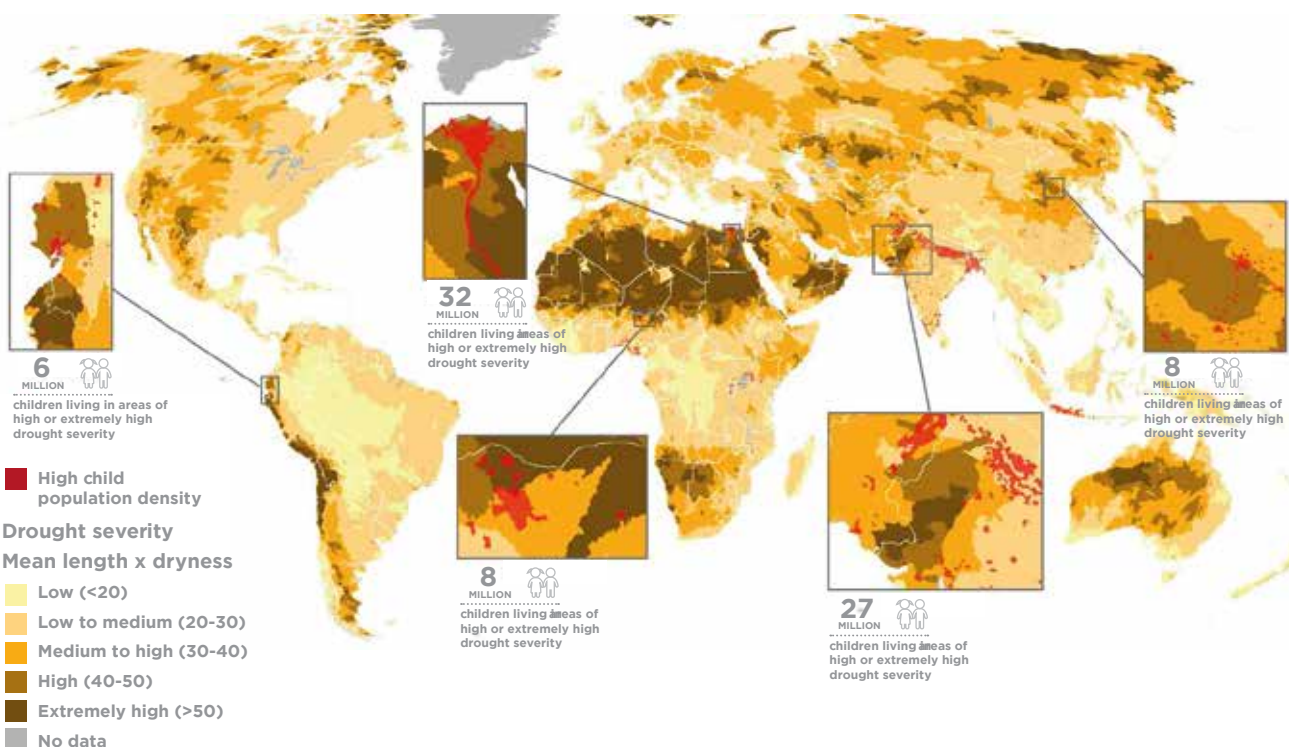
Floods and impacts on children globally

More than half a billion children live in extremely high flood occurrence zones.



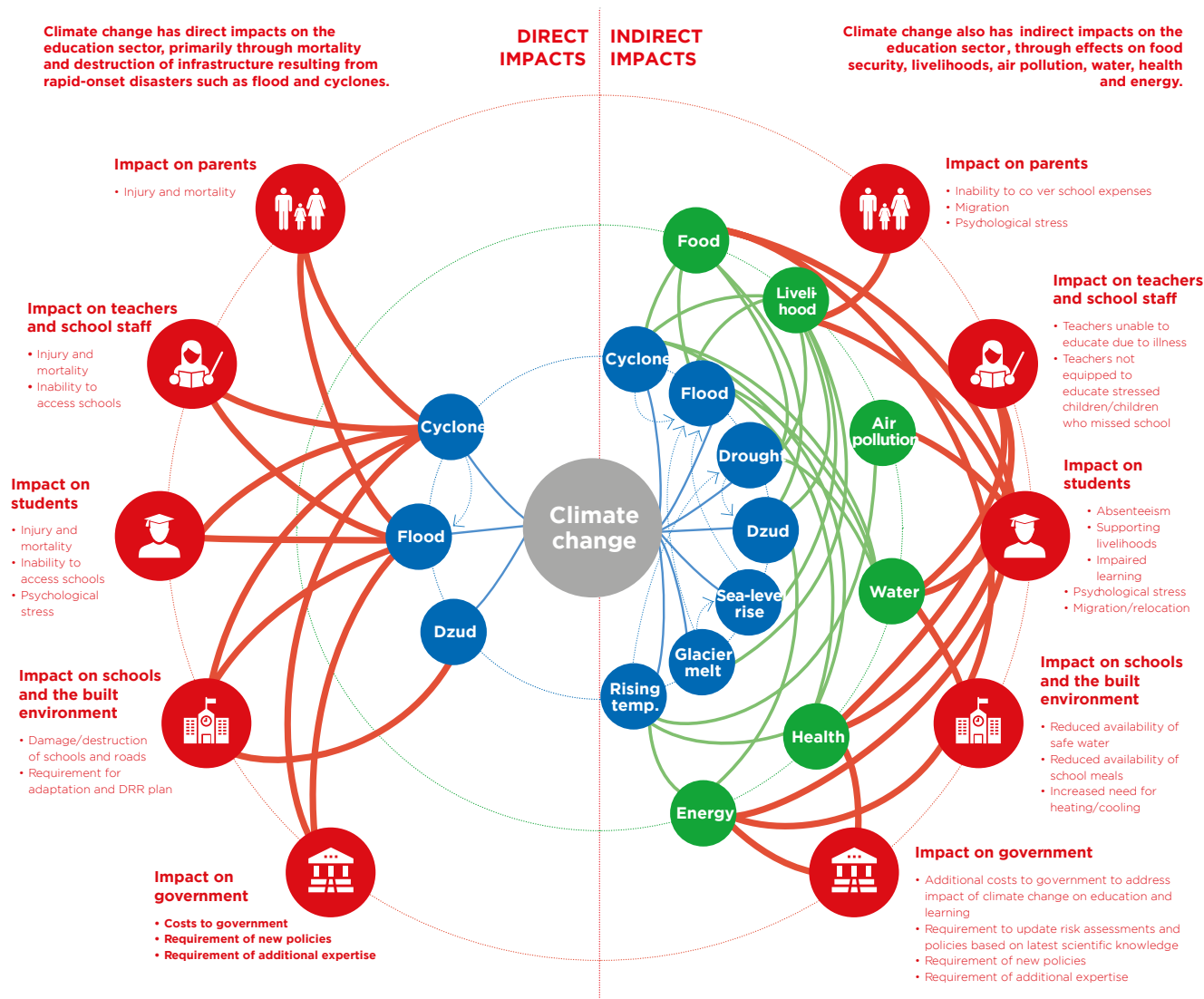
Droughts and impacts on children globally

Nearly 160 million children live in areas of high or extremely high drought severity.



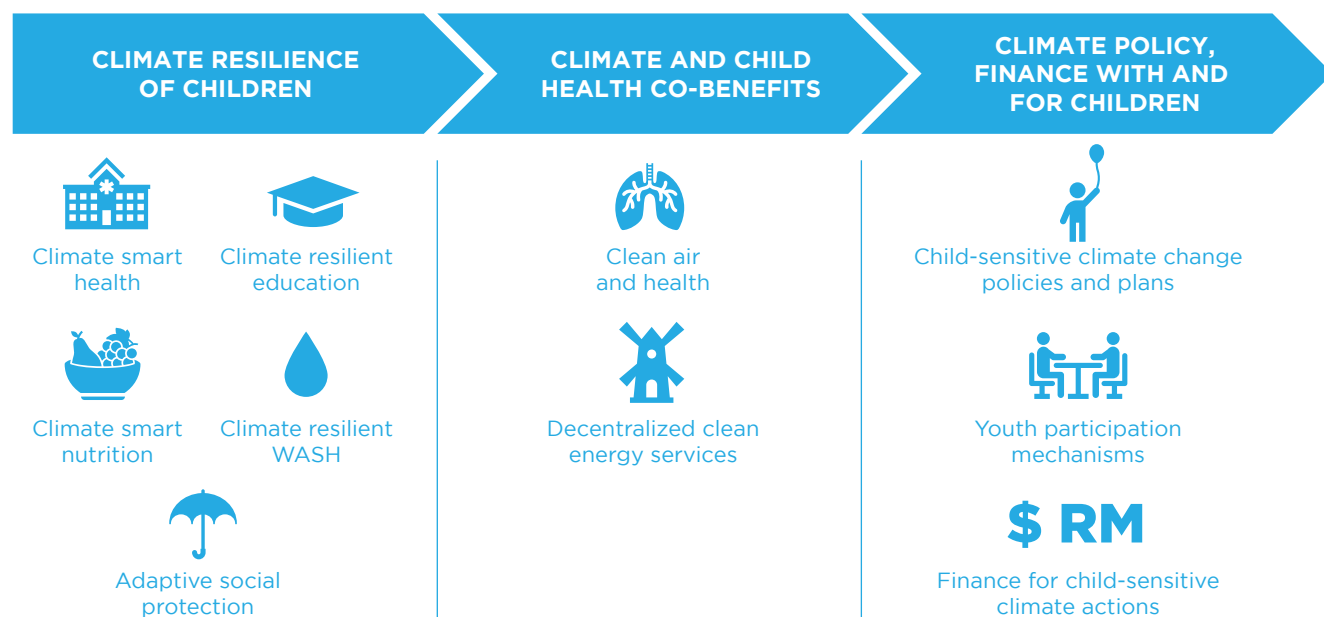
Climate impacts on education

Direct and indirect pathways



Source: UNICEF, 2019 - It Is Getting Hot: Call for Education Systems to Respond to the Climate Crisis.

UNICEF East Asia Pacific Climate Action Priorities



Exploring DRR and CCA measures through a child-centric approach (Malaysia perspective)

Professor Dr. Mazrura Sahani

Epidemiology of Environmental and Occupational Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISKS ON CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Climate change and environmental degradation pose significant threats to children's health because children have unique metabolism, behaviour, physiology, cognitive and development characteristics. They are far more sensitive than adults to toxic chemicals in the environment, and are among the worst affected by climate change.

For example, children are highly sensitive to air pollution because they breathe more rapidly than adults, and their physical defence and immune systems are underdeveloped. They are more vulnerable to heat stress, hyperthermia, and renal disease.

DRR AND CCA IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia established its National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction in Malaysia (MyDRR) with the goal towards achieving sustainable development and resilient communities through DRR. It includes DRR mainstreaming in national development at all levels by strengthening monitoring systems, early warning and information dissemination on disasters, and to develop a culture of resilience to current and emerging hazards and disasters at the community level.

The National Adaptation Plan integrates elements of DRR from the Sendai Framework and the SDGs to guide systematic implementation of no regret adaptation. Other initiatives include the establishment of the ASEAN Partner Institutions on Climate Change Adaptation (ASEANadapt)¹, and U-INSPIRE², both by the Southeast Asia Disaster Prevention Research Initiative, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (SEADPRI-UKM).

Both initiatives aim to inform decision-makers on scientific advancement in the region, as well as to empower Malaysian youth in Science, Engineering, Technology, and Innovation (SETI) in building disaster resilience at the national, regional, and global levels by strengthening partnerships.

¹The ASEANadapt links and informs decision-makers on scientific advancement in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in Southeast Asia region. Malaysia is progressing positively by investing in enhanced capacity for DRR, disaster preparedness and building resilience at all levels with various types of interventions.

²U-INSPIRE is empowering the role of Malaysian youth and young professionals to support national DRR and climate change initiatives by strengthening the partnerships, interaction, networking, communication, discussions, and sharing of best practices. A comprehensive National Adaptation Plan would be developed to guide systematic implementation of no regret adaptation measures for all the sectors in Malaysia.

POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL FROM THE 11th MALAYSIA PLAN (2016 – 2020)

Climate Change Adaptation: General Policy

1. Focus on building resilient infrastructure.
2. Strengthen natural buffers – focusing on enhancing terrestrial and marine biodiversity through conservation measures.
3. Strengthen the management of rivers and coastal areas (continuation of conservation efforts).
4. Increase resilience in the agriculture sector – improve food security.
5. Support research and development especially in agriculture-climate modeling.
6. Increase awareness on the health impact of climate change (climate related diseases).

Disaster Risk Reduction: Action Oriented

1. Strengthen disaster risk management – the policy, regulatory and institutional framework of DRM.
2. Incorporate DRM into development planning, evaluation and implementation.
3. To establish a national crisis and disaster management centre.
4. Improve disaster detection and response capacity .
5. Long term planning on flood mitigation including flood forecast and warning system.

ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN MALAYSIA CHILD-SENSITIVE?

Initial assessment of existing climate and environment policies and plans, and identification of gaps and opportunities

1. The legal assessment covers across the areas of environment, climate change, public health and child protection under the supreme law of the Constitution.
2. For environment, the main policy and law are the National Policy on the Environment Malaysia 2001, and the Environmental Quality Act 1974 under the purview of Department of Environment

3. For climate change, we have the National Climate Change Policy 2009. While there is currently no specific law addressing climate change adaptation in Malaysia, the Renewable Energy Act 2011 has been formulated to mitigate climate change across sectors.

4. For public health, the most relevant law is the Prevention and Control of the Infectious Diseases Act 1988 administered by the Ministry Of Health.

5. Finally, for children, we have the National Child and National Child Protection Policy and the Child Act 2001 under the purview of Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.

Legal assessment findings

The assessment found that the legal framework of the four specific areas in Malaysia have been distinctly formulated to respond to the identified problems in each of the sectors for the past several decades. Subsequently, these sectoral-based legal frameworks have different objectives, and respond to different target groups despite having an overlapping subject matter of interests.

The assessment also found that although the climate change policy has a direct reference to children as one of its major stakeholders, the policy has yet to be translated into explicit actions within the law. The current measures under the law are inadequate to protect the best interests of children from harms associated with climate change and environment. In summary, the findings concluded:

1. Environmental protection, public health and children's protection are four distinct concerns;
2. Administered by different policies, laws and regulatory body to respond to problems in each sector;
3. Have different objectives, and respond to different target groups despite having overlap in subject matter;
4. Climate Change Policy has a direct reference to children, but it is not translated into explicit actions within the law; and
5. Mitigation and adaptation measures under the law are not adequate to protect the best interests of children from climate change and environmental harms.

Thematic session 1: Exploring disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation measures through a child centric approach

DISCUSSION FOCUS

Key gaps and challenges in the integration of child-centered CCA and DRR in the following areas:

1. Policy and legal frameworks
2. Finance
3. Multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral coordination

DISCUSSION OUTPUTS

Key points on policy and legal frameworks

1. No cohesive CCA and DRR policy that is child-centric: Current CCA and DRR policies in Malaysia focusing particularly on children (or child-centric in nature) are severely lacking – whilst there is a significant variety of policies covering such issues, as highlighted by the various ministries in their keynote presentations, children seem to only be addressed through “micro-methods” or as a secondary thought.

This case can be best exemplified through the fact that there is no cohesive climate change/environmental curriculum implemented within the educational system; instead, elements of climate change/environmental studies are incorporated into other subjects such as Islamic studies, civic studies and the likes.

2. Leaving no one behind: Lack of engagement/participation from marginalized groups ranging such from the rural poor and urban poor, to the Orang Asli communities. As highlighted by two groups, it can be very difficult to engage with said communities on what efforts are being done to tackle climate change and DRR due to a variety of reasons; ranging from the lack of awareness through inadequate communication, funding and political will to inform and invest in aforementioned communities. Comprehensive education is necessary and it must be accessible and inclusive for all, also taking into account the varying needs of such diverse group of communities.

3. Continuous preparation for the future: Legal frameworks addressing CCA and DRR initiatives in a child-centric way is lacking – as seen in the education sector, there is no ‘stand-alone’ act that addresses the need for CCA and DRR education. Current and forthcoming policies must be frequently revised multi-sectorally to ensure it is reflective of the current situation. The basic

essence of DRR is to prevent and prepare for future crisis, hence policies must not just be reactionary in nature but to have a stronger preparedness stance – there must be continuous preparation.

4. Educating the educators: The role of teachers is pertinent as providers of education – teachers must be educated, trained and supported in order to effectively teach young minds of the necessity for CCA and DRR action and initiatives. As highlighted by members from the Ministry of Education, there is already action to diversify their pedagogical approaches through inquiry-based learning and taking on a more hands-on approach to develop youths' interdisciplinary skills, which will enable them to make linkages on social changes within the context of the changing climate.

The Ministry of Education has had a history of conducting workshops with teachers (in cooperation with NGOs) to enhance their teaching skills with regards to CCA and DRR, but again, these are grounded within the overall education training and are not standalone. There is also no monitoring and measurement mechanism in place to assess teachers' capabilities on teaching CCA and DRR, let alone the CCA and DRR capabilities of children.

Innovative teaching methods need to be encouraged – not just focusing on syllabus in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom. It is essential that we address the gaps within the education sector as there is a significant missing link not highlighted enough between climate change and children's health in the current education policy in Malaysia.

5. No one-size-fits-all approach: Like the complex and diverse nature and impacts of climate change and DRR, there is no one-size-fits-all approach that would work on the Malaysian population. Local community needs and their knowledge and interests must be integrated into CCA and DRR policies, to ensure that subsequent action is inclusive and customized to the needs of all communities.

As highlighted before, there is great diversity within the marginalized populations in Malaysia (i.e. urban poor, rural poor, undocumented migrants, Orang Asli communities) hence policies must be reflective of such differences. Whilst the education sector (especially universities) have made great strides in highlighting this through their case studies of the impact of climate change on different communities – this still only accounts for a small percentage of the Malaysian population.

There should be more replication of such studies applied to other communities in various locations in order to properly represent the needs of children in Malaysia, and to ensure that this translates into more effective decision-making and implementation of policies

Key points on finance

1. Allocation of funding: Adequate funding is necessary for the collection of data and case studies, which can help amplify the voices of those who need it most and to inform policy-makers for their policy making process. Breakout groups' participants suggested that funding could be procured through various means, particularly through governmental ministries such as the Ministry of Education and external parties such as UN agencies alongside support from the private sector.

To achieve effective child-centric CCA and DRR capabilities, there must be a strong private-public partnership as the business of climate change and its impact on our future generation should be the business of all.

2. Teaching grants: As highlighted by members from the Ministry of Education, funding from the government may be limited at this point in time, especially when taking into account the current pandemic and the efforts undertaken to curb the spread of the disease. However, this does not mean that ministries cannot take advantage of existing relationships with universities and other higher learning institutions that can offer their expertise and consultation in the formation of curriculums that are child-centric and climate change adapted.

Key points on multi-stakeholder and cross-sector coordination

1. Cooperation is key: CCA and DRR entities should be working together to reduce such risks as these threats, as highlighted by various keynote speakers, seem to run in tandem with one another especially now, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing us to think and act differently. All agencies, be it governmental or non-governmental, must bridge efforts and come onboard together, keeping in mind both to act from the bottom-up and top-down approach.

2. Voice of the children: The involvement of children, as is the point of this entire lab, in mitigation efforts (CCA and DRR) should never be overlooked. The voices of children must be heard to get different perspectives on what should be improved. This also means exploring the possibility of involving children in higher-level discussion – at the end of the day, adults at the top of the societal structure could never have the full understanding, or have the first hand experience of children that are experiencing the impact of climate change and disaster, hence why it is important to provide a platform for them to express their grievances.

The ever-growing use of social media can be a platform to voice their needs as we have already seen in the recent years (through Greta Thunberg for example), to showcase their action and activism. As technology becomes more easily accessible, it is important to take on board this opportunity to be more inclusive in a low-cost manner and to move with times

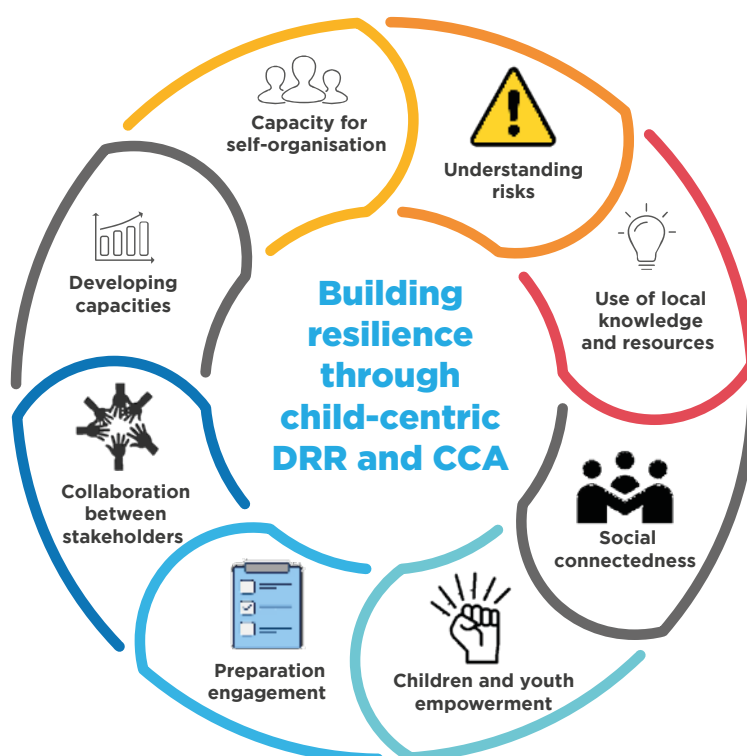
3. The importance of data: Data, particularly disaggregated data is one of the most important factors in advancing CCA and DRR initiatives that is child-centric and inclusive. Accessibility to disaggregated data representing various categories (i.e. people with disabilities, ethnicities, economic background and others) will help to inform CCA and DRR policies more effectively and accurately.

Subsequently, better data coordination from multiple stakeholders and research that targets diverse communities is essential. There is a great need to bridge findings and data from all sectors and there should be a transdisciplinary effort to share all findings and expertise outside our usual 'comfort zone' or 'discussion bubbles' for the good of all.

Additional points to consider

1. Understanding of the basic taxonomy of disaster: not to misconceive the definitions of man-made disasters and its impacts. It is important to have clear boundaries on what is man-made and what is not – without having a clear idea; it affects the population's capabilities on addressing this in strategies and action of going forward.

2. Understand the true extent of direct and indirect impacts of climate change and disasters on children: research needs to be ramped up and there must be strong emphasis on the evidence, resources and such. We must not just rely on personal experiences and stories as this can reduce all sorts of misunderstandings and disagreements, especially when accuracy and evidence-based decisions are required.



Voices of children and youth in DRR and CCA policies and measures

Bryan Yong

Policy and Research Coordinator
Malaysian Youth Delegation

EDUCATING CHILDREN AND YOUTH ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE: A SURVEY

U-INSPIRE and the Malaysian Youth Delegation conducted a one-week survey using Facebook and WhatsApp. This simple, rudimentary survey was not reviewed, but shows that the reach of youth NGOs should be taken advantage of. Some highlights of the survey:

97%

think that climate change will affect them in a bad way

92.6%

are worried that climate change or natural disasters are happening

85.3%

want to tell adults to tackle climate change too

67.6%

are worried that adults won't listen to them

97.1%

would like to learn how to tackle climate change

42.6%

are part of any environmental project/initiative in their school or community

94.1%

want to learn more about climate change from school

Most believes that the current education system can be improved to prepare children/youths to voice ideas and opinions.

44%

learnt about climate change from teachers at school

34%

learnt about climate change from co-curricular activities at school

22%

learnt about climate change from parents at home

We need to do better: enhancing laws, regulations, roles and responsibilities for child and youth protection and inclusion in disaster and climate action

Gabrielle Emery

Asia Pacific Disaster Law Coordinator
International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) Malaysia

BACKGROUND

The majority of people affected by many disasters are children, yet children are often excluded from disaster risk reduction activities. At the same time, climate change is leading to more frequent weather-related disasters, which has direct impacts for children – they disrupt child protection systems and worsen pre-existing tensions and conflicts, leaving children susceptible to violence, abuse, child labour, trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

IFRC conducted a survey to find out if disaster climate laws does really provide, or import by reference, relevant human rights protections and constitutional guarantees, especially to children. The survey includes review of laws in 20 countries from around the world, with detailed case studies in Brazil, Philippines and Uganda. It carried out interviews with technical experts from around the world, with an approximate participation of 730 respondents, which 260 are children.

FINDINGS

1. Laws and regulations are lacking; children's best interests are not being met.
2. The risk is high for violence, including SGBV, trafficking, separation, illegal adoptions, MHPSS, losing access to essential documents.
3. Related issues like access to education, participation in decisions that affect them, and age-, gender- and disability responsive approaches are also challenges.
4. In some cases there are laws covering specific aspects, but not others. It is very incomplete and partial.
5. Weaknesses in coordinated approaches within governments, and between the national and local levels; lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities; putting in place systems to address root causes of violence against children; and budgeting for and building capacity at local levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Relevant ministries and agencies should be mandated to have in place contingency plans fully covering child protection.
2. Child protection issues should be included in relevant laws, regulations and policies on disaster risk management.
3. Mandate the collection and analysis of age-, gender- and disability-disaggregated data as part of risk assessments and relevant processes.
4. Focus more on hearing directly from children to understand their perspectives in detail and find ways to enhance their agency to lead solutions.
5. Draw inspiration, as appropriate, from the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Setting to cover key protection issues.
6. Take a coordinated, multi-level and interactive approach to implementation of domestic laws involving child protection this includes allocating budget, training personnel, and working with local level governments and agencies too.



The policy brief, “We Need To Do Better”, seeks to improve knowledge of and evidence for strengthening child protection elements within laws and regulations related to disaster risk management.

Specifically, the study calls on governments and disaster agencies to counter the lack of attention, systems and inadequate investment in child protection and to recognize the consequences of disasters—including those increasingly influenced by climate change—on girls and boys around the world.

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Thematic session 2: Voice of children and youth in DRR and CCA policies and measures

DISCUSSION FOCUS

1. Do you consider children/youth opinion about CCA and DRR policies/initiatives?
2. Do your CCA and DRR policies/initiatives consider the welfare of children/youth?
3. What resources do you have to inform them about your CCA and DRR policy/initiatives?
4. What resources can you mobilize to educate children/youth on CCA and DRR?
5. Do you have plans in place to involve children/youth for your CCA and DRR initiatives?

DISCUSSION OUTPUTS

The general consensus was that most initiatives and policies were not explicitly focused on the involvement and inclusive participation of children and youth in CCA and DRR policy-making process, while participation in learning and capacity building activities, and opportunities do exist across different ministries and organizations. For example, while the Ministry of Education does not have a specific policy/directive that is CCA and DRR-focused, there are several CCA and DRR related topics that are embedded in Science subjects (in primary school syllabus), as well as in Geography subject (in secondary school syllabus). However, the latter is only offered as an optional course for Form 1 to Form 3 students.

Engagement and participation of children and youth can be conducted through both the formal education system and the informal learning and social activity platforms. The informal or co-curricular learning medium can be leveraged from the societal relationships between children and youth and their surrounding community and living environment. By engaging with local authorities and community figures, this is another form of engagement opportunity, where CCA and DRR awareness and knowledge can be disseminated to children and youth.

Examples of programs and initiatives conducted by local governments and civil society organizations:

1. Yayasan Sejahtera –livelihood programs, which indirectly benefits the welfare of children and youth.
2. Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) – conducts Go Green/ *Geng Pedal Sampah*.

Community-based programs are another form of promoting the CCA and DRR agenda to children and youth. At the same time, targeted engagement can be conducted focusing on key demographic groups such as children and youth from marginalized socioeconomic background and rural or semi-urban areas, where the children and youth groups face higher risk of climate change and disaster impact. This will ensure equitable access to CCA and DRR knowledge and information, and enable children and youth to be active contributors to CCA and DRR solutions.

Other resources that can be utilized are social media and other technological applications, as well as peer-to-peer learning approaches. Often, CCA and DRR seems like a continuum of complex and interconnected issues communicated only through highly specialized technical jargons, resulting in educators and children to face difficulty in understanding the concept and practical action of CCA and DRR.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) has undertaken the initiative to produce information booklets that promotes comprehension of CCA and DRR through simplified terminology and language and also adapted to the local context. This, resource coupled with training of teachers is hoped to help strengthen CCA and DRR education within the formal education sector.

Malaysia's national guidelines for disaster management are based on the Directive No. 20: National Policy and Mechanism on Disaster Management and Relief (MKN 20), which is the foundational directive for the operationalization of disaster risk management in the country. It establishes a coordinated mechanism for pre, during and post-disaster phases, determines roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved (from search and rescue to health, logistics and media) as well as outlines funding considerations.

However, it does not take into account climate change nor specifically mentions children and youth as one of the most vulnerable group in facing these impacts. The absence of children and youth as a standalone category in the directive, not only makes it harder to measure the qualitative and quantitative impacts of disaster and climate driven disasters on this demographic but it also hinders the identification of specific needs and welfare of children and youth within the climate change backdrop.

The occurrence of the on-going pandemic is predicted to increase in frequency due to increasing changes in climate. While children and youth are less directly affected by the pandemic, the indirect consequences of public health interventions undertaken to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, such as the temporary closure of schools and shift to remote/digital learning, impacted children and youth, especially those from the marginalized communities such as the stateless, urban poor and those living in rural areas with limited digital access.

Opposite page: Since 2007, MERCY Malaysia carried out School Preparedness Programmes (SPP) to support increase schools', students' and teachers' capacity towards disaster resilience. Since 2020, MERCY Malaysia is partnering with UNICEF Malaysia for more SPP activities in Sabah and Selangor. Note: photograph of a SPP activity conducted in 2019.

Beyond the conspicuous challenge on access to good internet and technological devices, other challenges such as mental health issues and access to food and safe environment rarely persist. But this could be the case of lack of reported cases, which can be a time bomb for the society in the longer run. Access to information on issues and problems like this must be made available to make sure that the wellbeing of children and youth of the community are protected.

Climate change solutions require an interdisciplinary approach with collaboration, commitment and coordination from various stakeholders, most importantly with children and youth groups. Excluding them in solution design and discussions concerning issues that threaten their future and welfare is no longer acceptable. The diverse background of this lab's participants and their respective achievements in furthering the climate and resilience agenda for children and youth are both noteworthy and at the same time echoes the need for collaborative and coordinated efforts.

Fragmentation of initiatives across various organizations, sectors and ministries makes it harder to track the efficacy and impact of these programs to its targeted demographic. Whether this collaborative approach is adopted in utilizing existing online platforms such as the Children Representative Council, which is founded by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, or the Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia founded by the Ministry of Education, the crux of any approach remains the same – active and meaningful participation and engagement of children and youth in the climate and resilience agenda is the way forward.



Thematic session 3: Defining actions, roles and responsibilities

DISCUSSION FOCUS

1. What are the type of actions and key roles that can be assumed by the private sector, civil society, academia and government agencies in empowering children and youth in CCA and DRR measures?
2. What are the foreseeable challenges that might be faced by the respective sectors listed above in ensuring representation of the future generation in climate and disaster policy-making and development/capacity building efforts?

DISCUSSION OUTPUTS

High priority

1. Amendment of existing DRR and CCA policies and guidelines: The impact of disasters and climate related risks disproportionately affect children and youth through direct means such as school closure, and indirect means such as food security challenges. The increasing systematic nature of risks demonstrates that frequency of climate-driven weather events or disasters are expected to increase, especially in the lifetime of the future generation. Hence, amendments of any DRR and CCA policies and laws have to specify the rights, welfare and protection of all children and youth.

No easy feat, any policy or law revision has to be based on data and evidence based information, will involve a variety of stakeholders such as non-governmental agencies, private sector, academicians and inter-ministerial collaboration, and require political will, commitment and good governance to ensure good execution, management and monitoring.

2. Mobilization of children and youth through common platform: Through both digital (e.g. social media) and physical (e.g. school clubs) platforms, children and youth can be engaged to participate in CCA and DRR discourses.

This platform can function both as a curation of CCA and DRR content, and help mobilize children and youth-led endeavors such as climate change school champions, science and communication competitions, and data collection for children and youth related climate research.

By equipping them with skills, resources, tools and knowledge, children and youth are able to be actively engaged and develop creative and innovative CCA and DRR solutions.

Medium priority

1. Early CCA education: Recognizing the importance of educating children on climate change and disasters, early CCA education is imperative to ensure children and youth are empowered in terms of knowledge and skills, and to tackle CCA issues and solutions practically. This would involve the collaboration, coordination and commitment from diverse stakeholders such as both federal and state governments, different ministries (e.g. Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation), the private sector and learning institutions.

The varied experience, expertise and resources made available by these stakeholders extend beyond their role as policy-makers, funders and subject matter experts. In fact, they are vital players in developing a comprehensive CCA education blueprint, operating system and action plan. This entails training resources and capacity building opportunities for teachers and staff, development of CCA curriculum in line with latest scientific inputs, strengthening of existing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, and the design of CCA based co-curricular activities.

Foreseeable challenges have to take into account of the expected delay in revising existing education policies and curriculums, and the financial implication of the revamping process, support of parents and teachers, and also the limited resources (manpower and expertise) of the Ministry of Education.

2. Climate change innovation and health-based community training programs through National Environmental Health Action Plan (NEHAP) Malaysia and other organizations championing this agenda.

3. Child and youth friendly CCA learning material resources: CCA learning materials are often limited to the English language and not adapted to the local Malaysian context. By involving children and youth from the early planning and content creation, in addition to stakeholders such as the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, creative agencies and subject matter experts from civil societies, academics and private sector, CCA and DRR information and knowledge can be conveyed to children and youth across the country in an easy to comprehend manner and in various local languages.

Despite the potential financial resources needed to execute this suggestion, diverse forms of educational materials enable inclusive learning for children and youth outside of the formal education system.

Lab summary

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ON HEALTH

Issues and challenges

1. Heat stress
2. Flood
3. Loss of livelihood
4. Water/food security (basic necessities)
5. Water management (disease)

Recommendations

1. Effective communication
2. Awareness to all level of society
3. Smart partnership
4. Strengthen local agenda
5. Continuous advocacy
6. Lifestyle change and consumer demand

FINANCING CLIMATE ACTION

Issues and challenges

1. Financing climate action is not seen as a good investment choice for financier.
2. But this issue can be improved by having clear financing effectiveness index and social effectiveness index.
3. Most financing support platforms (e.g. *tabung bencana*) are only for disaster response and not for preparedness.

Recommendations

1. Banking sector to start looking into feasible financing instruments.
2. Corporations and foundations need to manage CSR fund for focused, high impact programs and to help improve funding for disaster management.
3. To start into the prospect of sukuk in disaster mitigation and climate financing.
4. Islamic financing is one potential model (with USD 200-500 billion in zakat donation in OIC countries alone), but proper action plan need to be created to establish proper financing plan.
5. Green Climate Fund is available within the framework of the UNFCCC to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.
6. Adaptation Fund need to be created to support climate change adaptation initiatives.
7. Building trust and to have greater transparency.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

Recommendations

1. To measure the positive impact of climate adaptation plan (e.g. analysis on flood risk with designed solution to hopefully become a template for others (states and stakeholders) to follow.

2. Building database as evidence. Talking without proof will not work.
3. However, database needs to be communicated to the public effectively.
4. Strengthening governance in climate change initiative is important as an enabler in getting things happening on ground.
5. Incentives to the urban population is as important to the rural population as the risk profile is different but the risks imposed are similar if not greater.
6. Inception to children and toddlers for a better future for humankind.
7. Technological advancement is important but the human factor must not be pushed aside in adaptation and mitigation measures.

EDUCATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ACTION

Issues and challenges

1. National policy on climate change are only focusing on aspects of industry and technology.
2. Educator readiness is still at a low level.
3. Issues are not being addressed holistically.

Recommendations

1. Inquiry-based learning and climate change education must begin:
 - Climate change adaptation has to start early because learning from experience is learning too late.
 - Inquiry-based learning takes students through a process of reflection, scaffolded discussions, creating opportunities for students to share with others and explore solutions or actions.
 - Promoting inquiry-based learning is critical to ensure impactful climate change education especially in the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.
2. Building teachers capacity on CCA and DRR:
 - Investment in teacher training has to be strengthened for climate change adaptation is taught in an active and participative manner.
3. Improve education contents on climate change issues (e.g. educate, motivate and activate children, parents and communities).
4. Explore various educational methods – tools, knowledge and space for students to explore and understand climate change.
5. Empowering collaboration among professional and other stakeholders.
6. Integrate, instil, cultivate on climate change issues among public with different approaches.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY ON CCA

Recommendations

1. Put focus on strategic policies: transportation, energy, and solid waste management sectors.
2. Must cover both macro and micro level policy.
3. Transparency and public accountability are important to ensure the delivery and effectiveness of information.
4. Fair and uniform legislation on environment.
5. Bottom-up level enforcement rather than top down.

Closing remarks

Dr. Khor Swee Kheng

Health systems, policies and global health specialist

In addressing the issues of CCA and DRR in the education sector, with focus on children and youth, a coalition of the willing, able and relevant is ideal and must start. This can be an unlikely coalition, where non-traditional allies and inter-disciplinary members are to be a part of it. The coalition is to move forward the agendas, ideas and plans discussed in this lab, and it needs to be paired with strategic communications, relevant to stakeholders and the focus groups.

Risks are not always visibly seen. Part of the challenge is how to make children understand this – know the risks, ability to reduce the risks, and advocate for stronger protection against the risks. Integration of STEM education with non-traditional media platforms can be one mechanism to help children, youth and the education sector to cope with CCA and DRR actions.

This initiative must be quickly translated into real practical action. To begin with, we can start with children-focused NGOs and CSOs, and also organizations that work within the climate action, DRR and education stream. By voicing ideas and showing the way on how to do it will slowly but surely mobilize public's attention for greater awareness and support. This will trickle down to a stronger change towards better policies and law.

Giving intergenerational equality and dignified decision-making space to children and youth are also integral to the initiative. Inclusivity and not leaving anyone behind must be ensured to maintain a whole-of-society approach towards any changes that we want to make. By doing so, hopefully it will reflect on the critical need of mobilizing support towards this agenda – financial resource, expertise, technology and political support. A strategic long-term apparatus is needed.

Annexes

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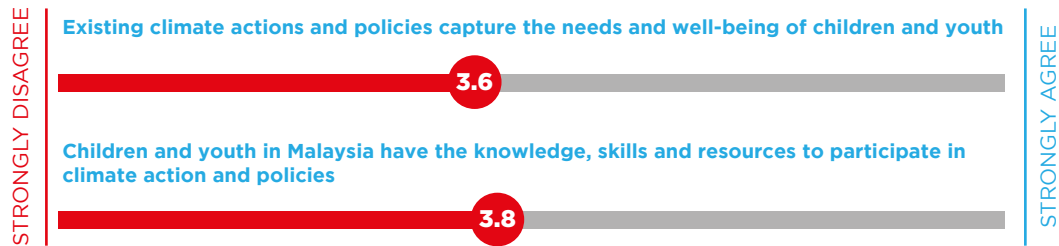
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EVENT POLL

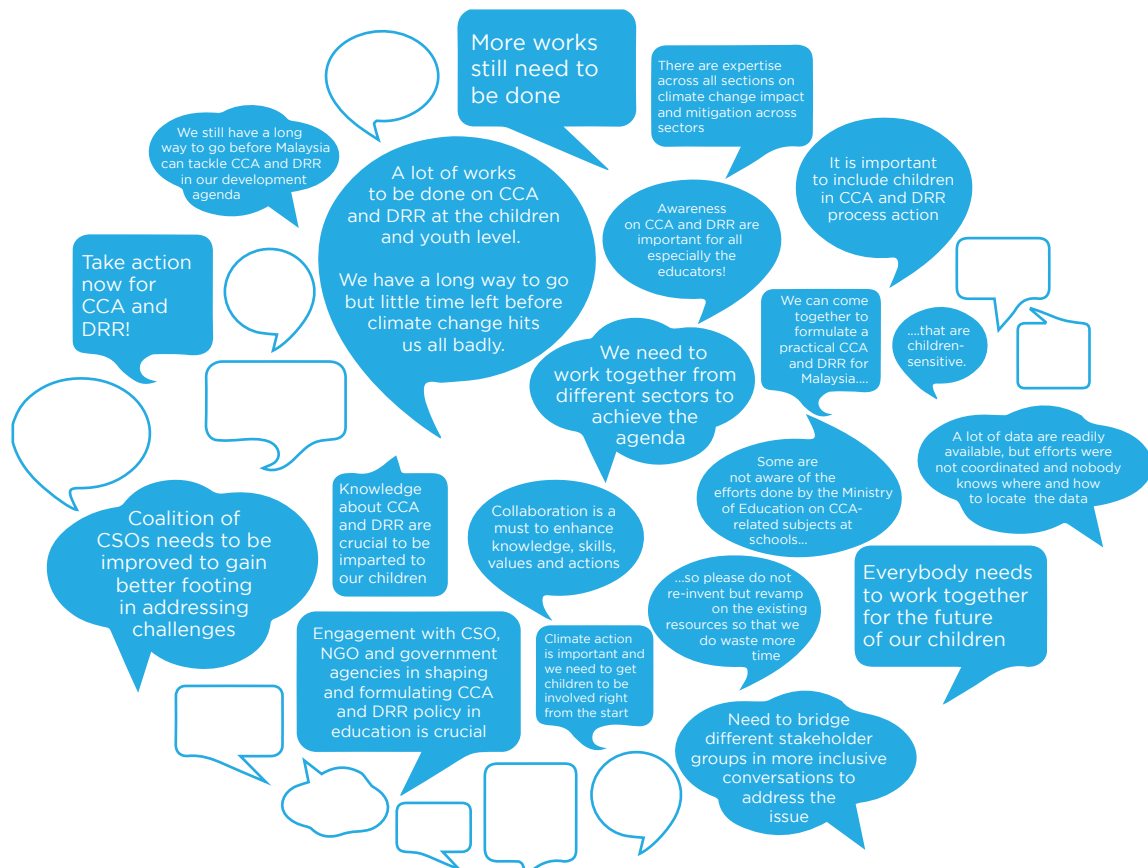
What do you think?



What is needed to empower children and youth?

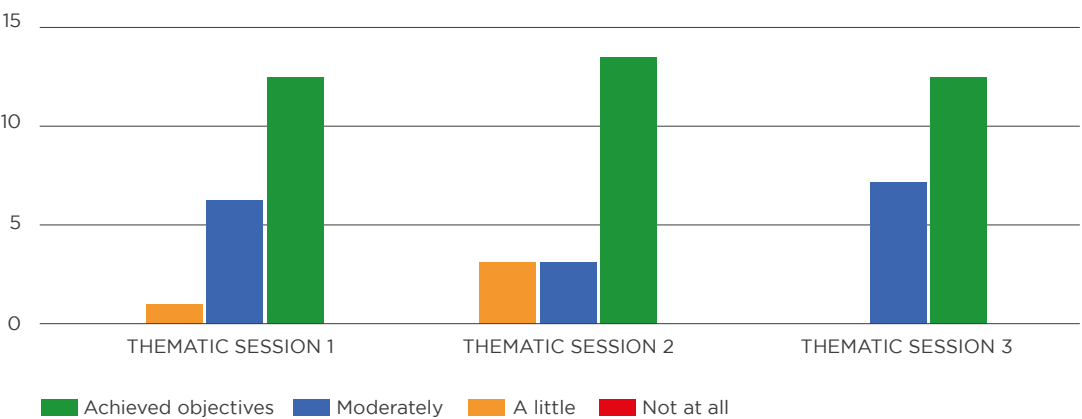


What were your key take aways from this event?

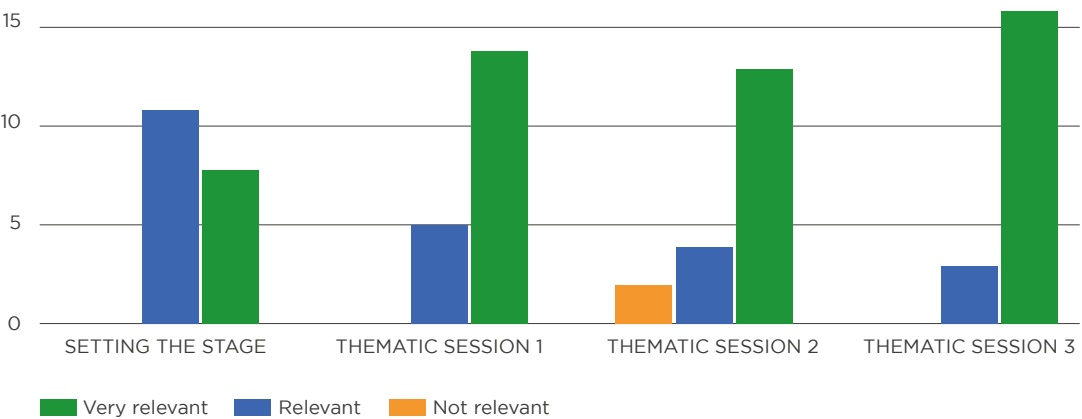


EVENT FEEDBACK

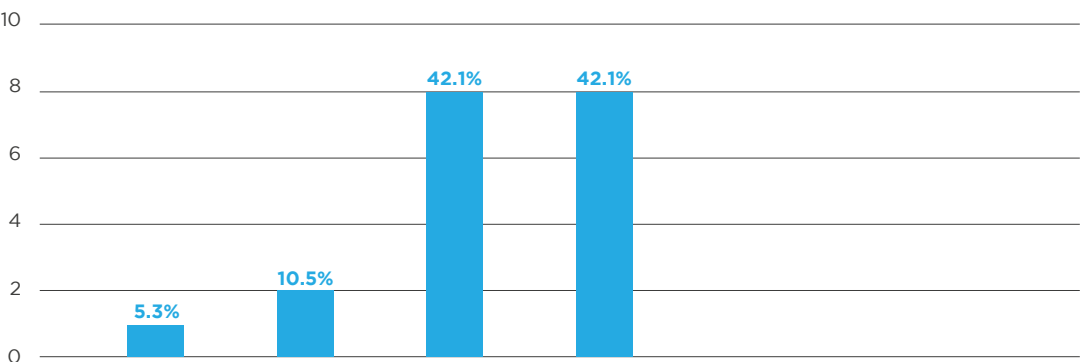
How reflective were each thematic discussions to the objectives of the program ?



Which sessions did you find most relevant?



How satisfied were you with the content of these sessions?



Not Risking It: Children and Youth in Climate Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in the Education Sector is a joint effort between:



MERCY Malaysia is a non-profit organisation focusing on providing medical relief, sustainable health related development and risk reduction activities for vulnerable communities in both crisis and non-crisis situations.

For more information about MERCY Malaysia and its work, visit: www.mercy.org.my

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

For more information about UNICEF and its work, visit: www.unicef.org/malaysia

Back cover: 2021 Malaysia flood has impacted school children in at-least five states across the nation. The changing climate is increasingly disrupting childrens' education and safety.



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