

Evaluation Findings: Most Significant Change (MSC) study of the Disaster Preparedness for Safer Schools (DPSS-2) Project, Nepal

Sector: School Based Disaster Preparedness



CONTEXT

Nepal Red Cross Society with the support of the American Red Cross implemented the Disaster Preparedness for Safer Schools 2 (DPSS2) project in Nepal, beginning in 2011. The project used child-to-child and child-to-adult approaches and school-to-school and school-to-community initiatives. At the end of the project, the American Red Cross commissioned a “Most Significant Change” (MSC) study to identify unintended outcomes of the project and allow the beneficiaries themselves to identify the impacts of the project.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Goal: Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and socio-economic impact caused by disasters by building safer, more resilient schools and communities.

Objectives: 1) to increase the awareness and knowledge on disaster preparedness in schools and communities; 2) to establish functional disaster management systems, and; 3) to build the capacity of communities and implementing organizations.

Project Duration: February 2011 - June 2014

Direct Beneficiaries: Students in 55 core schools and 165 non-core schools

Location: Three districts (two rural districts of Nuwakot and Rasuwa; one peri-urban district of Bhaktapur) in Nepal

Hazards: Varied (Bhaktapur: earthquakes and fires; Nuwakot: floods, earthquakes and landslides; Rasuwa: landslides and earthquakes.)

Partners: ARC, National Society for Earthquake Technology – Nepal (NSET)

Research Methodology: MSC technique. The sampling was purposeful. A total of 117 stories were collected from students, teachers and district officials.

EVALUATOR

Samadhi Marr



School girls in Nuwakot district point to a safe place on their school evacuation map. Photo credit: Samadhi Marr

Actionable Learning and Recommendations



Preparedness skills valued above hazard knowledge:

Among the 117 MSC stories of “what was the most significant change as a result of participating in the DPSS project”, 67.5% of the stories listed preparedness skills including First Aid, Household Disaster Preparedness Plans, Go Bags, and drills as their most significant change.

45.3% claimed hazard knowledge (earthquakes, fires, storms, electric shocks). 19.7% had “other themes” including health, sanitation, mitigation and school facilities.

49.6% specified that they have better awareness, 65.8% reported behavior change and a mere 7.7% stated organizational change.



First Aid training: Learning First Aid had the most important impact on lives, according to the majority of the story tellers. Compared with other DP activities, First Aid has practical utility in day-to-day life and trainees saw the tangible benefit of this newly-acquired skill. First Aid training gives the beneficiary motivation to continue investing their time. First Aid should be kept as a cornerstone of future disaster preparedness projects.



Child-to-Adult (C to A) approach: Educating community members was a difficult task for the students who reported experiencing doubt, ridicule and disbelief from community members, especially the elderly. RC staff should accompany students to promote DP and safety messages. Village Development Committees (VDCs) and other related people should also assist in awareness raising activities such as door-to-door campaigns, street dramas, dissemination of posters and pamphlets, etc.



Appropriate time of trainings and number of trainees: Trainings for students could have been conducted on weekends. More students should be involved in the trainings. Sponsored teachers requested to have refresher trainings for the children from time to time.



Drills: Future projects should also promote knowledge and drills for hazards other than earthquakes. The only drill that was mentioned in every school was “drop, cover and hold”, although some schools faced equally dangerous hazards like landslides, floods, and storms.



Sustainability strategy: The project should dedicate time and resources to ensure that teachers are sufficiently confident to continue the trainings and activities with new students and with minimal external support once the project has phased out.

It is also recommended to plan for sustainability “checks” at the core schools. Providing refresher trainings and follow-up visits to the sponsor teachers of the core schools is inexpensive, but would extend the sustainability of the project in those core schools.



VCA/DP Plan: VCA and subsequent DP plan could empower schools and students to address their own risk and vulnerability. One sample comes from Shree Krishna School in Bhaktapur whose students and teachers had identified through VCA that one of their school buildings was at risk of collapsing and that a retaining wall vital. They used the analysis to advocate with Red Cross District Chapter and successfully got funding support for reparation of the building.



Outreach to private schools: Private schools were not a target of the DPSS project, despite the fact that they too are vulnerable when a disaster occurs. Furthermore, private/boarding schools are also densely populated in the case of Nepal. It is suggested that, while financial support should be solely provided for government schools, at least disaster preparedness information should be disseminated to private schools.



Inclusion of out-of-school children: The current DPSS model inevitably excludes out-of-school children, despite the fact that they are among the most vulnerable. Efforts should be made towards their integration in future programming, either through direct targeting or through partnering between school and out-of-school children.

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Disability-inclusive programming: Persons with disabilities were neither included as participants of Project activities nor members of the JYRC.

As persons with disabilities are most vulnerable to disasters, future projects should sensitize staff and volunteers on disability-inclusive programming and ensure that capacities and needs of men, women and children with disabilities be appropriately integrated and addressed.



Pursue a dual approach targeting both school and community: future DPSS projects should work in the communities in parallel with target schools to deliver similar messages. In such an approach, the project uses schools as an entry point, and creates formal links between the schools and communities through the

Disaster Learning Centers (DLCs) or other mechanisms. Direct trainings by RC staff should be provided to community members. This would help to reinforce changes in both schools and communities, and enhance the overall outcomes of community resilience.