

## DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES AND ITS IMPACTS ON CHILDREN

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) focused on paying attention on children in all issues without discrimination and required States Parties to develop laws, policies, and mechanism in promoting and protecting children's rights. Disasters and emergencies are not stated clearly in the UNCRC, but it demanded States Parties to provide social security and services in order to ensure the prevention and protection the impacts on children. State Parties shall ensure preparedness of the resources and mechanisms to respond to disasters and emergencies. Therefore, Cambodia, as UNCRC's state party, accepted recommendations from UN Committee on CRC to allocate in responding to the economic crisis situation, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

Based on the UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on the Strengthening of the Coordination of the Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations stated "Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory."

### I. Situation

It is seen that Cambodia had affected by the natural disasters and emergencies such as floods, droughts, storms, and lightning. Cambodia had seriously affected by natural disasters and emergencies since 2002 to 2013, particularly in 2011 and 2013. Through consultation among NGOCRC members, NGO networks, child and youth-led groups, NGO partners, Unicef, UNDP, relevant child rights coalitions indicated that disasters and emergencies had made lots of impacts on children such as death, lack of nutrition, education, psychosocial distress, migration, pandemic diseases, child street, orphans, lack of shelters, unsafe living conditions, becoming disabilities, moving of dwelling, become sexual trafficking, child labor, sexual abuse, and becoming the victims of explosive remnants of war.

Based on the report of the World Food Program (WFP) in 2012 on Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF)<sup>1</sup>, in 2011 there were 18 of 24 provinces affected by flooding and made negative impact on more than 350,000 households within which there were approximate 1.6 million citizens (700.000 are children).

Based on WFP's 2013 final report No7 on HRF, indicated that 20 of 24 provinces affected by flooding in 2013 and 377,354 households within which there were 1,735,828 citizens and 168 persons died (more than 50% are children).

Based on the impact assessment of flood in mine/ERW contaminated area, developed by CMAA with technical and financial support from Unicef, in three provinces Battambang, Pailin, and Banteay Meanchey, the interviewees indicated that there were some landmines and ERW moved by flood water from their original locations to safe locations such as villages rice fields, farming fields, and high grounds. The interviewed

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<sup>1</sup> The 2012 Post-Flood Relief and Recovery Survey was a joint initiative by Action Aid, Asian Development Bank (ADB), DanChurch Aid/ACT Alliance, Danish Red Cross, Save the Children, UNICEF and WFP, in collaboration with the NCDM

local authorities, the CMVIS data gatherers reportedly found 174 items of landmines and ERW that were moved from their original locations to safe areas. Of the 174 items, 72 were landmines and 102 were ERW. 23 items of landmines and ERW were found in the villages, 149 found in rice/farming fields, and 2 in safe high grounds. Based on the same assessment the finding also highlighted on the scare of mine/ERW danger after flood. There is no specific numbers of children who were interviewed but 99.32% of the interviewees (1,019 persons) said they are scare about the potential danger of the washed landmines and ERW.

Based on a CARE's survey on 390 household at three affected provinces by flooding, including Prey Veng, Kandal, and Kampong Thom in 2011 indicated in the aftermath of the flood found 84% of interviewees reporting their income were fallen average 60% because of flooding. Whilst 48% of households who interviewed they loan to buy foods and agriculture inputs and loan interest rate averaged 34% to 65% per year dependence on the source of the loan.

In respond to the controlling, prevention, elimination and effectively respond to risks made by natural disasters, the Cambodia developed some legal frameworks, policies and mechanisms such as establishment of the National Committee for Disasters Management (NCDM) with structure from national to sub-national levels, signed on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, national policy on disasters management, and contingency plan on child protection for 2013-2014.

## II. Intervention

There were humanitarian responses to the effected people by flooding were assisted by many sectors including national institutions such as NCDM at both national and sub-national levels, local authorities, UN agencies including UNICEF, UNDP, local and international NGOs, such as WFP's Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF), Cambodia Red Cross (CRC), WVC, Save the Children, Plan International Cambodia, Caritas Cambodia, and other local humanitarian organizations. Based on the WFP's report No 7 on HRF, humanitarian assistance comprised basic food assistance including rice, iodized salt, sugar, fish, noodles, oil and other food (food security and nutrition, FSN); water containers, water purification chemicals and water filters, soap, hygiene education and hygiene promotion (water, sanitation and hygiene, WASH); post-flood outreach to provide immunization services, distribute oral rehydration salts and zinc and provide health education (health); tents, tarpaulins and shelter kits (shelter); education materials for teachers and students (education); mine risk education and mine clearing, and set-up of child-friendly spaces (protection); additional non-food items (other NFIs) such as toothbrush and toothpaste, kramas and sarongs, cooking sets, mosquito nets and others.

The Mine Risk Education (MRE) after flood was also conducted as mentioned in the impact assessment of CMAA with technical and financial support from Unicef. Of the 1,026 interviewees, 59.65% (612 persons) had received MRE messages provided by MRE operators after the flood and 40.35% (414 persons) said they did not receive. Of the 612 people received MRE messages, 200 (32.68%) said that the MRE operators educated them about the movement of mines and ERW from other locations to safe areas and 412 (67.32%) said they received MRE messages provided MRE operators but the operators did not mention about the movement of mines and ERW during the flood. It is shown in the assessment that the victim of mine and ERW were also received the

assistance. Of the 1,026 interviewees, 45 were mine/ERW survivors. Of the 45, 43 received victim assistance from victim assistance agencies. The 43 survivors received assistance from OEC, CHRD, CRC and CARITAS such as rice, instant noodles, tinned fishes, bicycles, study materials, etc.

### III. Special Concerns

Based on the Cambodia National Council for Children (CNCC)'s Child Situation Bulletin on 2011, affected flooding on children found that 2011 flooding had negative impact for short term and long term on children and their families. At national level, flooding destroyed infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals, bridges, irrigation system, agriculture sectors, and economic action. At communities and families, flooding had not only destroyed prosperities, productivities, and deaths but also seriously affected livelihood of citizens. Though, RGC, CRC, and CSOs provided emergencies response to the affected citizens, especially children, but many interviewees complained that those emergencies response still limited.

Natural Disasters counted since 2002 to 2013 years, Cambodia seriously affected on citizens, especially children, food security, and many challenges, particularly the flooding in 2011 and 2013 of the year. Based on the WFP's HRF report in 2011, in the aftermath of the floods, there was additional concern that households might turn to their children to help support income generation and livelihood protection. In the same report also indicated that just less than 10 percent of households had a member migrate out since the floods, though more than half of these reported that the main reason was due to the flood. Migration from households was most prevalent among the poorest households, and those considered most affected by the floods; the findings suggest that these migrations were driven in large part by household economic pressures. There were no survey indicated the cases and specific numbers of children who were sexual trafficking and forced labor and child victims of mine in the aftermath of the floods. However, based on the 2009 Fact Sheet's World Vision Australia, Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, indicated disasters is a factor of many that make people vulnerable to being trafficked into the sex industry.

### IV. Recommendations

- The approval of the Draft Law on Disaster Management should be expedited, and followed by a program of awareness-raising within the CDMs and related government institutions regarding the new Law, and particularly the coordinating role of the CDMs vis-à-vis international actors.
- The budget allocated annually to the NCDM should be sufficient to cover operational costs as well as disaster preparedness, mitigation and response activity.
- The government and relevant entities should conduct research on the impacts on children who become trafficked and child labor which resulted by natural disasters.
- The government and relevant entities should disseminate on the affects made by migration.
- Educate people including children on prevention from natural disasters through meeting, workshop, handbook on safety, and broadly dissemination through mass media.
- Strengthen the function and allocate budget for the NCDM.

- The government should adopt the reserved budget to respond on time to the natural disasters.
- The government should reserve equipments on time to support and save people's lives while flooding and it is a factor that can prevent people including children from migration that lead them to become victims of sex trafficking, child labor and sexual exploitation.