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PRESS RELEASE
19 July 2019

Save the Children Philippines calls for stronger disaster preparedness for kids

Save the Children Philippines has called for the strengthening of disaster preparedness in schools and communities as children face the highest risks of death, injury and disease in times of emergencies.

Lawyer Albert Muyot, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Save the Children Philippines said local governments should invest in building resilience of children as part of climate change adaptation strategy.

The Philippines ranks third on the list of the 171 disaster-prone countries, next to the island-nations of Vanuatu and Togo, according to the World Risk Report of 2018.

Globally, there are 535 Million children, or one in four living in countries prone to disasters. July is declared as National Disaster Resilience Month to raise awareness on the need for building resilience across national and local levels.

Muyot said children's rights to proper healthcare, access to education and protection from violence must be ensured at all times, especially during emergencies.

"Disasters such as earthquakes, massive flooding and severe typhoons take a heavy toll on children's lives, particularly those in deprived and marginalized situations," he said.

Save the Children Philippines partnered with the Department of Education (DepEd) for the implementation of Education Safe from Disasters that puts in place and automate a management information system for disaster preparedness in all public schools.

Muyot said child protection and child participation should be at the core of disaster preparedness systems in schools and communities.

Save the Children Philippines advocated the passage of Republic Act 10821 or the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act that directs national and local government agencies to implement and sustain comprehensive emergency program to protect children from disasters and emergencies.

The law prioritizes the protection of children, pregnant and lactating mothers during disaster and emergency situations. It also prevents the prolonged use of schools as evacuation centers to allow children to resume classes.

More than 11 million school children have been affected by major disasters from 2007 to 2012, based on figures from DepEd.

Muyot said schools and local authorities should integrate children's rights to participate in developing policies that affect them, including disaster preparedness.

Save the Children Philippines pioneered a disaster resilience program for child survivors of typhoon Yolanda through the Batang Empowered and Resilient Team (Team of Empowered and Resilient Children).

The program helps children know the difference between risks and hazards at home and in schools. It also teaches them what to do before, during and after a disaster which include bringing of essential things such as water and flashlights in the go-bag.

More than 3,000 child facilitators have been trained under the BERT program which started in the Yolanda hit provinces in the Visayas.

At least 6,555 children in remote areas in Mindanao who are vulnerable to disasters and impact of armed conflict were also trained as BERT child facilitators.

"One of the core principles of children's rights is to be heard on matters that affect them including drafting disaster preparedness plans," said Muyot.

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