

“IT’S OUR SCHOOL”

Children’s Views on the Use of Schools as Evacuation Centers

Children’s education is compromised when schools are used as evacuation center

In the Philippines, the aftermath of a disaster or an emergency situation means that schools – particularly public schools, will be utilized as evacuation centers to shelter the affected population. However, using schools as evacuation centers result to significant effects and impacts on children’s education and overall well-being. This practice results to disruption of regular class schedules, students and teachers missing significant class days, damage and/or loss of school property and facilities, poor student performance, increased drop-out rates, and exposes school children to a myriad of threats and exploitation.

This report puts forward policy recommendations and action points on the issue. In sum, the matter on the use of schools as evacuation center is actually a convergence of two humanitarian issues: (1) the need for evacuation centers to accommodate the affected population, and (2) ensuring educational continuity in the aftermath of disasters. While access to shelter after a disaster is a humanitarian imperative, fulfilling this should not be at the expense of children’s right to education. Regardless of the situation, educational continuity must be guaranteed and the quality of learning must not be compromised.



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ACRONYMS

ADM-MISOSA	Alternative Delivery Mode – Modified In School Off School Approach
CAMANA	Caloocan, Malabon and Navotas
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CWC	Council for the Welfare of Children
DepEd	Department of Education
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
DOH	Department of Health
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
JMC	Joint Memorandum Circular
LAPG	Language Assessment for Primary Grades
LGU	Local Government Unit
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NAT	National Achievement Test
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PAGASA	Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration
RA	Republic Act
SDRRM	School Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
TLS	Temporary Learning Spaces

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Executive Summary

Children's Education is Compromised When Schools are Used as Evacuation Center

In the Philippines, the aftermath of a disaster or an emergency situation means that schools, particularly public schools, will be utilized as evacuation centers to shelter the affected population. Families are cramped inside a classroom. In worse cases, hallways and other roofed spaces inside the school are also occupied. Also, tents and temporary shelters are built in open spaces inside the school like playgrounds, quadrangles and sports oval to accommodate the evacuees.

However, using schools as evacuation centers result to significant effects and impacts on children's education and overall well-being. This practice results to disruption of regular class schedules, students and teachers missing significant class days, damage and/or loss of school property and facilities, poor student performance, increased drop-out rates, and exposes school children to a myriad of threats and exploitation.

Schools Must be Safe and Education Must Not be Interrupted

In 2011, Save the Children together with other child-focused organizations framed the "Children's Charter: An Action Plan for DRR for Children, by Children". The process involved more than 600 children in 21 countries including the Philippines. Focused on promoting child-centered approach in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), the Children's Charter highlights education, particularly educational continuity and safe school infrastructures as top priority expressed by children.

Building on these priorities, Save the Children Philippines embarked on a study to consult school children on their views and experiences regarding the use of schools as evacuation centers. Views of major education stakeholders including school officials and administrators, local government leaders and members of the civil society were also sought to validate and analyze the current approach with regards to the use of schools as evacuation centers and to render significant policy recommendations and action points on the issue.

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Results from the consultations point to the undeniable truth that school children are greatly affected when schools are used as evacuation centers. Majority of the responses show that studying became more difficult after a disaster or an emergency situation. Most school children were not able to promptly return to school and incurred multiple absences, thereby resulting to missed classes and lessons.

When temporary learning spaces (TLS) and temporary classrooms were made available, school children experienced the unsuitable learning environment and inadequate facilities – as the tents are hot and humid during summer and flooded during the rainy season. Pupils also felt that they were displaced from their own classrooms because of the evacuation and in worst cases, they had to conduct their classes under the shade of the trees.

Majority of school children consulted are not in favor of using schools as evacuation centers, citing destroyed or damaged classrooms, distraction and noise caused by the evacuees, and not being able to use their own classrooms as common reasons. On the other hand, an overwhelming majority are in favor that other open spaces and structures like basketball courts, multi-purpose halls, and stadiums should be used as evacuation centers. School children also expressed that evacuees staying in schools should be transferred to alternative shelters such as tents, bunkhouses and other temporary shelters. Further, most of the school children consulted are in favor that schools should not be the first choice for an evacuation center but if it cannot be avoided, then the number of days should be limited so classes can resume as soon as possible.

Taking Action

Using schools as evacuation centers result to disadvantages that mount very high costs in terms of losses in our educational system. The tangible losses are the most obvious – damaged structures, facilities and learning materials – yet these can be repaired or replaced. But the intangible effects –

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lost appetite for learning, poor performance of both teachers and learners, exposure to various threats of exploitation, emotional and psychosocial stress are greater and most often have lasting effects on the child. These among others, should prompt a purposeful rethinking on the current norm of using schools as evacuation centers.

Towards this end, this report puts forward the following action points and recommendations:

-  Schools should be the last option as an evacuation center. In the event the schools are used as such, the provisions of RA 10821 or the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act, particularly Section 5 thereof and the Joint Memorandum Circular on Guidelines on Evacuation Center Management and Coordination must be strictly adhered to.
-  Thorough review and systematic process on pre-identifying which schools will be used as evacuation center must be in place.
-  Direct and formal coordination between the Local Government Units (LGUs) and the school should be established and maintained.
-  In times of conflict emergencies and evacuation caused by armed conflict, schools should never be used for military purposes. At all times, schools and other educational structures and facilities must solely remain for civilian use.
-  Re-evaluate and rethink the current design and plan for Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) and temporary classrooms.
-  School Disaster Risk Reduction and Management plans should include plans for educational continuity in times of prolonged emergencies.
-  Child Protection structures in schools should remain functional even during emergencies and especially when the schools are used as evacuation centers.

-  In the long term, LGUs with support from the National Government, must build permanent evacuation centers separate from a school.

These policy recommendations and areas for improvement are further elaborated towards the end of this report. In sum, the matter on the use of schools as evacuation centers is actually a convergence of two humanitarian issues: (1) the need for evacuation centers to accommodate the affected population, and (2) ensuring educational continuity in the aftermath of disasters. While access to shelter after a disaster is a humanitarian imperative, fulfilling this should not be at the expense of children's right to education. Regardless of the situation, educational continuity must be guaranteed and the quality of learning must not be compromised.

INTRODUCTION

Disasters caused by both natural and man-made hazards leave lasting effects on the society and its general population. When houses are damaged or destroyed as result of a disaster, public buildings and spaces are often used as transitional sites or evacuation centers until people can safely return to their homes or be appropriately relocated to safer communities. The period of displacement may range from a few days to weeks, but in worse cases, to several months extending to a year or more – depending on the scale and extent of the devastation.

This scenario is not strange to the Philippines. In 2013 alone, three consecutive disasters ravaged different parts of the country – leaving millions displaced and evacuated to transitional sites and evacuation centers.

In September 2013, the City of Zamboanga was caught in a series of clashes between government forces and armed secessionist groups. Called by many names; “standoff”, “crisis”, or the popularly used: “Zamboanga Siege”, the fighting displaced 24,000 families². The fighting that lasted over 20 days caused a mass exodus from the city.

In October, just a few weeks after the Zamboanga siege, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake shook the Province of Bohol and parts of Northern Cebu leaving over three (3) million Filipinos³ homeless and more than 2 billion pesos worth of property in ruins and losses. Soon after, the strongest typhoon ever recorded to hit land, Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) hit the Visayas Region which made its landfall on 8 November 2013, affecting 15 million Filipinos with over four (4) million Filipinos displaced.



A classroom in Tacloban City used as Evacuation Center by several families.



Photo by Save the Children

Introduction



Photo by Save the Children

A school destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan

The following year, in July 2014, Tropical Storm Rammasun (locally known as Glenda) caused public storm warning signals to be raised in several provinces in Bicol region and southern Luzon including Metro Manila which affected roughly 4.7 million people. In September of the same year, due to the heightened seismic activity of Mayon Volcano, 10,000⁴ residents within a 6 kilometer radius of the volcano from the Province of Albay were forced to be evacuated by the authorities. Before the end of the year, typhoon Hagupit (locally known as Ruby) brought intense rain and destruction in Central Visayas where typhoon Haiyan first made landfall and some 4.2 million people were affected.

In 2015, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) recorded a total of 15 tropical cyclones which entered the Philippines' Area of Responsibility, a number of which brought significant destruction and displaced thousands of people. In July of the same year, Typhoon Egay (Linfa) struck parts of Luzon causing damages of over 214 million pesos⁵. In November, Typhoon Lando (Koppu) affected

3,126,130 people in Northern and Central Luzon⁶. Typhoon Lando was reported the worst typhoon to have landed in the country in 2015.⁷ Before the end of the year, Typhoon Nona (Melor) killed 42 people, left 4 people listed as missing and damaged over 279,000 homes.⁸

In these disasters and the previous calamities that affected the country, schools – particularly public schools – were utilized as evacuation centers to shelter the affected population. An average of 5-10 families are cramped inside a classroom and in worse cases, hallways and other roofed spaces (e.g. library, administration office, faculty rooms, and stock rooms) inside the school are also occupied. Also, tents and temporary shelters are built in open spaces inside the school. These shelters are built within playgrounds, quadrangles and sports oval to accommodate evacuees. However, using schools as evacuation centers result to significant effects and impacts on children's education and overall well-being, therefore a study to set forth guidelines and recommendations on the matter is highly important.

School as Evacuation Center

Schools are often deliberately chosen by LGUs to serve as transitory shelters because they offer protection from the elements, have classrooms, open grounds, assembly areas and water and sanitation facilities. Schools are also key institutions and community hubs, with a high degree of visibility and familiarity for local communities, particularly elementary schools that serve as the center for a range of community activities⁹. Typically, schools are one of the few, if not the only strong and well-made structure in a community large enough to accommodate several families, thus becoming the outright, if not only, option for an evacuation center in the event of a disaster.

However, this practice results to disruption of regular class schedules, students and teachers missing significant class days, damage and/or loss of school property and facilities, poor student performance, increased drop-out rates, and exposes school children to a myriad of threats and exploitation. When classes are interrupted for long periods of time, it becomes difficult for children to

catch up with their lessons. Classes cannot continue as planned because many of the classrooms in schools are being used as shelter for those who have been displaced by the disaster. After a disaster, teachers and students spend longer hours in school during weekends or extend regular class hours to complete missed lessons and the required number of school days¹⁰.

In a 2016 report¹¹, Save the Children outlined the disadvantages in using schools and other educational facilities as temporary shelters and collective centers. The report highlighted the following disadvantages:

- (1) School facilities damaged or destroyed by the disaster itself may be unsafe, or may not have appropriate services to operate as shelters;
- (2) The cost and educational impact of damage caused to the school facilities by use

SCHOOL AS EVACUATION CENTER

EVACUATION is the process of moving or transferring people from hazard threatened or stricken areas to a safe place or places. There are two types of evacuation: (1) Precautionary, that is done prior to impact; and (2) Post Impact, which involves the movement of victims from hazard-stricken areas into safer surrounding conditions.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL EVACUATION CENTER?

It is a temporary shelter where survivors in emergencies can take refuge. It is a venue where evacuees can be helped in coordination with concerned government and non-government agencies in their basic needs.

- DepEd officials may allow the use of the schools as an evacuation center when there is no other safer place where the students/pupils can be accommodated.
- People from the community may be allowed to use the schools as a temporary holding center.
- In case the school is used as an evacuation center, DepEd officials and personnel shall be responsible for the preservation of school facilities and properties for the duration the school is being occupied by evacuees, so that after the emergency period the school can resume operation as soon as possible.



(Source: 2008 DepEd DRR Resource Manual)

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as shelter can be worse than that caused by the disaster itself. Overuse or careless use may damage buildings, sanitation facilities, equipment, furnishings, materials and books. Without alternative resources, people sheltering may use school furniture and materials for fuel;

(3) Sheltering can lead to new and serious protection risks for children and youth. Overcrowding, lack of supervision, and/or lack of separation between shelter and education activities may lead and expose children to emotional, physical or sexual exploitation and/or abuse;

(4) The sudden loss of school as a consistent anchoring institution may cause further psychosocial distress for children who have suffered other severe losses;

(5) Educational continuity may be broken as classes are suspended. Where there are no adaptations to compensate for learning time lost, students will fall behind in their studies and are at higher risk for dropout and poor achievement;

(6) The teaching and learning process is likely to be disrupted, resulting in negative, long-term consequences for learning processes. Noise, relief distribution, smells from cooking, and presence of younger children are distracting and make it difficult to learn;

(7) Children's play, which is an important part of a child's well-being and psychosocial and physical development, may be impeded due to the occupation of school playgrounds, particularly if tented camps are occupying the recreational area(s);

(8) Teachers may be deprived of their livelihoods, increasing their vulnerability, forcing them to leave and reducing the likelihood that they will be available to resume teaching;

(9) Teachers and other school personnel may be exhausted and overwhelmed by the crisis, by staff shortages and by additional responsibilities to support management of the school as shelter and helping affected families; and,

(10) Tensions and discontent can arise between the host and displaced communities. Children may feel resentment towards people who they experience as displacing them.

In 2011, Save the Children together with other child-focused organizations framed the "Children's Charter: An Action Plan for DRR for Children, by Children." The process involved more than 600 children in 21 countries including the Philippines. The Children's Charter, focused on promoting child-centered approach in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), highlights education as top priority expressed by children. Among which educational continuity and safe school infrastructures were included.

5 KEY PRIORITIES IN THE CHILDREN'S CHARTER: An Action Plan for DRR for Children, by Children

- ① Schools must be safe and education must not be interrupted.
- ② Child protection must be a priority before, during and after a disaster.
- ③ Children have the right to participate and to access the information they need.
- ④ Community infrastructure must be safe, and relief and reconstruction must help reduce further risk.
- ⑤ Disaster Risk Reduction must reach the most vulnerable groups.



Objectives, Methodology, Respondents, Research Areas and Limitations

Objectives

Broadly, this research sought to:

-  **Consult** school children on their views about schools being used as evacuation center and determine how they feel about the matter;
-  **Gather** views of key stakeholders like teachers, barangay leaders, and government officials on the planning and use of schools as evacuation centers;
-  **Identify and analyze** effects of use of schools as evacuation centers/displacement sites and also the use of temporary learning spaces to school children;
-  **Validate** Priority 1 of the Children's Charter for DRR which specifies that schools must be safe and education must not be interrupted; and,
-  **Provide** analysis on the current approach of the government and/or the assigned government agency with regards to the use of schools as evacuation center and render significant policy recommendations and action points on the issue.

Methodology

Participatory approach through consultations with school children using child-friendly and age-appropriate methods of inquiry served as the main methodology for this research. The consultation process was composed of five parts, starting with introduction and mood-setting where participants introduced themselves and briefly narrated their recent experiences regarding the disaster. Then, participants were asked to share their views and experiences in going back to school after the disaster. They were then shown pictures of temporary learning spaces and asked to describe their experiences in the TLS, if they have. Children's views on the use of schools as evacuation center were surfaced through "emoticons" or "emoji": (a) smiling face for AGREE; (b) sad face for DISAGREE; and, (c) neutral face for NO REACTION/NEUTRAL. As closing, children were asked to draw what or who they think should help them with their concerns in school after a disaster.

Responses from children were triangulated and validated with the findings from key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussion (FGD) sessions with key education stakeholders from both the government and civil society and voluntary sector. KII and FGD respondents included local government officials (City / Municipal Mayors and

barangay Captains), school principals and division heads, teachers and school DRRM point person, representatives from relevant national government agencies and from the humanitarian sector. Furthermore, review of related literature and policy analysis served as the source of secondary data for this research.



Photo by Save the Children

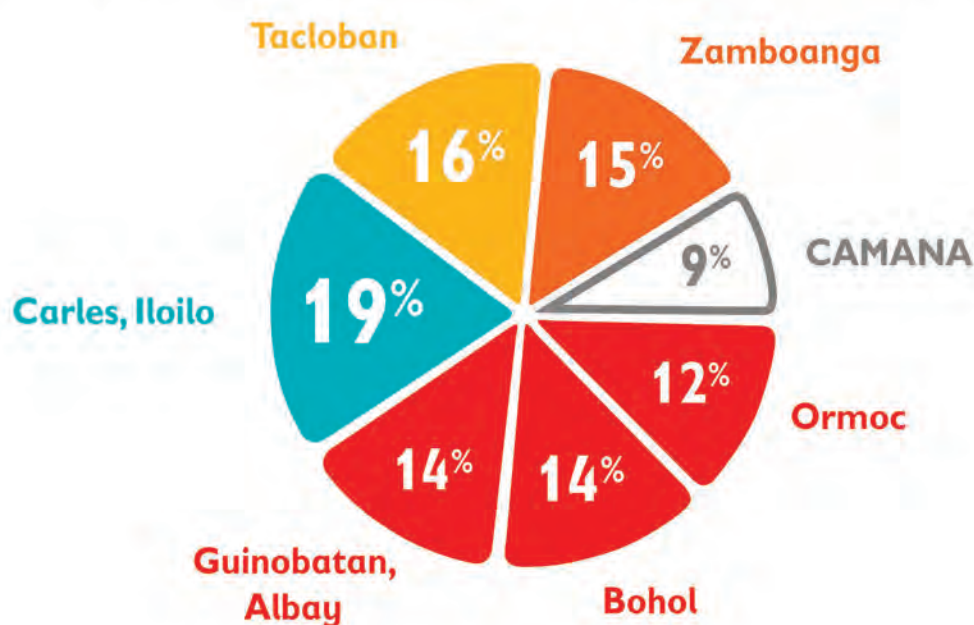
Children's consultation session in Tacloban City

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Respondents

The research engaged children aged 6-17 years old who are currently enrolled in selected schools. Child consultation participants were divided according into three (3) age brackets, particularly: (a) 6-8 years old; (b) 9-12 years old; and, (c) 13-17 years old.

A total of 26 child consultation sessions were conducted, participated by 428 school children in 20 elementary and 6 high schools. Around 50 key stakeholders and decision-makers were engaged through interviews and focus group discussions.



Graph of Child Consultation Participants per Research Area

Research Areas

Interviews and child consultation sessions were conducted from August to November 2015 in seven (7) different locations in the country, namely: (1) CAMANA (Caloocan, Malabon and Navotas); (2) Tacloban City; (3) Ormoc City; (4) Bohol; (5) Zamboanga City; (6) Carles, Iloilo; and, (7) Guinobatan, Albay. A list of schools used as evacuation centers were obtained from the Department of Education (DepEd) and from this, target schools were selected on the basis of: (a) the school was used as evacuation center for more than 15 days; and for the case of schools in CAMANA, (b) the school was used as an evacuation center more than once within the same year.



Temporary classroom in Iloilo

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Limitations of the Study

As this study highlighted the opinion and views of school children and key stakeholders on the use of schools as evacuation centers, the nature of the research and the methods used were purely descriptive and qualitative. This research focused more on accounts and experiences of children, and less on actual statistics and numbers pertaining on the use of schools as evacuation center and its effects.

Moreover, the selection of research locales were purposely based on areas with Save the Children presence (CAMANA, Tacloban City, Ormoc City, Bohol, Iloilo) and areas suggested by DepEd (Zamboanga City, Guinobatan, Albay).



Photo by Save the Children

Children participating in child consultation session



Photo by Save the Children

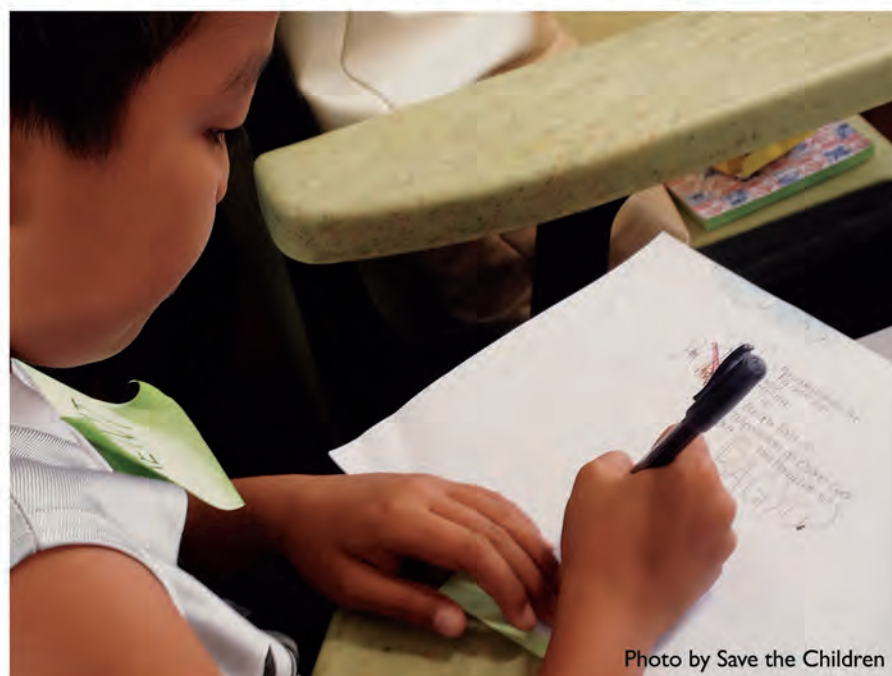


Photo by Save the Children

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the general findings of the research based on the results of the child consultations sessions. This is supplemented by the responses from the key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Analysis and discussion of the findings were based on the structure of the child consultations and are not categorized per research locale.

Impacts of the disaster to children's education

Children were asked to describe the situation in their community during the most recent disaster. They were then asked to determine whether their studying (a) Got easier, (b) Became much difficult, or (c) Nothing has changed since the disaster. Majority of the responses (306 out of 428, or 71%) depicted that studying became much difficult after the disaster. The common reason of this difficulty was destruction and/or damage of their school and the lack of school supplies.

With their classrooms destroyed/damaged, students and teachers were holding classes in makeshift classrooms and tents or worse under the shade of the trees, leaving them exposed to the elements. School children also cited that the presence of evacuees inside the school distracts them. The practice of extending class hours and conducting make-up classes during weekends were contributory to the difficulties experienced by children in the aftermath of a disaster.



Children in a school evacuation center in Eastern Visayas



Photo by Save the Children

Impacts of the Disaster to Children's Education



71% of the children consulted experience difficulties in their studies after the calamity in their area.

Teachers and school staff also experienced difficulties particularly in time and task management and in dealing with the evacuees. Most of the teachers remarked that upon the resumption of classes, they could not proceed with their lessons, as they must first do a tracking of their students, and in some cases, even visiting them in their homes to convince them to go back to school. Lost and/or stolen class records, lesson plans, teaching aids and other valuable documents and school properties such as electric fans, chairs, tables and chalkboard add to the severity of this problem. Moreover, teachers, students and other school staff also spend considerable hours in cleaning their classrooms before they can start with their classes. This proved to be even more difficult for schools accommodating evacuees on a shifting basis (evacuees stay on the classrooms only at night), as they need to do the cleaning on a daily basis. Teachers remarked that they are doing camp and evacuee management functions outside of their mandate in order to secure school property and ensure that order and cleanliness is maintained.

In some schools¹², the Alternative Delivery Mode – Modified In School Off School Approach or ADM-MISOSA were used to compensate for missed lessons and class hours. Though this alternative

may seem better as compared to nothing, students who experienced this program remarked that they were only given activities or projects to be discussed and submitted on a latter time. They perceived that the ADM-MISOSA was not very helpful because it was not appropriately discussed to them, making it difficult to comply with the required output. Some of the activities were rushed in order to catch up with their other lessons.

School children were also asked how soon they were able to get back to school, and whenever applicable, they were further asked on the reasons why they incurred absences in the first few weeks after the disaster. More than 60% answered that they were not able to promptly attend class even though formal resumption of classes has been announced. Most of these absences were incurred in the first 3 days and considerable number were absent for 4 days and above.

"Commonly, there is really low attendance on the first week upon resumption of classes..."

Elementary school teacher from Bohol

LET'S HEAR IT FROM THE CHILDREN

"It became more difficult because we don't have any more classrooms to be used because the school was used as an evacuation area. Our textbooks and other materials were lost."

Male child from Ormoc, 15 years old

"There were still a lot of evacuees in our school when the classes started. I cannot concentrate since we shared our room with the evacuees. They were noisy and we were overcrowded in the room."

Female child from Tacloban, 13 years old

"I had difficulties in my studies after the typhoon. The road was still full of debris, there was no electricity, and I don't have school supplies and uniform to wear. Our classrooms are not conducive for learning, it gets wet when the rain comes and so hot during sunny days."

Female child from Ormoc, 15 years old

"We need to clean our classrooms before we can start our lessons and it takes about an hour to clean."

Female child from Guinobatan, 14 years old

"Because we only hold our classes in a tent and it is very hot during the afternoon."

Male child from Bohol, 11 years old

"The roofs were destroyed and we are holding our class in a tent, under the shade of the tree or at the stage."

Male child from Iloilo, 10 years old

"I studied at the 'bakwit' (evacuation) area and it was really hard because the environment was disorderly."

Male child from Bohol, 12 years old

"Our education is gravely affected because we cannot use our classrooms since the evacuees are occupying them so we are all behind in our lessons in school."

Male child from Zamboanga, 15 years old

"Teachers cannot finish their lessons because they have to tend to the evacuees needs. Classes are done by shifts and the teachers conduct classes and monitor the evacuees at the same time."

Female child from Guinobatan, 11 years old

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After the calamity in their area, **62%** of the children did not attend the first week of class.

Fear and trauma were the common reasons cited by children, particularly from areas badly hit by Typhoon Yolanda and areas affected by the Zamboanga siege. Some said that they incurred absences because they need to help restoring their damaged houses and/or contribute in the family's livelihood. Moreover, some incurred absences

because they evacuated/relocated to a safer location far away from their host school, which meant additional expense and travel time. For some, they transferred to schools near their evacuation/relocation area, and a few children recounted that some of their schoolmates were not able to get back to school at all.

LET'S HEAR IT FROM THE CHILDREN

"I went back to school 10 days after the classes resumed. It was still dangerous for me to go back to school since the roads were still not cleared from debris."

Male child from Tacloban,
10 years old

"I am very afraid to go back to school because of the aftershocks."

Female child from Bohol,
11 years old

"We need to look for work and help our family. If we go to school instead of working, we will not have any money."

Group of male children from Zamboanga,
16-21 years old

"The facilities and items were not enough. Frequently, I feel paranoid that event may happen again, it was really traumatic. There are times that I still think of my loved ones that passed away because of the storm. It was hard to even go to school because of the transportation."

Female child from Tacloban,
15 years old

"We are afraid of the bomb threats and our school supplies were burned."

Female child from Zamboanga,
13 years old

Use of Temporary Learning Spaces and Makeshift Classrooms

Formal school system is often disrupted in the aftermath of a disaster and consequent evacuation, particularly when schools are used as evacuation centers to shelter the affected population. When classes are suspended for considerable period of time, efforts are made to conduct classes in temporary or makeshift classrooms. Also, as part of emergency response to education, temporary learning spaces (TLS) and/or temporary classrooms are built to ensure continuity of learning.

School children involved in this research were consulted regarding their experience in TLS and makeshift or temporary classrooms. Most of the respondents are not very familiar with the TLS and how it worked, referring to it as “play school” with activities like drawing, singing and games. For some, the TLS was more on psychological or psychosocial support and debriefing, which they dislike – as they were asked to narrate their experiences during the disaster.



Photo by Save the Children

A classroom in Iloilo, destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan

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Majority of the responses from children cite the unsuitable learning environment and inadequate facilities in the TLS. Students, as well as teachers complain that the tents are hot and humid during summer. This situation was reported to get worse during the rainy season, as the tarpaulin/temporary roofs have holes and the floors get flooded with rainwater. In some cases, teachers had no choice but to dismiss the class earlier than scheduled. The location of the TLS also posed issues for students and teachers alike. Some noted that the TLS and temporary classrooms are far from the comfort rooms, and in one particular case, the TLS was infested with mosquitos and one student suffered dengue fever.

For school children who had classes in the TLS and temporary classrooms for longer period of time, most of them feel that they were displaced

from their own classrooms to accommodate the evacuees. This was particularly true for the case of Guinobatan, Albay where the classes were held in tents provided by some NGOs or in makeshift classrooms built by the local government, while the evacuees occupied the original classrooms. Some school children consulted in Bohol said that they were not motivated to go back to school right away because of the situation in the TLS and temporary classrooms. Prolonged stay in temporary classrooms also prompted some parents to transfer their children to private schools with adequate learning facilities.

"It was really difficult at the TLS, because there were two sections and we were seated very close to each other, and it was very hot."

LET'S HEAR IT FROM THE CHILDREN

"One thing I didn't like in the temporary learning space was the place where it was constructed. There were many mosquitos. One of my classmates acquired dengue."

Female child from Tacloban, 14 years old

"It was difficult because we are using the temporary classroom wherein the roof is made of tarpaulin sheet which makes it very hot during sunny days and we all got wet during rainy days. We also don't have school supplies, and some of the things in the school were brought home by some of the evacuees."

Female child from Ormoc, 12 years old

"There were few books; sometimes the class is not okay, it is disorganized. It is also hot, and it also floods when it rains. There were no chairs, we just closely sit with each other."

Female child from Tacloban, 9 years old

"I attended 5 sessions in the tent. It was quite difficult to learn in a place without proper ventilation."

Male child from Tacloban, 14 years old

"It was difficult to study there, we don't have electric fans so it was really hot and we don't have armchairs, we are using mono-block chairs so it was not easy to write."

Male child from Guinobatan, 15 years old

"The place was hot especially when it's sunny day. Then if it's rainy season we all got wet because the tent has many holes, then it floods inside."

Female child from Tacloban, 10 years old

"There were no vacant rooms, so we need to find a place to hold our class, because our school was used as an evacuation center, the students are holding their classes anywhere (plaza, grandstand, courts, other schools, tents)."

Male child from Zamboanga, 14

Use of Schools as Evacuation Centers

School children were asked to explain how they felt when their schools and classrooms were used as evacuation centers. While their explanations vary, most of them are sad that they have to miss their lessons because of the evacuation. They also emphasized that they spend considerable time and energy in cleaning their classrooms and are often distracted by the noise and raucous caused by the evacuees especially the unattended children.

"The evacuees begged for money. Sometimes, some of the evacuees disrespect us and catcall at the female students."

Female child from Zamboanga City, 14 years old

Having the evacuees in close proximity to the classrooms and TLS exposes school children to threats of abuse and exploitation. A group of female respondents from Zamboanga narrated that the evacuees are disrespecting them through catcalling. The evacuees also beg for alms from the students, and they feel harassed by this. A female pupil from Tacloban said that she was afraid of using the toilets because the evacuees were there. School children were also exposed to unruly behavior of the evacuees, for instance, a boy in Iloilo narrated that the evacuees were gambling in the evacuation center. Worse, the men were drinking alcoholic beverages and even walked around without their shirts on.



50% of the children expressed that they feel sad when families affected by the calamity stayed in their school.

While most of the respondents expressed negative views when their schools are used as evacuation centers, a number remarked that they are happy because they were able to help families who lost their homes. For some, it is better that the evacuees were in the schools rather than in bunkhouses and tents where conditions are worse. Also, children feel that they are safe and secure when their families evacuated to the school. This is particularly true for school children who evacuated to their own schools during the disaster. They remarked that the classrooms are stronger than their houses and that the roofs cannot be blown off by the typhoon.

LET'S HEAR IT FROM THE CHILDREN.

"Because when I went back to school, I saw our classroom so untidy; our comfort room had a bad smell and was so dirty. We were greatly affected especially in our studies, instead of starting the lecture already; we need to clean our classroom first."

Female child from Ormoc, 14 years old

"Because our school is being used as a big garbage area. Our school becomes messy, and perhaps there will be more casualties since our school is located near the seashore."

Female child from Tacloban, 10 years old

"The evacuees looked miserable at the school because it was crowded, and some people were gambling"

Male child from Iloilo, 9 years old

"We are always relocating from place to place to conduct our classes and when we went back to our school, our classroom was so filthy and our school stuff were missing."

Female child from Zamboanga, 13 years old

"They occupied our rooms as if it was their house, so it was really sad."

Female child from Zamboanga, 6 years old

Other Site Options for Evacuation Centers

"If they will use all the schools as evacuation centers, what will happen to our education?"

Female child from Zamboanga, 14 years old

The respondents were also asked to share their views on using other sites like sports arenas, basketball courts, stadiums, multi-purpose halls, churches, and other open spaces for evacuation centers. This research question was framed based on the mandates of the DSWD, DepEd, DILG and DOH Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1 Series of 2013 on Guidelines on Evacuation Center Management and Coordination, which identifies site options for setting-up evacuation centers.

81% of the respondents agreed that sports arenas, basketball courts, stadiums, multi-purpose halls, churches, and other open spaces should be used as evacuation centers in the event of a disaster or emergency. The most common reason cited was these structures have wide and open areas, so that the evacuees will not be overcrowded in the classrooms. Also, school children cited that they can return to their classes sooner if these spaces are used as evacuation center instead of their classrooms. Notably, a school boy in Bohol remarked that because of the aftershocks, he prefers to stay in the open field rather than inside a classroom. A male pupil from Albay shared the same view, citing that people easily get sick inside an overcrowded classroom.

Salient Features of JMC No. 1 Series of 2013

- ☉ All **SCHOOLS**, sports arenas/basketball courts, stadiums, multi-purpose halls, churches, and other open spaces **CAN BE IDENTIFIED AND USED** as sites for setting-up evacuation centers;
- ☉ Alternative temporary shelters shall be established or explored for the evacuees or displaced population. In the event the evacuees are already **HOUSED IN SCHOOLS**, they shall be transferred to alternative shelters such as tents, bunkhouses and other temporary shelters, and;
- ☉ **SCHOOLS SHALL NOT BE THE PRIMARY CHOICE AND OPTION** for evacuation centers. However, in events that schools needs to be utilized, the local government units, with the support from national government agencies shall establish transitional shelters to house the evacuees for an extended period of time. Usage of schools should be up to 3 days for short term displacement, medium and long term displacement which is up to 15 days or until such time that the respective LGUs are able to establish the alternative transitional sites.

(Source: DSWD, DepEd, DILG and DOH Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1 Series of 2013)



81% of the children agreed that all sports arena, basketball courts, stadiums, multi-purpose halls, churches, and other open spaces can be identified and be used as sites for setting-up an evacuation center.

"It's Our School"

As a follow-up question, school children were asked to share their views and feelings when the evacuees' occupying the schools are transferred to alternative shelters such as tents, bunkhouses and other temporary shelters. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (91%) shared that it is okay and they feel happy, because they can now use their classrooms and continue with their classes. Most of

the respondents also shared that it is better for the evacuees to transfer to temporary shelters so they can have privacy and their needs will be properly addressed. A female student from Albay shared that transferring to a temporary shelter is better because commonly, the evacuees get sick with communicable diseases when they stay in the classrooms.

LET'S HEAR IT FROM THE CHILDREN

"It's okay if they will be transferred to temporary shelters so that they will be given relief items, and communicable diseases will be prevented from spreading. At least, if they will be in temporary shelters, they will have their own houses and water to use."

Male child from Tacloban, 11 years old

"It is the obligation of the Government to transfer them to permanent or even just temporary houses so that our studies will not be affected."

Female child from Tacloban, 9 years old

"It's okay for me, so that our school will no longer be messy and when classes resume, we can already start without delay."

Female child from Ormoc, 15 years old

"Because they get sick here at the school."

Female child from Guinobatan, 10 years old

"The people affected by the typhoon need houses of their own even if those are just temporary so that the parents can discipline their children for them not to be wandering around the school grounds."

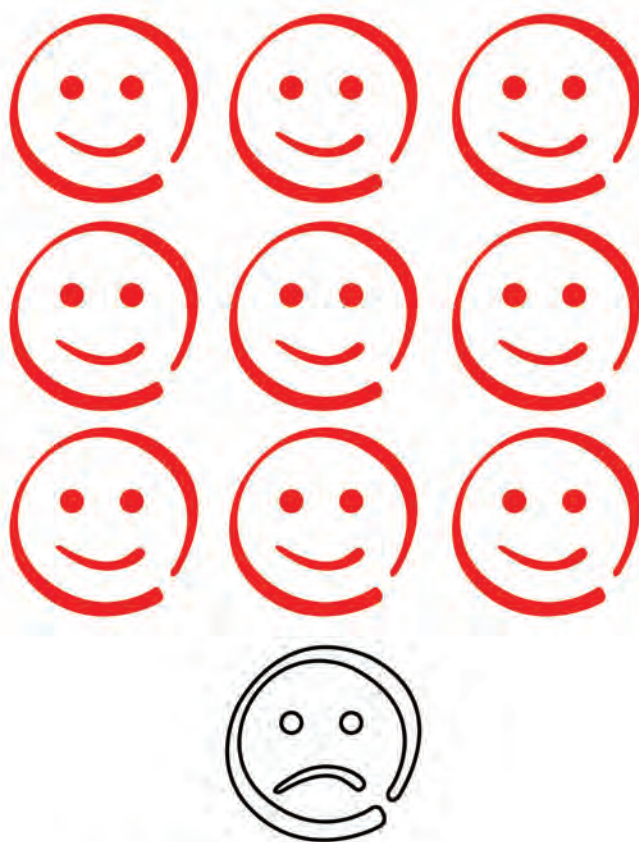
Male child from Tacloban, 9 years old

"So we can use our classrooms to study and the lives of the evacuees will be easier at the tents instead being congested in one room and they can have their own sleeping areas."

Female child from Iloilo, 9 years old

"It's Our School"

Interviewed teachers and school administrators also shared that transferring the evacuees to sites separate from the school should be a priority of the government, especially if the period of displacement is expected to be long. For some teachers, when the evacuees stay in the classrooms for a long period of time, it becomes difficult to convince them to relocate or transfer to the bunkhouses and tent cities. In the case of some schools in Zamboanga, evacuees insisted that they remain in the schools because conditions are worse in the bunkhouses and the city stadium.



91% of the children said that it is okay for the affected families staying in their school to be transferred to the alternative shelter.

Local government officials concurred with the responses of the children and teachers, citing that ideally, the evacuees staying in schools should be immediately transferred to temporary shelters and tents so that classes can resume as soon as possible. But budget and logistical constraints prevent them from doing so.

Most local governments expressed that they don't have enough budget to construct temporary shelters and bunkhouses for the evacuees, as most of their emergency fund is utilized for food and relief goods to be distributed to the affected population. For local governments who had the means and resources to build temporary shelters for the evacuees, location and land ownership was their main challenge. A barangay captain in Tacloban City cited that he needed to negotiate first with the owner of the land, and they have to go through a long legal process of having a memorandum of agreement (MOA) before they can build temporary shelters for their displaced constituents. Moreover, for LGUs with the resources and capability to build permanent evacuation centers, access to a secure and suitable location can prove to be a hindrance. This is particularly true for the City of Caloocan, where building a permanent evacuation center is hindered by location issues.



A classroom in Iloilo, destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan

"Caloocan doesn't have a permanent evacuation center, but we are planning on constructing one. We are still looking for an area that is not prone to flooding because it would be useless to build one if it also floods in that area."

Caloocan City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office

Limiting the Use of Schools as Evacuation Centers

To ensure educational continuity for children in the aftermath of a disaster or emergency, the Guidelines on Evacuation Center Management and Coordination (JMC No. 1 Series of 2013) mandates the limited use of schools as evacuation centers. It states that schools shall not be the primary choice

and option for evacuation, but in cases where schools need to be utilized, the usage will be up to 3 days for short term displacement, and for medium and long term displacement up to 15 days or until such time that the LGU are able to establish the alternative transitional site.

LET'S HEAR IT FROM THE CHILDREN

"It is very much okay so the room that they are using can be used by the students and we can prevent what happened after Yolanda. There is really a need to have a temporary shelter so they will be safe and they will not disturb us."

Female child from Ormoc, 15 years old

"It is okay so that the students can go back to school. If the evacuees stayed longer, the students might not learn anything."

Female child from CAMANA, 11 years old

"So our classes won't be disturbed and there will be no more need for a make-up classes."

Female child from Guinobatan, 10 years old

"Our education, health and safety would be at risk. When our school accommodated the families affected by the siege, many of our school properties and structures were damaged and destroyed. It resulted to more struggles for the students and our school."

Female child from Zamboanga, 15 years old

"It's Our School"

The principle on limiting the use of schools as evacuation centers is also one of the key components of the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act¹³, a legislative measure already approved by the Philippine Congress and signed into law by the President last 18 May 2016. The Act, among other things, aims to streamline the government's plan to ensure the prompt resumption

of educational services for children. It orders that "only in cases where there is no other available space or structure which can be used as a general evacuation center may a school or child development center be used as an evacuation center" (Sec. 5). Similar to JMC No. 1, the Act limits the use of schools as evacuation centers to a maximum of 15 days.

CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY RELIEF AND PROTECTION ACT (RA 10821)

Sec. 5 Evacuation Centers - Only in cases where there is no other available place or structure which can be used as a general evacuation center may a school or child development center be used as an evacuation center.

When a school or child development center is used as an evacuation center, gymnasiums, learning and activity centers, auditoriums and other open spaces shall be utilized first. Classrooms shall only be used as a last resort. The use of the school premises shall be as brief as possible. If the use is predicted to exceed fifteen (15) days, the affected LGU shall provide written documentation to the DepEd and DILG on the following:

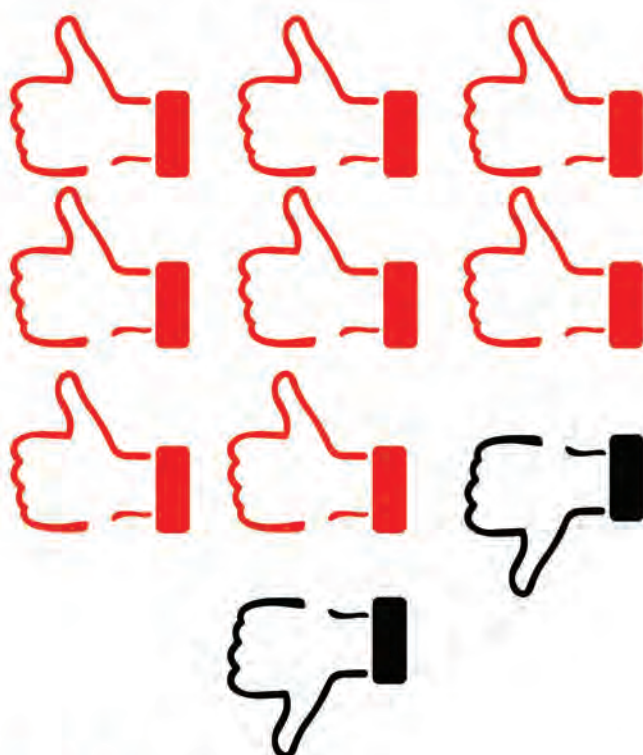
- i. The name and location of the school;
- ii. All alternative sites and proposal for final site selection;
- iii. Measures being implemented to prevent interference or disruption to the school and educational activities of children; and
- iv. Other particulars to be provided in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of this Act.

The DepEd, in coordination with DPWH, shall continuously monitor and assess the condition of temporary learning spaces and other transitional and semi-permanent structures used as classrooms after a disaster, and if the use exceeds six (6) months after the declaration of state of calamity, the regional DepEd office shall conduct regular site inspections and shall certify to the Secretary of Education that such spaces are in good physical condition and sufficient to ensure the safety of the children and their environment.

(Source: RA 10821)

"It's Our School"

When asked if they are in favor of limiting the use of schools as evacuation center based on the JMC and RA 10821, 83% of school children consulted agreed on the limitation. Immediate resumption of classes and lessened damages to school facilities were commonly cited by the school children as the reason why they favor the limitation.



83% of the children consulted said that it is okay that the school will not be the primary choice to be used as an evacuation center. However, in an event that it needs to be utilized, its usage should be up to 3 days for short term displacement, medium and long term displacement which is up to 15 days or until such time that the respective LGUs are able to establish the alternative transitional sites.

"This [school] is not an evacuation center but a school. (It is) a place for teachers to teach the students so they can learn."

Female child from Bohol, 11 years old

On the other hand, most of the school principals, DRR coordinators and teachers interviewed for this study revealed that they were not aware that such guidelines exist. A teacher in Tacloban City remarked that if he knew about the limitation set by the JMC, he could have cited this in order to convince the evacuees to vacate the classrooms and transfer to the bunkhouses. LGU officials particularly in the barangay level, were also not aware that the JMC exists and that there is a limit on the number of days that a school can be used as an evacuation center. However, some individuals raised the point that the number of days seem to be impractical and is not reflective of the realities on the ground.

"It is good to put a limit on the number of days that a school can be used as evacuation center, but in reality, it could not be achieved because we don't have a permanent evacuation center. We can't just drive away the evacuees after 3 days when no provision for shelter or tents are made available for them."

- Brgy. Captain, Tacloban City

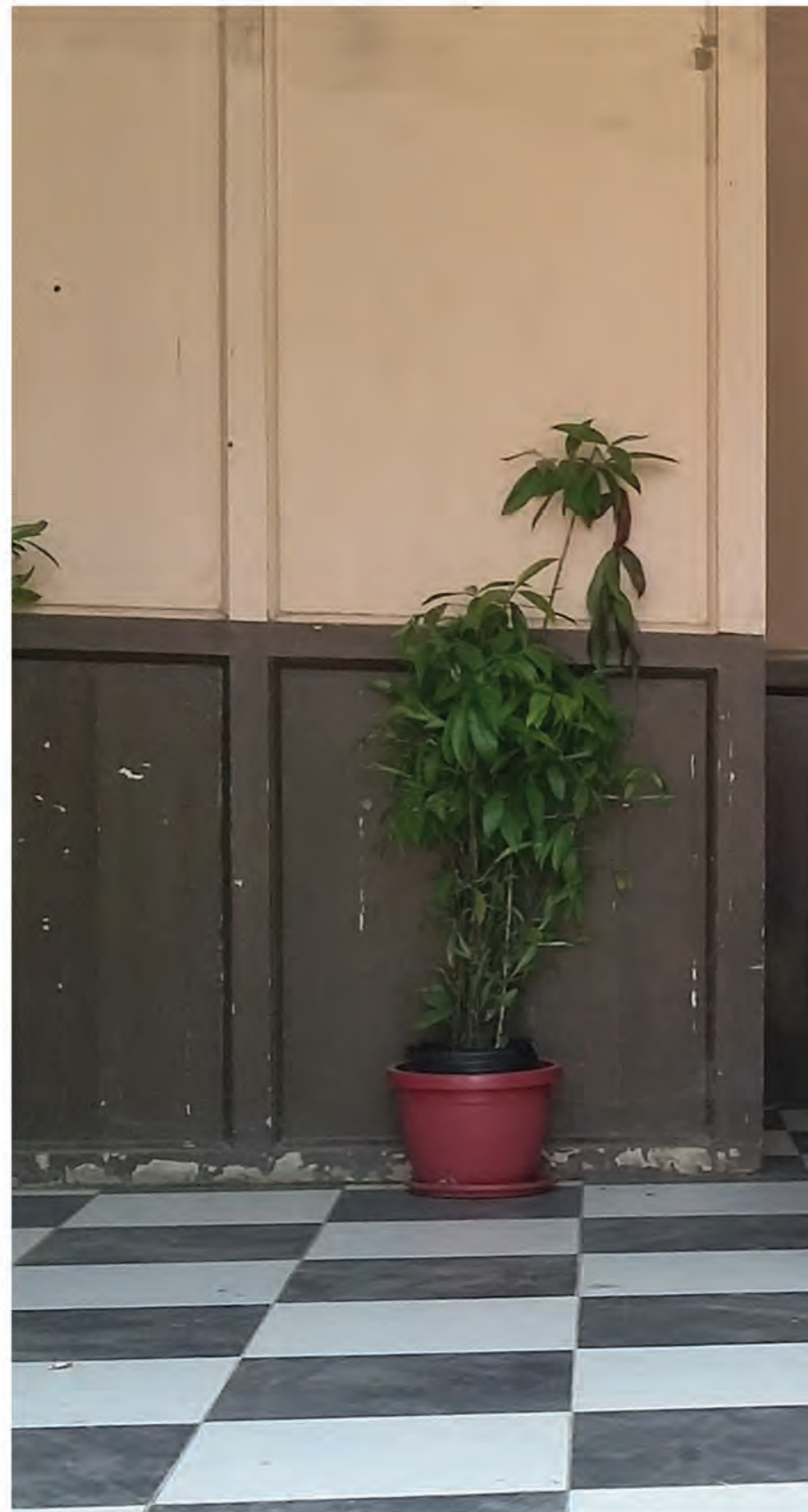
Admittedly, DepEd division offices in the research areas revealed that the problem with the limitation set by the JMC is the implementation. One division supervisor interviewed for this report noted that their hands are tied on the matter, as it is the local government that decides when to lift the evacuation and/or transfer the evacuees to temporary shelters. For most communities, schools remain as the only choice for an evacuation center given that majority are without permanent evacuation centers and have limited options for spaces available for evacuation purposes. Responses from the local officials on limiting the number of days a school can be used as an evacuation center is regarded a good solution. But taking into consideration that their areas are frequented by typhoons and monsoon rains, for them, the most ideal recourse is to build permanent evacuation centers. With limited options on other sites for evacuation, the use of schools as evacuation centers will continue as practiced.

SYNTHESIS

Drawing primarily from the responses of school children, it is clear that the impacts and effects of using schools as evacuation centers still reverberate in their young minds. Firsthand experiences of missed classes and lessons, destroyed or damaged classrooms, displacement from their own schools, overcrowded TLS and temporary classrooms and having to witness the overall disorder and unruly behavior of some of the evacuees have etched an effect on children and their education, something that cannot be taken back, nor reversed.

Using schools as evacuation centers results to disadvantages that mount very high costs in terms of losses in our educational system. The tangible losses are the most obvious – damaged structures, facilities and learning materials – yet these can be repaired or replaced. But the intangible effects such as lost appetite for learning, poor performance of both teachers and learners, exposure to various threats of exploitation, emotional and psychosocial stress are greater and most often have lasting effects on the child. These among others, should prompt a purposeful rethinking on the current norm of using schools as evacuation centers.

Anecdotal evidence from researches and experiences from other countries point to the very same line of argument raised in this report. The evacuees' humanitarian right to shelter versus children's right to education underlines the discourse on the use of schools as evacuation center. However, this need not be the norm whenever the need for evacuation and emergency shelter arises. Clearly, the gaps and inefficiencies are caused by weak (or worse, non-existent) DRRM planning, absence of school disaster management protocols, and overall lack of coordination among government, decision makers and education stakeholders. To mitigate and manage these effects and impacts to schoolchildren and the community as a whole, comprehensive school safety and appropriate disaster risk management mechanisms should be in place.



A teacher conducts her class in a small corner of a school corridor in Zamboanga City



Photo by Save the Children

Conclusions

This report presents the perspective of school children on the use of schools as evacuation centers. Looking at both ends of the spectrum, stakeholders and decision-makers face an unlikely dilemma between fulfilling the need for evacuation centers and upholding educational continuity. While access to shelter after a disaster is a humanitarian imperative, fulfilling this should not be at the expense of children's right to education. Regardless of the situation, educational continuity must be guaranteed and the quality of learning must not be compromised. Lost appetite for learning, increased exposure to threats and exploitation, and the psychological impacts of being out of school are effects which cannot be measured by the numbers and statistics reflected on situational reports during disasters, and thus could be easily overlooked. It is necessary that appropriate actions be taken from all fronts to address the issues surfaced by children resulting from the use of schools as evacuation centers. It is their school, after all.

Action Points and Recommendations

In light of the views expressed by school children and other major education stakeholders and decision-makers, this report puts forward the following action points and recommendations:

(1) Schools should be the last option as evacuation center. In the event the schools are used, the provisions of RA 10821 or the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act, particularly Section 5 thereof and the Joint Memorandum Circular on Guidelines on Evacuation Center Management and Coordination must be strictly adhered to. Among others, the use of schools as evacuation center must be limited to a maximum of 15 days due of the following reasons:

- (a) Glaring negative impacts on children's education and learning;
- (b) Substantial damage and/or loss to facilities, records and school properties;

- (c) Prolonged use of schools as evacuation centers affects children's motivation to go back to school or attend TLS sessions;
- (d) School children are more exposed to threats of child exploitation, abuse and other child protection issues, and;
- (e) Unnecessary burden and additional task for teachers and/or education workers to manage the evacuees in the school.

(2) Thorough review and systematic process on pre-identifying which schools will be used as evacuation center must be in place. Schools pre-identified for evacuation purposes must be designed, built, maintained, equipped and managed to meet the minimum standards for temporary shelter in order to ensure human dignity, safety, child protection and educational continuity¹⁴. Intrinsic to this process should be the adherence to:

- (a) Agreement that other school facilities (e.g. covered courts, quadrangles, assembly halls) will be the first to be utilized for evacuation. Classrooms should only be used when no other facility or space inside the school is available for evacuation purposes;
- (b) Established protocols and procedures in evacuation should be strictly enforced;
- (c) Risk and hazard mapping to determine if the school is safe for evacuation purposes;
- (d) Zoning and/or clustering of barangays or villages that will be assigned to a specific school or classroom, and;
- (e) Accountability and reporting mechanism to ensure that damages or losses caused by the evacuation is properly addressed and education investments are safeguarded.
- (f) If schools are used as evacuation centers, the School Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (SDRRM) Team's functions

"It's Our School"

should also include providing supplementary support to Camp Management to ensure children's safety and protection of investments in education.

- (g) Training School DRRM Team and DRRM Coordinators on camp management and coordination.

(3) Direct and formal coordination between the local government units (LGUs) and the schools should be established and maintained. This coordination must be in place between and among different levels of local government (provincial, city, municipal and barangay) and DepEd offices (regional, division and school levels).

- (a) Coordination between the respective Local (provincial, city, municipal and barangay) Disaster Risk Reduction Management Councils and the SDRRM Team.
- (b) Updated and comprehensive DRRM planning and coordination should involve school heads and/or school DRRM point person, barangay officials, and other education stakeholders in the community.
- (c) Wide dissemination and strict implementation of laws and policies related to schools as evacuation center (e.g. JMC No. 1 Series of 2013, Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act, DepEd DRRM Manual).
- (d) LGUs must be accountable for losses and damages to school facilities and property caused by the evacuation. Among others, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) underlining repairs, replacement, reconstruction and other cost-related matters must be in place.

(4) In times of conflict emergencies and evacuation caused by armed conflict, schools should never be used for military purposes. At all times, schools and other educational

structures and facilities must solely remain for civilian use.

- (a) The declaration of all schools as Zones of Peace must be affirmed in order to protect pupils, students, teachers, and education workers from potential conflict and various forms of violence;
- (b) Fighting forces from either sides/parties should be prohibited to use any schools or educational facility - be it functioning or abandoned, for military and tactical purposes either for short or long-term use;
- (c) Schools should not be attacked and/or destroyed by any warring parties, regardless of motive or purpose, and;
- (d) School children, education workers, and civilians caught in the crossfire must be given safe passage and properly evacuated to evacuation centers.

(5) Re-evaluation and rethinking the current design and plan for Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) and temporary classrooms. As results of the consultation highlight issues and lapses on TLS and temporary classrooms, the following should be considered:

- (a) Set an ideal size to student ratio for the TLS to avoid overcrowding;
- (b) Careful selection of the location of the TLS, considering health, safety, security, accessibility and hazards to children. The standards and procedures on site selection should be in the School DRRM plan;
- (c) Lesson and activity planning for TLS and classes in the temporary classrooms should be standardized. Alternative delivery modes should be re-evaluated and updated to suit the educational needs of the children without being devoid of the circumstances in the TLS and temporary classrooms, and;

“It’s Our School”

- (d) Operational procedures on dismantling and taking down of constructed TLS and temporary classrooms (including donated) should be standardized and implemented. Dilapidated and unused TLS tents pose significant hazards to school children and educational workers, thus should be properly disposed or disassembled to be put into better use (e.g. recycling).

(6) School Disaster Risk Reduction and Management plans should include a section for educational continuity in times of prolonged emergencies. Among others, the following must be in place:

- (a) Flexible school calendar to be used when necessary;
- (b) Identify appropriate flexible learning strategies that will be guided by teachers or adult learning facilitators;
- (c) Identify plans for educational continuity for younger learners (e.g. preschool, kindergarten), and;
- (d) Reconsider procedures on nationwide educational assessments, like the National Achievement Test (NAT) and Language Assessment for Primary Grades (LAPG) for areas hit by disasters and emergencies. If possible, guidelines for exemption or postponement must be in place.
- (e) Explore alternative pathways for education and/or alternative means for affected learners to get their educational qualifications. For instance, a process for mass promotion of learners affected by emergencies should be in place.

(7) Child Protection mechanisms in schools should remain functional even during emergencies and especially when the schools are used as evacuation centers. Towards this end, schools must:

- (a) Adopt a Child Protection Policy and organize/convene a Child Protection Committee (CPC);

- (b) Train and capacitate CPC members and teachers in addressing and handling child protection cases;
- (c) Ensure proper referral, coordination and reporting of cases of child abuse and exploitation with the appropriate agencies (e.g. DSWD, CWC, PNP), and;
- (d) Ensure compliance to Section 4 (d) of the Children’s Emergency Relief and Protection Act, mandating among others the establishment of a Comprehensive Emergency Program for Children.

(8) In the long term, Local Government Units (LGUs) with support from the National Government, must build permanent evacuation centers separate to a school, and for such purpose:

- (a) Allocate funds for (1) acquiring a safe location, and (2) building an evacuation center that meets internationally agreed minimum standards;
- (b) Encourage clustering/zoning of barangays or villages that will use or occupy the said evacuation center, and;
- (c) These structures can also double as multi-purpose assembly halls, extension offices, or coordination hubs during times of normalcy.

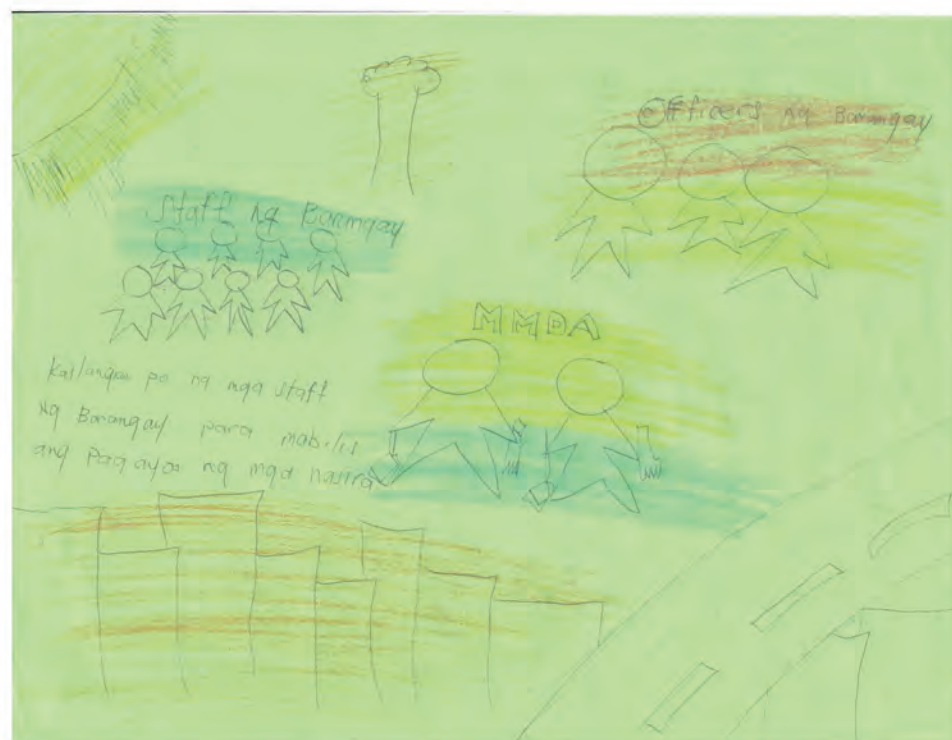
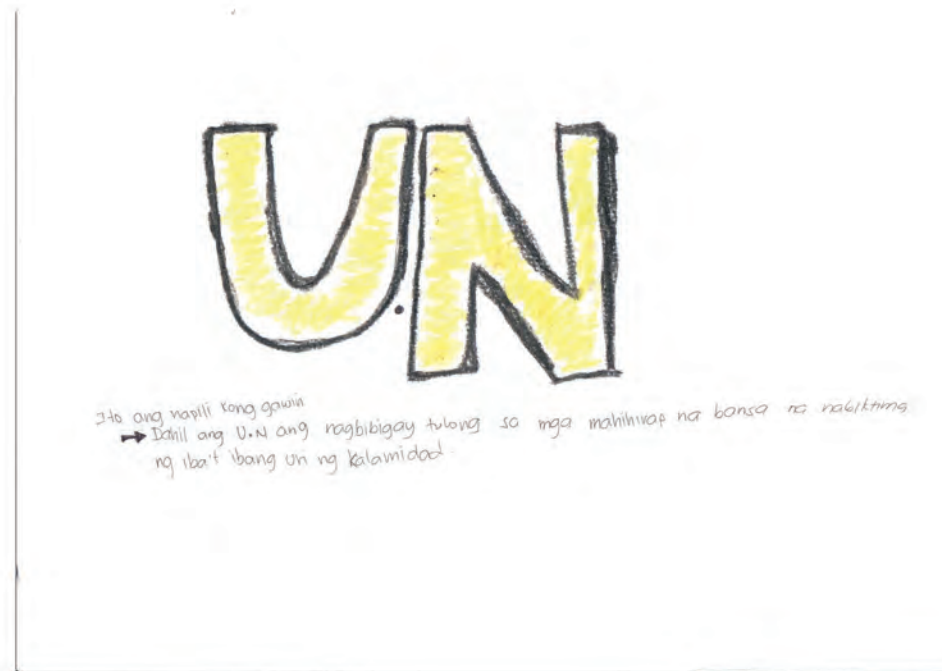
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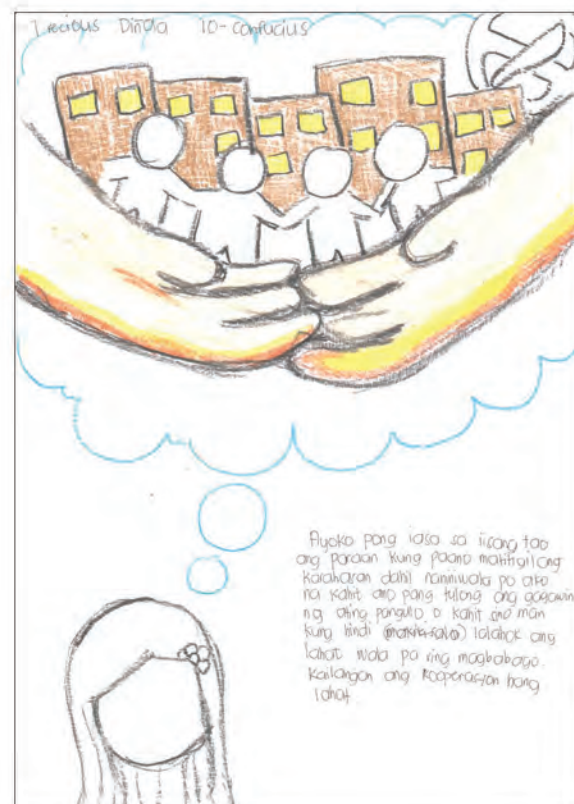
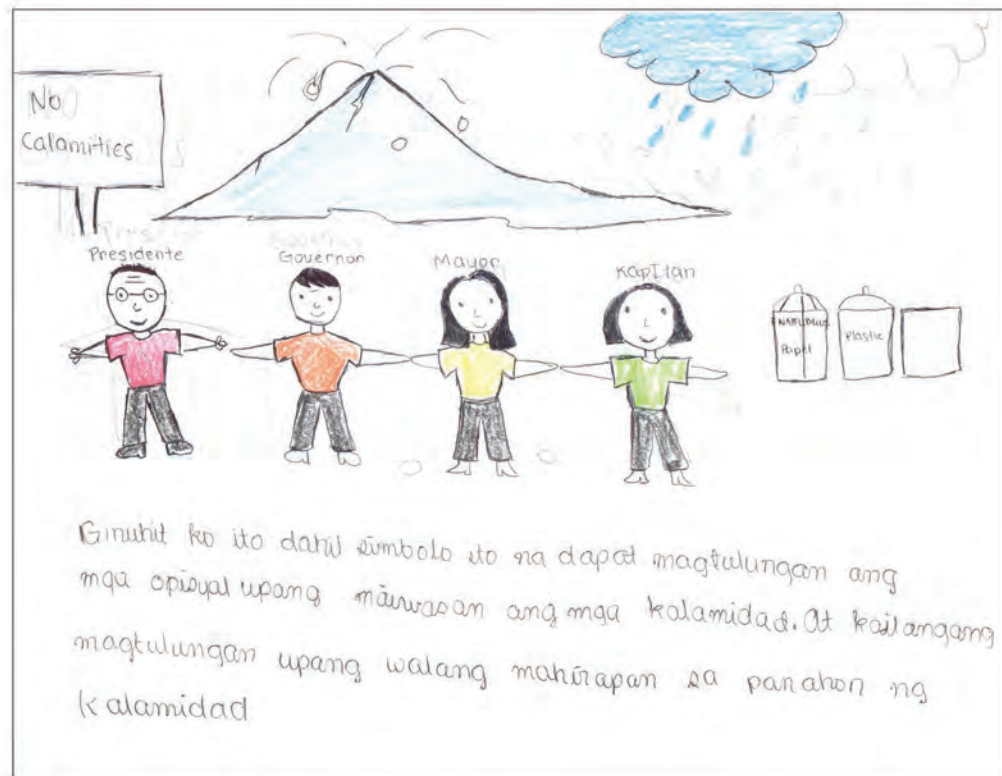
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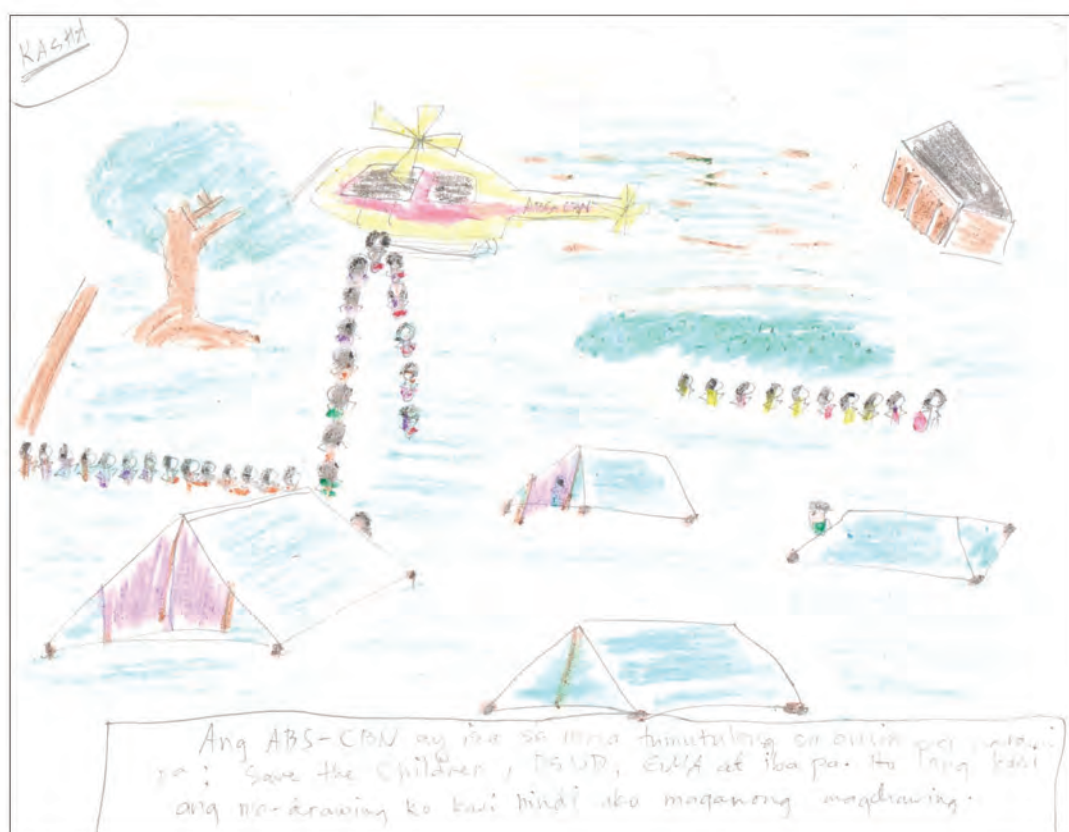
In Sketches and Doodles: What Children are Looking Forward to?

We asked school children to illustrate who they think could help them on their issues and problems regarding education during times of disasters and emergencies. We asked them to draw what they are looking forward to in the future, for their schools and their communities as a whole. Below are some of the drawings:



"It's Our School"





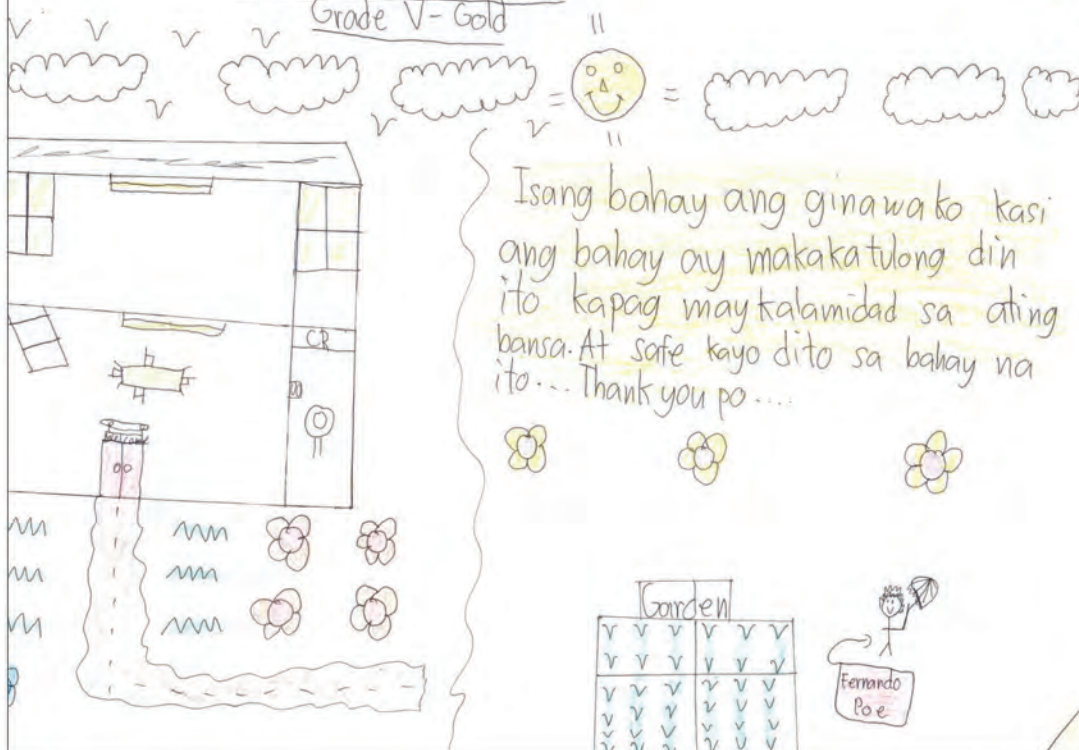
"It's Our School"

Andrei D. Lario



Weather Reporter
 Weather Reporter dahil makakahanda
 kayo pag may paparating na kalamidad
 at mabibigyan kayo ng impormasyon
 kung sino dapat nating paghandaan
 na kalamidad!

Leah Mae G. Abarondo
 Grade V - Gold





Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In Philippines and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.