

Assessment Report of the Current Status and Needs in Improvement of Emergency
Kindergarten Management (EKM)
Tien Giang provinces,
Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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1. Introduction

The initiative of operating Emergency Kindergartens (EKs) to care for young children during flood seasons has been considered as a successful model in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam by the flood management authorities in the past few years. It is because this model provides basic care, education, and safety for young children. The EKs have helped to considerably reduce the number of child drowning cases as well as provide some forms of education for these children. In addition, this model also contributes to help parents continue their work during flood time to earn a living for the whole family.

In order to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of this initiative for replication during future floods in the Mekong Delta, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) with funding support from DIPECHO, in January 2008, has conducted an assessment of the EKs in Tien Giang province, Vietnam.

Objective: The objective of this assessment is to identify the gaps and needs in emergency kindergarten establishment, maintenance, and upgrading in conjunction with the existing provincial and district Flood and Storm Control Plans.

2. Key Findings

2.1. Child protection from water-related risks in flood-affected areas: general features

2.1.1. Common agreement on the need to pay special attention to protection of children from drowning, especially during flood season

Interviewed provincial, district, communal representatives, parents, community members all still have bad memories of the year 2000 flood which caused the death of hundred children. They also recognized that children still face danger and risk of drowning during the dry season due to the water omnipresence in the Mekong delta. They therefore all agreed that it would be necessary to pay special attention to protection of children from drowning, especially during flood season.

“In flood season, we very much focus on protection of children, elder people, women, especially pregnant women. Since 2001, we have improved the dyke system to protect residential areas from the flood and build new flood proof residential sites. In these protected and flood proof areas, we put emphasis on organizing care for children... In flood season, whenever the flood level reaches 1.5 m in Hau My Bac commune, all elder people and children will be moved to safe and flood proof areas. When the flood level reaches 2.2m, schools will be closed...” (Cai Be DCFSC)

2.1.2. Protection of children: from rapid response to long term preparedness

Rapid response: temporary EK

The year 2000 flood was devastating, causing an extensive number of child drowning cases in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. In addition to care and protection provided by families, in order to rapidly respond to the need of safer care and better protection for children, temporary EKs were established by the local authorities, using a private house borrowed from a volunteer owner or using public building such as health care centers, schools etc...

Long term preparedness: permanent EK

Since 2002, in the field of disaster risk reduction, more focus has been put on long-term solutions on the basis of the principle of living with the floods. One lesson learned after the response in 2000 and 2001 floods was that new EKs should be permanent and flood-resistant so as to help save children from drowning while their parents are away to earn a living. EKs should also be more child-friendly, providing for the particular developmental health and education needs of young children who typically will use these as EK for a period of several months a year. Therefore since 2002, the preferred solution is to establish and operate permanent EKs which aim at both providing education and protection for children.

In Tien Giang, to avoid having to house EKs in private households that may in the long term prove unsafe for children or unwilling to host childcare activities, permanent EKs are set up in public preschool facilities. Permanent EKs are considered integrated part of the pre-school system, thus are under the full management of the education authorities.

Long term trend

Establishing organized care for children in flood-affected areas and during flood season is a coordinated planning process between different agencies and different levels under the direction of the vice-president or president of the people committee at all level and under the supervision of the SFSC unit who is as advisor to the People Committee on disaster response and preparedness matter. A general disaster preparedness plan is prepared every year at all levels. Each organization also prepares its own plan, taking into account the information provided in the general plan.

For long term, there is a trend to plan for stronger integration of child care with education through development of more permanent Emergency Kindergartens.

Tien Giang plans to pass the main responsibility for establishing and operating Emergency Kindergarten to education authorities in order to facilitate the integration process. The plan is to establish “*at least one preschool per commune that is able to house emergency care for children by 2010*” (DOET). It is recognized that temporary Emergency Kindergartens in private houses or public building will remain necessary as they responds to the immediate needs in some places where no public pre-school facilities are available.

2.2. Permanent EKs

2.2.1. Opening and building permanent EKs

In Tien Giang, the opening and building EKs are under the People Committee’ s direction and guidelines. Education Authority is assigned to be focal point and other agencies act as collaborating agencies.

Since these EKs are part of the pre-school system, they are established once for all. However they need to figure in the disaster response and preparedness plan of the commune as a potential site to be transformed into emergency Kindergarten in flood season. All costs are covered by education budget. In flood season, additional funding may be allocated if justified.

There are two main funding sources for opening permanent EKs:

DOET budget

External budget

While using DOET's budget to open a permanent EK, DOET has to prepare annual plans on the basis of its available budget and its need to develop preschool education. The priority is given to commune without permanent EK. DOET budget mainly goes rather to building new permanent EKs than improving existing preschool facilities

"The district has developed plan to build EKs. However, due to its limited financial capacity which is fully depending on Education budget, only few EKs can be built each year...I think it is better to build new EKs where there is no preschool facilities rather than improve existing preschool sites because preschool facilities are still lacking" (DCFSC of Cai Lay)

The use of external funding sources is more flexible. Therefore funding can be used for building new EKs or for improving existing preschool facilities. The decision is made on the basis of donor's budget availability and local needs that are identified by the donors or by their local partners/representatives. Relationship that exists between the donors and the local communities also contributes to the decision making, especially in term of amount allocated and site selection. External donor usually requires local communities to contribute matching funds.

"We have 3 EKs in our commune which were built with financial support from the district (???). 75 children daily attend these EKs"(My Thanh Bac commune)

"My Tan has 1 permanent EK that was built in 2002 at a flood proof residential site with support from international organization. The EK is managed by 1 preschool teacher and actually admit children of 5-6 years old.

2.2.2. Operating permanent EKs

Operation period

EKs has clear double mission of providing education, emergency care and protection for children. Therefore it is open over the year. All EKs are day care center and thus they are close during evening and night time.

Staffing

In dry season, each EKs has one preschool teacher taking care of children's education. Preschool teacher should have at least minimum required education background (12 years of general education plus 2 years of teacher training).

In flood season, if more children are sent to EKs, at least 1 local caretaker will be hired to assist the preschool teacher. They are mainly members of women association, youth union or local staff of CPFC, health care center who are selected on the basis of some criteria such as volunteering spirit, availability, child care skills. Caretakers receive training on children's recreational activities, food preparation and health care. They are likely to be mobilized every year.

Beneficiaries

In dry season, attendants of EKs are children from 3 to 6 years old. In flood season, EKs are open to all children.

Care conditions

Generally pre-school facilities meet minimum standard in term of physical conditions. During the dry season, the pre-schools have a clear mandate to provide children with education opportunities, following official education program and obligation. Food for children should be prepared according to the nutritional standard. In most communes, there is at least one pre-school with one main site and several satellite sites.

In flood season, depending on the flood level, one or more sites will be transformed into emergency Emergency Kindergarten where more children can attend. In flood season, educational activities can be more flexible. More recreational activities can be then organized for children.

Cost

Costs for operating EKs include salary for caretakers and other functioning costs such as equipments, electricity, water, maintenance etc...

As government staff, preschool teachers are paid by government salary budget. Local caretakers paid by education operational budget. Other expenditures are covered by education operational budget and/or by parents' contributions and/or external funding sources

2.3. Temporary EK

2.3.1. Opening temporary EKs

The need to be prepared for opening temporary EKs in case of urgency is always recognized by the authorities at all level. Therefore in the general disaster preparedness plan prepared every year at all levels, there is always a section relating to protection of children and to opening EKs. The main budget for opening temporary EKs usually comes from reserve budget line for disaster response. Local authorities and mass organization also mobilize other financial resources from donors. Since the establishment of temporary Emergency Kindergarten requires some funding from the government, a plan need to be prepared in advance before the flood season. This plan indicates the number of current available houses

and/or public buildings, depending on local authorities' criteria, and that can be used as Emergency Kindergartens and the number of temporary Emergency Kindergartens that need to be opened in flood season. This plan serves as basis for budgeting.

"Since 2002, flood level is not high so there is no urgent need to organize emergency care for children. Main role of EKs is therefore to provide children with education opportunities because. However each year, we still prepare and submit to the district authorities a plan for establishing EKs in case of need, using permanent EKs and temporary facilities in flood proof primary school facilities. We do not want to house EKs in private residences because teachers are more skillful than community members to take care of children and local authorities should not hand all responsibilities over to the community members. To prepare this plan, we have to establish a list of children living high risk of flooding areas, a list of potential locations and an estimated budget for covering costs for caretakers and children " (vice-president, My Thanh Bac commune).

"In other villages where permanent EKs are not available, the commune has selected some houses that can be used as temporary EK in flood season. These sites are housed in private residence. These houses should be located in areas protected by dykes, have enough space with paved floor and have the electricity network out of children's reach... Every year, the commune develops a disaster preparedness plan. According to this plan, CPFC is the focal point for organizing temporary EKs. The primary school's role is to provide teachers as requested to help organize educational and recreational activities for children. There is a group of women who can be mobilized whenever needed to be caretakers. They are CPFC collaborators or health workers who are selected by CPFC on the basis of criteria such as volunteering spirit, love for children and skills to communicate with children" (My Tan commune's president).

The concrete decision to open the Emergency Kindergartens is made by the commune people committee's chairman. The decision to open an Emergency Kindergarten is made on the basis of information on the flood level provided by the weather forecast services and the flood and storm control services needs of the local people/children that are identified through consultation made by communal staff of CPFC, education in coordination with other bodies infrastructure and budget conditions.

2.3.2. Operating temporary EKs

Operation period

Temporary EKs are open when necessary and only in flood season.

Staffing

There are generally at least 2 caretakers for each temporary EKs. Caretakers are hired by the local authorities. They are mainly members of women association, youth union or local staff of CPFC, health care center who are selected on the basis of some criteria such as volunteering spirit, availability, child care skills. Caretakers receive training on children's recreational activities, food preparation and health care. They are likely to be mobilized every year. In Tien Giang, depending on the availability of teachers, they can be mobilized to

take care of children in EKs and/or to provide training, advises for caretakers through regular monitoring visits.

“According to the plan, CPFC is the focal point for organizing temporary EKs. The primary school’s role is to provide teachers as requested to help organize educational and recreational activities for children. There is a group of women who can be mobilized whenever needed to be caretakers. They are CPFC collaborators or health workers who are selected by CPFC on the basis of criteria such as volunteering spirit, love for children and skills to communicate with children” (My Tan commune’s president).

Beneficiaries

Temporary EKs are open to all children. However when the demand is higher than the capacity of EKs, some selection criteria apply:

“In principle, all children can attend EKs in flood season regardless families’ economic conditions. However priorities are given to children from families living in remote and high flood areas” (My Thanh Bac commune)

Generally houses and public buildings that are borrowed to be the temporary Emergency Kindergarten should be flood proofed and meet some requirements in term of space and safety conditions. In many cases, additional improvements such as fencing are done with financial support from the government budget. Staying at the centers, children can be provided with food, some recreational and educational activities.

Cost

Caretakers’ salaries and operation costs are covered by the reserve budget and donors’ support.

2.3. Training for caretakers: needs and program

When the first temporary EKs were established in 2000, caretakers, including mobilized teachers, have met difficulties in managing EKs. Hired caretakers were selected on a voluntary basis. They therefore lacked skills on organizing group activities and educational activities for children. They usually have not sufficient understanding of nutrition and health care standard. Pre-school teachers were assumed to have necessary skills and capacities to provide children with appropriate care and education. However due to most of them being young, they lacked practical experience of addressing other children’s needs, especially in the event of emergencies. They therefore have done the work of caretakers only on the basis of their own experiences. Main activities for children were to tell them stories, teach them to sing some children’s songs and to distribute toys provided by humanitarian organizations to them without guiding them on how to play with.

In September 2001, Save the Children Alliance has carried out a rapid assessment of EKs that were set up to respond to the flood and found that in many EKs, caretakers still lacked basic care skills and knowledge of nutrition, hygiene, water and sanitation issues as well as of educational and recreational activities that could be organized for children.

To address the above weaknesses, in October 2001, a training program covering topics in childcare, making and use of toys and educational materials, and child-to-child activities was then developed by Save the Children in partnership with Tien Giang DoET. Experts from relevant agencies such as MoET were invited to provide their support to DoET and Save the Children staff in developing the training materials. A TOT for 30 participants and follow up training sessions for teachers and caretakers were then organized in Cai Lay, Cai Be and Tan Phuoc districts.

In 2007, ADPC took up this training initiative with focus on EKs to a higher level by including capacity building on EKs' management as an integrated component of its current FEMS projects. According to the informants, MOET has developed training materials for EK caretakers. ADPC project is supporting the revision of these training materials to make them more appropriate to the local situation by adding new contents such as food hygiene, nutritional education. In partnership with Tien Giang PCFSC, ADPC has organized several training sessions for EK caretakers in Cai Lay and Cai Be districts. So far, ADPC has organized 2 training sessions of which one for Cai Lay and one for Cai Be. 90 participants have attended these trainings.

In addition to these focused training program, preschool teachers receive yearly training to *"improve their skills to care for children, to prepare food that is appropriate for children of different age groups"* (District DoET)

2.4. Effectiveness

Organized Emergency Kindergartens with intervention of local authorities are considered useful for the following reasons:

It frees parents from the obligation to stay at home, so that they can work to earn a living. This is very important for people living in Mekong delta because the flooding season is also the time where they have more opportunities to earn money from fishing or other types of work.

It frees parents from the obligation to bring their children with them while they go fishing, thus avoiding to take children on the boat which is not a safe place.

Children can stay in a safe place, taken care of by trained caretakers, meet other children, play and have food prepared by the caretakers. Children from poor families also benefit from free meals thanks to the financial support from the government.

However it is noted that the temporary emergency Emergency Kindergartens were established mainly to provide supervised care for children during flood times, not to educate children. It is due to the lack of the facilities, teaching aid, teachers, and most importantly the mandate to maintain education activity. It totally depends on the initiative and motivation of each center management team, teachers, and local leaders to make educational activities as mandatory. The caretakers are community volunteers and were not officially trained to take care of children. In addition, most of the emergency Emergency Kindergartens use private houses as the caring facilities. The number of children in each center is usually over the capacity of the physical facility due to the high need of local households. Children do not have a stimulating living and educational environment. In some cases, the houses do not meet the minimum safety.

It is highly recognized that permanent Emergency Kindergartens, especially those established in public pre-school facilities is the most advanced form of organized care for children during dry and flood seasons because:

It is managed by the Education Authorities, thus offering a warranty of sustainability, suitable equipment, infrastructure maintenance and upgrading quality and quality care sustainable solution

It helps educate parents on the need to prepare for the children's future and develop pre-school education for children which is a high concern of both parents and authorities

It facilitates educational activities for children during the time they stay in the Emergency Kindergartens. Children are taken care of by trained teachers and caretakers during the whole school year, so including flood season. They can either stay for half day or whole day if the parents wish so. Parents therefore can work to earn a living. They are still with their parents during the night time. Education materials and teaching methodologies are those that are used formal education system. Teachers are supervised by education authorities. Children therefore can have access to official pre-school education so that they are better prepared for their official enrolment in primary education system. Since the center operates during the school year, it is ready to be transformed into emergency Emergency Kindergarten if necessary in flood season.

It can help integrate disaster risk reduction into very early stage of children's education

2.5. Establishing and operating Emergency Kindergartens: gaps, challenges and needs

2.5.1. Gaps

Weakness in information dissemination on policy, guidelines relating to Emergency Kindergarten's operation

When interviewing the key informants in Tien Giang, they mentioned about the decision of the Party, the People's Councils, and the People's Committees to ensure the safety for children during the flood season and the emergency Emergency Kindergarten is one of the measures. However the assessment team was not able to collect written documents for reference on guidelines and policies relating to the opening, operation, management, budget allocation and reimbursement, child selection, caretaker selection and training, and so on. It was also noted that at higher level, the informants are more aware of these policies and regulations than at lower level where the commune leaders and community members do not know exactly what policies exist and how they can access to the government supports.

Gaps in planning and opening EKs

- Lack of clear information on plan and results at provincial and district levels

When reviewing some disaster management strategies and annual response plans of different levels from the provincial to commune, the assessment team finds that the plan to open and operate some EKs in the most flood prone communes are included in these plans. It reflects the attentions and supports of the disaster management agencies to the EK initiative. However, these plans did not comprehensively describe the initiative, its purpose,

operation, management structure, and available supports. Instead, these plans only mentioned the need and plan to operate these EKs.

For 2007, it was said in the PCFSC plan that *“lessons learnt on EK should be documented for further extension of this model in order to protect children’s life in flood areas... The DOET should... provide schools and local people with guidance and instructions on how to organize transportation for children in flood season and organize EK to protect children in flooded areas”*.

At district level, only few lines of the disaster preparedness plan talked about organizing EK to protect children’s life in a very general term: *“District department of education and training should coordinate with the District committee for population, families and children and communal People Committee to reinforce the organization of EK”* (DP Plan for 2007, Tan Phuoc district) or *“Education authority.... should have plan to build EKs to be prepared for 2007 flood season and to organize EKs in flood season”* (DP plan for 2007, Cai Lay district)

- Weak information sharing on planning

As said, opening and operating EKs require collaboration between different agencies. It was said that Tien Giang province has assigned education authorities the main responsibility for establishing and operating Emergency Kindergarten in order to facilitate the integration process of emergency child care and education. It seems therefore that DoET is the main body that prepare plan for construction of EK. However Pcfsc does not have information on Doet's plan to set up Ek.

“The district has developed plan to build EKs... For the year 2008, I do not know exactly where EKs will be built... I do not know exactly how many EKs there are in Cai Lay but I think most of communes have at least one...” (DCFSC of Cai Lay)

Agencies such as CFSC, CPFC who play the role of supervision often do not have updated information from other participating agencies and from the local level. Between agencies, information is usually not consistent in term of policy guidelines, budget allocation. Between different levels, once agencies at the communal level complete data and information collection on the needs to establish Emergency Kindergartens according to instructions from the higher level, they usually send their report to district level line manager. In some cases, the information flows stop there, resulting in lack of information at provincial level. Communal authorities can only plan for opening temporary EKs. They can hardly know what the plan for establishing permanent EKs is.

- Lack of clear mechanism to involve community members, including children in planning

Community participation in implementing emergency Emergency Kindergartens is considered key factor for the success of this initiative. Their contribution is made through them making their houses available to use as temporary Emergency Kindergartens during the flood season, mobilizing parents to send children to safe places, providing food, mobilizing additional resources (in-kind and labor). However it is not clear how community members, including children participate in planning process and in making decision to open, operate and maintain these EKs. There seems to be no systematic mechanism to involve them in these processes. The plan for disaster risk reduction in general and for establishing EKs has no indication on how things should be done. While the roles of different agencies are mentioned, there is no information on what role community members and children can play

and how they can take that role. In communes who benefit from HCVA training with support from INGOs, although participatory planning process is implemented to facilitate community members' participation, it is done only when the project provides funding and technical support. Children's participation in planning and making decision is not yet admitted everywhere.

- Funding issue

It is a wish of every communal authorities and communities to have permanent EKs available in order to be less dependant while they need to open EKs in flood season. However there is a gap between the need of permanent EKs and the financial capacity to meet the need.

Funding from education budget is limited and it is not possible for the education authorities to allocate large government financial resources to build new pre-school facilities since investment priorities go to primary and high school infrastructures. Therefore there is a need to prioritize in planning.

"The district has developed plan to build EKs. However, due to its limited financial capacity which is fully depending on Education budget, only few EKs can be built each year..."

Due to its limited budget, Government encourages investment from private and NGO sectors within their socio-economic development program or on humanitarian aid basis. There is therefore a need to seek for and obtain additional funding. The problem is that there is few donors who are positioned in both field of disaster risk reduction and education services. Most of them are interested in one or another, thus making it difficult to justify a request for funding a multi-purposes infrastructure. Sometimes funding from external donor agencies is available but requires matching funds. In some cases, it was impossible for the local authorities and communities to mobilize matching funds.

"In 2007 and 2008, Save the Children Alliance has agreed to financially support the construction of 3 EKs in Cai Lay district. However 3 selected communes could not commit matching funds. SC financial support was then allocated to other communes. We could have asked DOET for matching funds but it was too late to do that because DOET has already allocated funding to DOET planned project... It is very difficult to mobilize matching funds from the local population because they already have to contribute a lot to community infrastructure projects" (DCFSC of Cai Lay)

Regarding temporary EKs, since 2002, due to the flood level being low, there was not high demand for establishing temporary EKs. So there is no evidence on gap between the level of fund allocation and financial needs. However, since funding comes from reserve budget, this is seen as a gap because reserve budget is in principle multi-purpose, thus can be used to meet other needs than to set up temporary EKs.

"The problem is that funds are allocated from reserve budget, not from a pre-budgeted plan" (Cai Be DCFSC)

- Staffing

An important question that is always asked whenever there is a plan to establish a permanent EK is who will operate the EK. When permanent EK is open according to the DOET plan, DOET can plan for education staff assignment. But if EK is built with external

donor's support without coordination with education authority, then EK has to hire local caretakers to start. Sometimes it is a problem to find resource to hire local caretakers. Even if the EK is under DOET plan, it is still not sure how human resource will be allocated: *"Education Authority has not yet a clear plan for allocate human resources for preschool education and a clear salary policy for preschool teachers"* (Cai Be DCFSC)

Gaps in training

- Training of caretakers

There was only a little number of training opportunities that have focused on building capacity for EK caretakers. According to participants in training activities, training sessions were quite short. Most of them were trained only once and have not been offered any refreshing training yet. Up to now, trainings mainly target permanent EK teachers. Training initiatives were not extended to all communes and to all caretakers yet while *"locally hired caretakers are not used to take care of big group of children"* (My Thanh Bac)

Most of caretakers are from mass organizations. Although they have received training on care for children, these trainings were usually short-term trainings. Since education is becoming more and more a key component in daily operation of Emergency Kindergartens, especially with the development of dual-use permanent Emergency Kindergartens, the lack of qualification of caretakers will be a problem. Indeed, beginning of 2008, MOET has issued new regulations on professional qualification required for teaching job. According to this new regulation, minimum professional qualification should be 12+2 (12-year general education + 2-year specialized teacher training). Many existing caretakers therefore will not meet the requirement and in principle they will not be allowed to teach children. Post training evaluation and/or training need assessment was not done in order to assess caretakers' skills so as to propose refreshing and/or upgrading training plan for those who want to continue working in the future.

Awareness raising on disaster risk reduction is not yet systematically organized for EK caretakers. Experiences of teachers in emergency cares are still lacking. In term of care quality, some teachers are still young and have no children. They may be good at teaching skills but may lack experiences on giving care for children of young age

- Awareness raising for children's parents

How to mobilize children from the poorest families who live in the most vulnerable areas to Emergency Kindergartens, to convince parents on the need to send children to a Emergency Kindergarten are the greatest concern and the biggest challenge for the local authorities, staff and mass organizations. They usually faced parents' reluctance attitude due to the constraints in term of distance to the Emergency Kindergartens, of lack of confidence on caretakers, of time they need to spend for transportation and due to the need to financially contribute to the operation costs of these centers.. These parents do not want to spend their time to send and pick up their children from the Emergency Kindergartens.

"When we met with the parents, they are very concerned about transportation of children, about time they need to spend to take them to EK and about financial contribution" (My Thanh Bac commune, WU)

After having experienced the very bad year 2000 flood and good benefit of Emergency Kindergartens set up in 2001, parents have started to change their mind. However there are still parents who prefer keeping children with them at home or taking them to work.

- Funding for training

In term of financing, most of training sessions for EK caretakers were mainly sponsored by the INGOs and donors. There is no state budget allocated for training activities.

Gaps in operation

- Lack of safety fencing

Most EKs in operation still need to be further improved. As per today, many EKs still have not any fencing which is one of the most needed safety requirements to protect children in flood season.

- Lack of recreational equipments

In term of recreational activities, there is a critical lack of playgrounds, toys and recreational materials although caretakers try to make some toys by themselves with locally found materials.

- Difficulties in ensuring education in EKs during flood season

One of the objectives of permanent EKs is to provide children with quality educational activities. However teachers still have to deal with the lack of teaching and learning materials. In flood season, if there is urgent need to organize emergency care for children, teachers have to take care of an increasing number of children while in principle they have to ensure standard preschool education program implemented. *“It would be good if a simplified preschool education program is specifically designed for the flood time so that teachers can at the same time provide quality preschool education for preschool students and take care of other children”* (My Thanh Bac commune)

Lack of space also causes difficulties for operation. Indeed, in flood season, EKs are open to children of all ages while *“each EK usually has only one room. It becomes then very difficult to organize activities for children”* (My Thanh Bac commune)

- Impossibility to maintain temporary EK in operation for long periods

Temporary EK functions only during the flood time. Not all people who have a safe house want to have children at their place. So there may be no possibility to establish a temporary Emergency Kindergarten where there is a need. Houses' owners may not want to lend their house every year. It is therefore necessary to change the place from one year to another. In regards to EKs housed in public buildings, these public buildings are generally only available at main places. Public building cannot be mobilized for as long time as a private house since public services should take again its pace as soon as possible. It is therefore sometimes necessary to stop the Emergency Kindergarten's operations while there may still be a need to keep it functioning to protect children.

“we would like to have more permanent EKs. To open temporary EKs in public building such as school creates a lot of dependence. We cannot organize EKs if students still go to school” (Tan Phuoc DCFSC)

- Change in caretaking staff

Low salaries of caretaking staff is a challenge that may result in caretakers resigning from the work or not willing to do the same work again. There will be then a need for start over again the training process, involving time and money.

“The problem is many caretakers resigned due to low income”

- Access of children from poor families or from families just above the poverty line.

The transformation into public pre-school facilities may result in limited access to education of some groups of children, especially those from the families who are positioned just above the poverty line, thus reducing the rate of children attending preschool EK. To send their children to public pre-school, parents have to pay for education fees. Parents also have to pay higher costs for food as food for children should meet nutritional standard, especially when the children stay for the whole day. Since regular pre-school time is half day, parents also have to pay extra fees for extra working time of the teachers. Although children from certified poor families can benefit from fee exemption as per government policy statements, some parents cannot afford costs for food and teachers' extra working time. In case of the families who are just above the poverty line, they face difficulties to afford both education fees and cannot get any fee exemption and cannot afford to send their children to the pre-school.

2.5.2. Needs

Need for continuous efforts to develop permanent EKs

Flood remains one of the main causes of pre-school and primary school aged children's drowning in previous year. There is therefore an evident need to continuously implement measures to protect children in flood season. In addition, due to the omnipresence of water in the Mekong delta, children also drown in dry season. The need to protect children is then also very important.

More and more, education is considered a solution to protect children from drowning and other effects of the flood. Indeed in pre-schools and schools, children are supervised, provided care for and can learn about how to identify dangers and protect themselves from that. Government therefore pays special attention to linking disaster preparedness and education.

However, most pre-school facilities built before the year 2000 flood are not flood-proofed. Almost none of these pre-school facilities therefore can be considered safe for children in flood season. On the other hand, existing Emergency Kindergartens, including newly built ones are not all properly equipped with teaching materials, safety fencing, and playgrounds...

There is therefore a need for, on one hand, improving wherever possible existing education facilities to meet the flood proofing requirement to make them ready for becoming EKs in

flood season and, on the other hand, building new Emergency Kindergarten taking into account the education purposes.

Need for better planning and information sharing

Children's protection in flood prone areas involves a multitude of stakeholders and different levels of decision making. Due to the need for continuous efforts to develop EKs to ensure children are protected and due to limited financial resources, it is important, as expressed by local stakeholders, to prioritize and progressively develop EKs. Therefore there is a need for good planning to ensure EKs are developed where the demand is and to ensure relevant stakeholders and levels of decision making are involved. Today, what is called plan is rather intention than plan. In order to do good planning, it is important that information sharing is improved because planning cannot be pertinent without relevant information on policies, on resource availabilities, on local needs and requirements.

Need for securing external funding

Funding is always a critical issue. Government has called for socialization, i.e responsibilities sharing between government and other social stakeholders. It is then expected that the development of EKs does not rely only on government budget but that public pre-school facilities are also built or improved with external donors' support together with contributions of the local authorities and communities, then handed over to education authorities who are responsible for providing teachers, teaching facilities and teaching aids and functioning costs. There is therefore a need for seeking and securing external funding.

The problem also is that only few donors are positioned in both fields of disaster risk reduction and education services. Most of them are interested in one or another, thus making it difficult to justify a request for funding a multi-purposes infrastructure. It is really true when it is about convincing a donor with strong focus on disaster risk reduction to fund the construction of an infrastructure that is used during 10 months of a year for education purposes. There is a need to make any proposal to external funding more convincing to secure funding

Need for training and stabilizing caretaking staff

When an EK goes into operation, it is a critical issue to ensure EK is operated by skillful caretakers. In the case of permanent EKs, caretakers will be likely preschool trained teachers and locally hired assistants. It is indisputable that preschool teachers have necessary and better skills to provide children with education than any other caretaker. However since the EK is likely to be open to more children and to children of different age groups in flood situation, there is a need for preschool teachers to be prepared by training on how to manage the EK during that time, how to play other roles than educative ones. For locally hired assistants, their roles are certainly more than just providing teachers with assistance. They therefore need to be trained on how to participate in organizing activities for quite a big group of children and how to provide them with care and protection.

Since training is an investment on human resource, it is necessary to keep caretakers motivated and willing to take their roles and responsibilities. It may help avoid facing the

issue of frequent staff change and ensure that the available human resource is used in the most valuable way and for a long period.

Need for developing minimum construction and operation standards for EKs

EK should be a place where children are provided with education opportunities and with protection from water-related risks. EK is therefore neither a simple preschool facility nor a simple emergency child care center. Thus EK should be designed, arranged and operated in a way that responds to education and safety needs. As per today, there is any standardized requirement for EK yet. In many cases, EK respond only to education needs. There is therefore a need for developing minimum construction and operation standard for EKs.

3. Recommendations

From the strategic perspective, considering the need to protect children from water-related risks, the need to facilitate access to education for children, multi-purposes Emergency Kindergarten is the most effective model. It is recommended that EK development is integrated into national DDR strategies.

From operational perspective, practical improvements should be done to address gaps and needs in terms of planning, opening and operating EKs.

In term of planning, it is recommended that:

- provincial authorities issue clear guidelines on establishing and operating EKs
- mechanisms are set to ensure two way communication and information sharing between stakeholders from different agencies and from different levels.
- careful survey is carried out at communal level to identify local needs of EKs and capacities to contribute. HCVA seems to be a good way to do in order to involve community members, including children in the process.
- information from the communal level is channeled up to the provincial level and used as input for overall provincial plan for establishing and operating EKs that is used as basis for budgeting
- overall provincial plan and budget are developed with as much details as possible and are shared with all stakeholders, including local communities and external donor agencies or individuals for fund raising purposes.
- proposals for external funding make disaster risk reduction features or education purpose more visible according to the targeted donors and provide relevant information on the benefices of multi-purpose EKs.
- *“donor agencies should, at very early stage of their intention to support the construction of EKs, inform local authorities and population about the need of matching funds and give them enough time to prepare”* (DCFSC of Cai Lay)
- Minimum construction and operation standards for EKs are developed and serve as basis for planning taking into account available resources

Some suggestions from the field on requirements for a good EK:

- *EK should be located at a safe site with fencing and healthy environment*
- *EK should have enough space for organizing activities for children*
- *EK should have toilets, toys, medicines, kitchen utensils and informative documents on flood safety for children.*
- *EK should provide children with safe mean of transportation*
- *EK should have well trained caretakers*

In term of training, it is recommended that:

- Training should not be one shoot activity
- More training activities are organized both in term of refreshing and providing new knowledge for a wider group of caretakers, including those who are part-time involved in EK's operation such as locally hired assistants for permanent EKs and locally hired caretakers for temporary EKs
- Post training evaluation is carried out in order to assess caretakers' skills so as to propose an upgrading training plan for those who want to continue working in the future.
- Training of caretakers should also include knowledge and skills on disaster risk reduction, care for children in emergencies and skills to work with big group of children
- Training activities are organized for children for children on recognizing and avoiding hazards, dangers and for community members on education and disaster risk reduction linkage
- Costs for training are included in budget plan for development of EKs

In term of operation, it is recommended that:

- improvements are made to equip existing EKs with safety fencing
- minimum operation standards for EK include necessary equipments and teaching, learning and playing materials. Costs for equipments and materials should be included in the budget plan for development of EKs.
- Minimum operation standards set expectation in term of education offer during flood period, taking into account the increased number of children attending EKs and the diversity of their ages
- Minimum construction standard is available in term of design and arrangement to ensure sufficient spaces are available for EKs to function with an increased number of children attending during flood time
- Caretaking staff, especially those who are locally hired for short term period, get relevant compensation so that they are willing to do the work again and again.
- Policies on support to children attending EKs are made available to all stakeholders, including parents. Government support may have to go to children from certified poor families as required but external support may be used to support other children.

As an international organization, ADPC can play an active role in the process of development of EKs. It is recommended that:

- ADPC advocates for EKs towards international donor communities
- ADPC advocates for community members and children's participation in the development of EKs
- ADPC collaborates with local and international partners to come up with proposal on minimum construction and operation standards for EK
- ADPC continues to support training initiatives for children, parents, caretakers, community members and authorities
- ADPC supports the improvement of existing EKs to meet safety and education needs
- ADPC supports the construction of new EKs