

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION THROUGH SCIENCE CLUBS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Most disaster risk reduction (DRR) research traditionally tended to assume that children and youth are passive victims with no or very little role to play in communicating risks and in preventing, preparing for, and responding to disasters. But with the UN-led celebration of the International Year of Youth from August 2010 to August 2011, there has been a renewed interest in young people and the vital role they can play in important issues, like DRR. This study aims to find an entry point for youth participation in DRR and to recommend ways of overcoming the barriers to youth participation in DRR.

2. METHODOLOGY

To prove the hypothesis that science clubs can be an effective vehicle for youth participation in DRR in the Philippines, a questionnaire survey was conducted to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. 658 science club members from all over the country participated in the survey. Focus group discussions participated by 80 science club advisers were also conducted to collect additional detailed information.

3. FINDINGS

Based on survey results, the level of youth participation in DRR through science clubs in the Philippines is only moderate (Aggregate Weighted Mean Index = 3.68 in a scale of 1 to 5, n = 658). The science club adviser plays a critical role in the implementation of DRR-related activities (mean rating = 4.40 in a scale of 1 to 5). If the science club adviser is not active, then the science club and its members will likely not be active also. On the other hand, most science clubs report that they only allocate a small portion of their funds to DRR activities (mean rating = 2.75) and that they have few sources of funds (mean rating = 3.18). Since science club members have limited knowledge of DRR, they feel that it is necessary to partner with government agencies when conducting DRR activities (mean weight = 2.64 in a scale of 1 to 3). According to science club members, students' knowledge of DRR (mean weight = 2.59) and the initiative of the community leaders (mean weight = 2.39) are also crucial to implementing DRR activities. Survey respondents put the least importance to the extent that age groups mix and interlink (mean weight = 1.20), which helps explain why youth participation in the traditionally adult-dominated DRR activities is low.

4. CONCLUSION

If the support framework is there (knowledge, resources, community support), youth participation in different kinds of DRR activities becomes possible (Figure 1). Moreover, the involvement of science club members and advisers in DRR is relevant because they know very well the conditions of their household, school, and community and have knowledge on locally available resources for a potentially sustainable community-based disaster risk reduction.

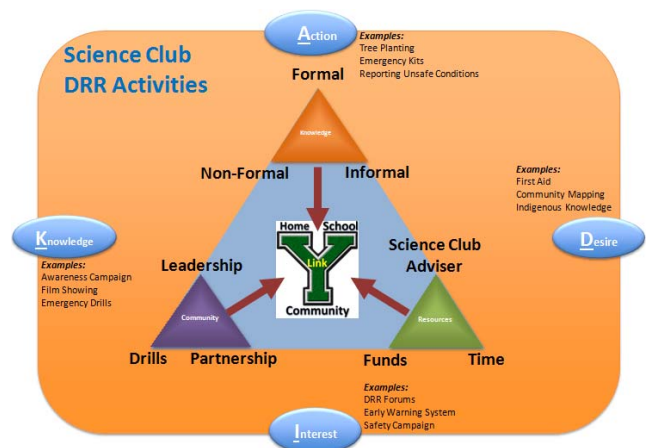


Figure 1 Support system for science club DRR activities and home-school-community linkage