

Improving school resilience: Who are the key actors? A Perspective from Indonesia

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Indonesia is an archipelago country which experiences various catastrophes. Over the years, the casualty rate and the cost of natural disasters have significantly increased. It is estimated that three-quarters of schools in Indonesia, with at least 40 million students, are located in disaster-prone areas.

Teachers and students are highly vulnerable if they are not prepared with proper knowledge and skills to deal with different catastrophes, a fact underlined by Indonesia's National Authority for Disaster Management (BNPB) in 2012.

The implementation of disaster education in Indonesia has faced various challenges, including lack of policy support, teacher capacity, lack of references and disaster-related teaching materials, uncertain funding and also questions of how to maintain the sustainability of the integration of DRR into the school curriculum (CDE, 2009).

The Hyogo Framework for Action highlighted that knowledge and education are important for building a culture of safety and resilience at all level of hazards in educational curricula for both formal and non-formal education (UNISDR, 2005). This blog post identifies three key actors to build resilience at the school level in Indonesia, namely teachers, students and school management, and offers some recommendations to improve this resilience.

Teachers

Teachers are the first key actors in disaster risk reduction education (Adiyoso & Kanagae, 2013). The limitation of teachers' knowledge, due to the lack of training and teaching materials, has delayed the integration of DRR in the curriculum. Improving the capacity of teachers may contribute significantly to improvement of understanding of disaster risk among students. The following actions can be taken to provide basic knowledge and skills for teachers:

1. Build a partnership with universities to include DRR topics as a compulsory subject for first-year students in the education department.
2. Build collaboration with teacher training centres at the provincial level, to provide regular teacher training that incorporates DRR knowledge.

Students

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 underscores that children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to DRR. Students can be a core component of DRR because they can easily learn from their surroundings and can adopt new habits (King, 2012, UNICEF, 2012); they can empower their families and communities with knowledge regarding disasters; and they can have the confidence to protect themselves, their families and their community from potential hazards (UNISDR, 2007). Educating

students about disasters can help them to cope with challenging environments. It can help to empower society against the impact of natural disasters and help it to take the necessary steps to prevent further losses. Potential actions include:

1. Involving students in designing DRR activities in schools.
2. Giving more space for students to expand their knowledge and skills on DRR through school activities, such as scouting, art club, planting, among others.

School management

Improving resilience at the school level is very heavily dependent on the support of school management, which includes the principal, vice-principal and school committee. Strong internal support from school management has an important influence on the building of a safe learning environment. Actions that can be taken at the school level to foster resilience at the school level include:

1. Using internal regulations to support regular activities to improve knowledge and skills for teachers and students, such as drills, DRR storytelling and essay competitions at the school level.
2. Deploying the school operational fund (Bantuan Operasional Sekolah) to support DRR activities.
3. Rewarding teachers who make continuous efforts to integrate DRR knowledge, both in the classroom and during extracurricular activities.

References and further reading:

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