



CASE STUDY: Protecting preschool children from natural disasters in Indonesia

In an innovative project in **Indonesia**, ChildFund used preschools as an entry point for protecting young children during and after natural disasters. Recognizing that young children are particularly vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence in emergency situations, ChildFund integrated **disaster risk reduction (DRR)** measures into an early childhood development (ECD) program⁴ for children ages 4 and 5 years on the disaster-prone island of Sumba.^{xxiii}

ChildFund's aim was to create a safer preschool environment and to minimize the risk to children during disasters. To start with, our partners renovated local preschools to make them more structurally sound and enable safe evacuation, then taught pupils how to remain safe during different types of emergencies. Weekly evacuation drills were conducted, and a six-module DRR package

Children are disproportionately affected by disasters.

The impact of earthquakes, landslides and flooding in Indonesia can be devastating on families and children. As well as the potential for loss of life and severe injury, children may become separated from their families and other responsible adults, leaving them vulnerable to harm and distress.

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was rolled out to school staff. At the same time, teachers were taught positive discipline techniques and ways to better engage with their students.^{xxiv}

A rigorous evaluation of the program compared the preschools that received the DRR-ECD intervention with a control group of preschools in nearby villages.^{xxvi} The results demonstrated that:

- The renovated schools were more structurally sound and disaster-ready.
- The quality of adult-child interactions was higher among DRR-ECD schools.
- Children in the DRR-ECD program had greater awareness of safety precautions and emergency actions than children in the control group. This included better knowledge of ways to prepare for emergencies, the different types of natural disasters and their warning signs, where to go (safe spaces) during emergencies, and which adults to turn to for help.

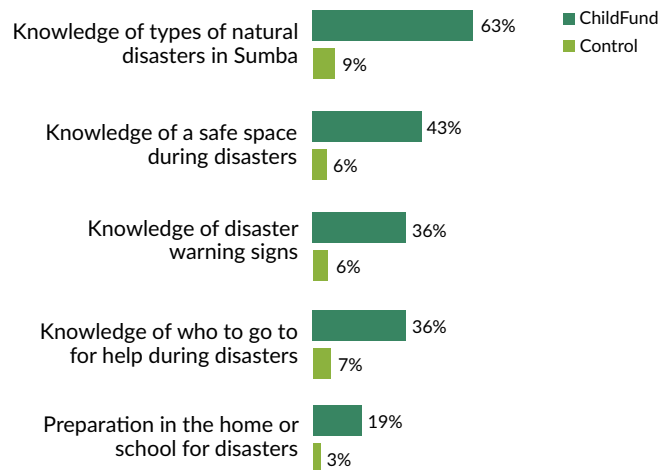
The stress caused by disasters can cause family tension, which may manifesting physical violence and child neglect. Children's learning may also be disrupted if their schools are damaged or if their families lose their livelihoods.

ChildFund's **disaster risk reduction (DRR)** strategies aim to prevent children being harmed during and after disasters. Key to their success is making sure that children know what to do and where to go in an emergency.^{xxv}

Although the evaluation broadly demonstrated a positive impact, a few lessons learned emerged:

- Integrating the DRR components took time away from school readiness activities and overwhelmed teachers with additional responsibilities.
- DRR training needs to be tailored to prioritize the most commonly occurring natural disasters in each context.
- More attention needs to be given to preparing children for what to do during disasters that take place outside of preschool settings - for example, at home - so that the knowledge they gain is sustained and remains relevant as they transition into primary school and grow older.

Evaluation of DRR Knowledge Among Children in ChildFund's Impact Group and the Control Group



Overall, the results from this exciting ECD-DRR initiative suggest that the model could be adapted to other contexts and that preschool programs provide a promising entry point for preventing harm to children during and after natural disasters.