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Implementation of disaster risk reduction and management policies in a school setting in Lao PDR: a case study

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Abstract

T i t l e: Implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policies in a School Setting in Lao PDR: a case study

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Abstract

Background: Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) formulated the National Strategic Plan for Disaster Risk Management to reduce risks to the communities. This plan was eventually integrated into the school curriculum but its implementation has never been evaluated. This study aimed to clarify the present situation to inform better implementation strategies on disaster risk reduction and management in a school setting focused on fire disasters in Lao PDR.

Methods: A case study was conducted in Vientiane and five provinces in 2017. Key informant interviews were conducted among 52 policy implementers from the Disaster Management Committee (DMC), the education, and fire service sectors at national, provincial, district and school levels. Observations were done among eight secondary schools, and questionnaires were answered by 869 Grade 7 students. Interview transcripts underwent content analysis using the 12 influential components of successful policy implementation and the 3 pillars of comprehensive school safety framework. The level of student knowledge on fire prevention and response was examined.

Results: Three themes emerged: policy content and dissemination, factors which affect policy implementation, and impacts of policy implementation. Facilitating factors include effective coordination and ownership among the national DMC members for scaling up disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities, and strong support from the central government. Barriers include unclear provisions in the national legislation, unclear mandates especially on leading the program, poor monitoring system, insufficient human resources and lack of public-private partnerships. All the study schools conducted DRR classes and designated a disaster assembly point. More than 80% of the students correctly answered items on fire response.

Conclusion: The policy was widely disseminated and implemented in all levels across

sectors among the study sites except for some rural areas. Although there is a lack of national legislation and clear mandates, strong leadership and ownership of the implementers facilitated policy implementation. All the study schools conducted fire prevention activities. Most students knew how to appropriately respond to fire. A comprehensive school-based DRR program would be beneficial in improving student knowledge and practices on DRR.