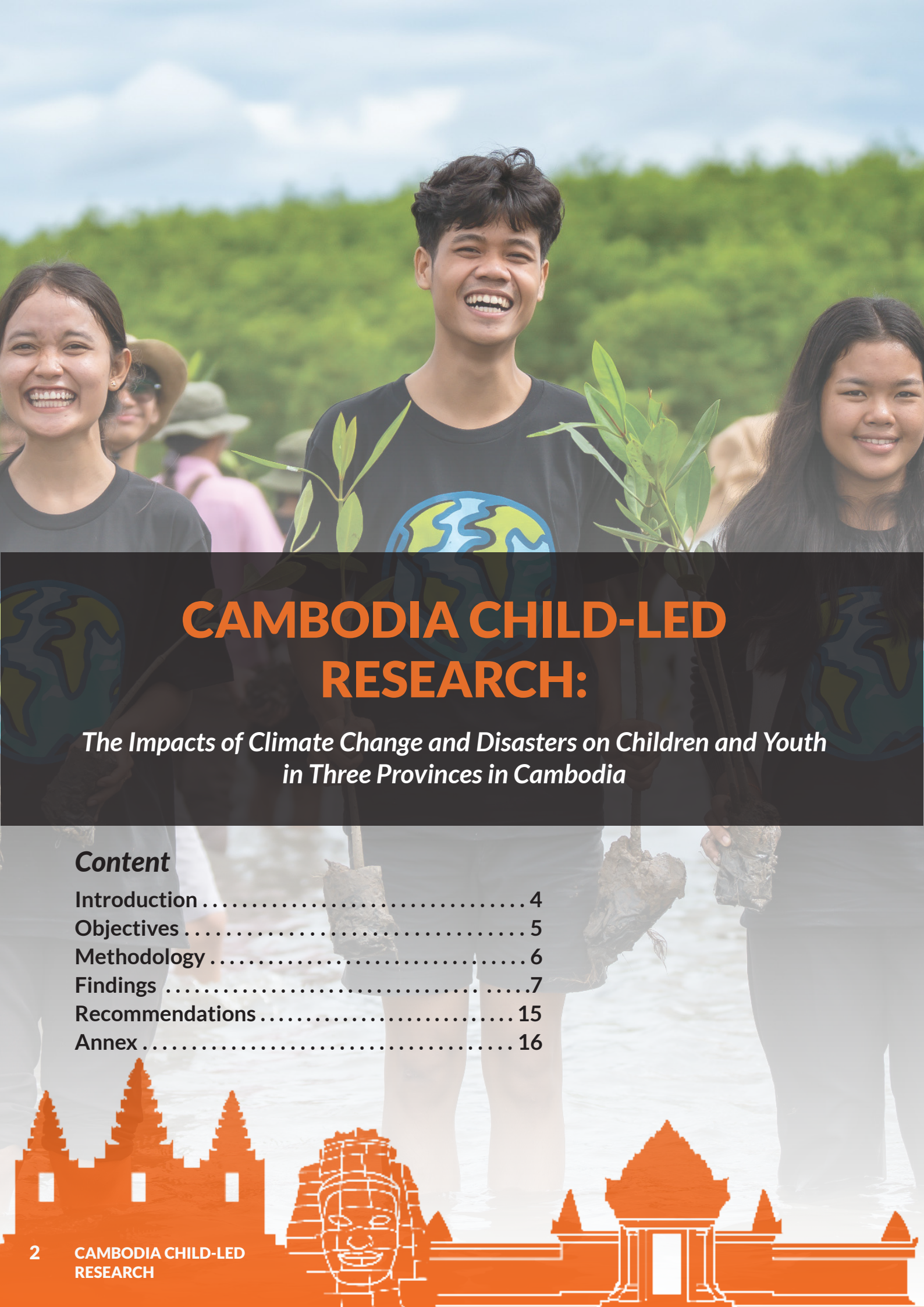




Cambodia

Child-led Research



CAMBODIA CHILD-LED RESEARCH:

The Impacts of Climate Change and Disasters on Children and Youth in Three Provinces in Cambodia

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Lastly, we would also like to express our gratitude to the World Vision International organization for empowering children and young people like us to take the lead in this research initiative.

CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING CONSIDERATIONS. World Vision International Cambodia ensured the safe and ethical participation of girls, boys, men and women, adhering to World Vision's Safeguarding policy and protocols on data collection and World Vision's Code of Conduct. WV Cambodia support staff were trained on Psychological First Aid (PFA) and interviews' ethical and safe management. Names of participants have been anonymized to ensure confidentiality. All participants were oriented on the possibility of withdrawing from the interview process at any moment.

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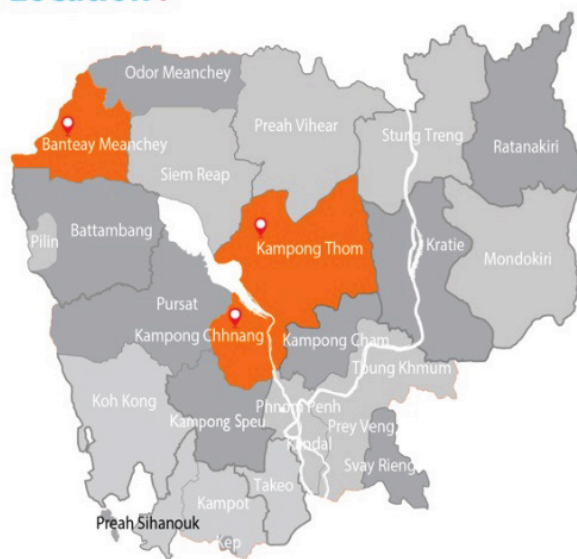
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We are a group of young researchers from Cambodia who conducted a study on the impacts of climate change and disasters on children in our communities. For the past few years, we have been experiencing extreme heat wave, flooding and drought due to climate change. This has interrupted our daily activities including our schooling, recreational activities and livelihoods, and has caused health issues among children like us and adults alike.

Child Led Research Location



-  **Kampong Chhnang (Boribou 2 AP)**
-  **Banteay Meanchey (Mongkul Borey 2 AP)**
-  **Kampong Thom (Kompong Svay AP)**
-  **Kampong Thom (Santuk AP)**

With the support of World Vision East Asia Young Minds CAMP and our mentors at World Vision Cambodia, we were able to design and carry out our research study within June to August 2024 across three areas: Kampong Chhnang, Banteay Meanchey, and Kampong Thom province. These provinces are three of the most significantly impacted by the heat wave happening in Cambodia and where each member of the research team comes from.

We finalized our topic and questionnaire and data collection plan with assistance from the staff of World Vision Cambodia. We became responsible for conducting data collection independently across the abovementioned provinces. We specifically targeted communes that faced extreme heat and other natural disasters in the previous year.

We collected our data through key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) over a period of more than two weeks. Upon completion of the data collection, we documented and analyzed all the notes and quotes, subsequently encoding them into a saturation grid tool on Excel for summarization. We then analyzed all the information gathered and commenced the drafting the report with assistance from the staff of WV Cambodia and WV East Asia.



We are a group of four young researchers from Cambodia

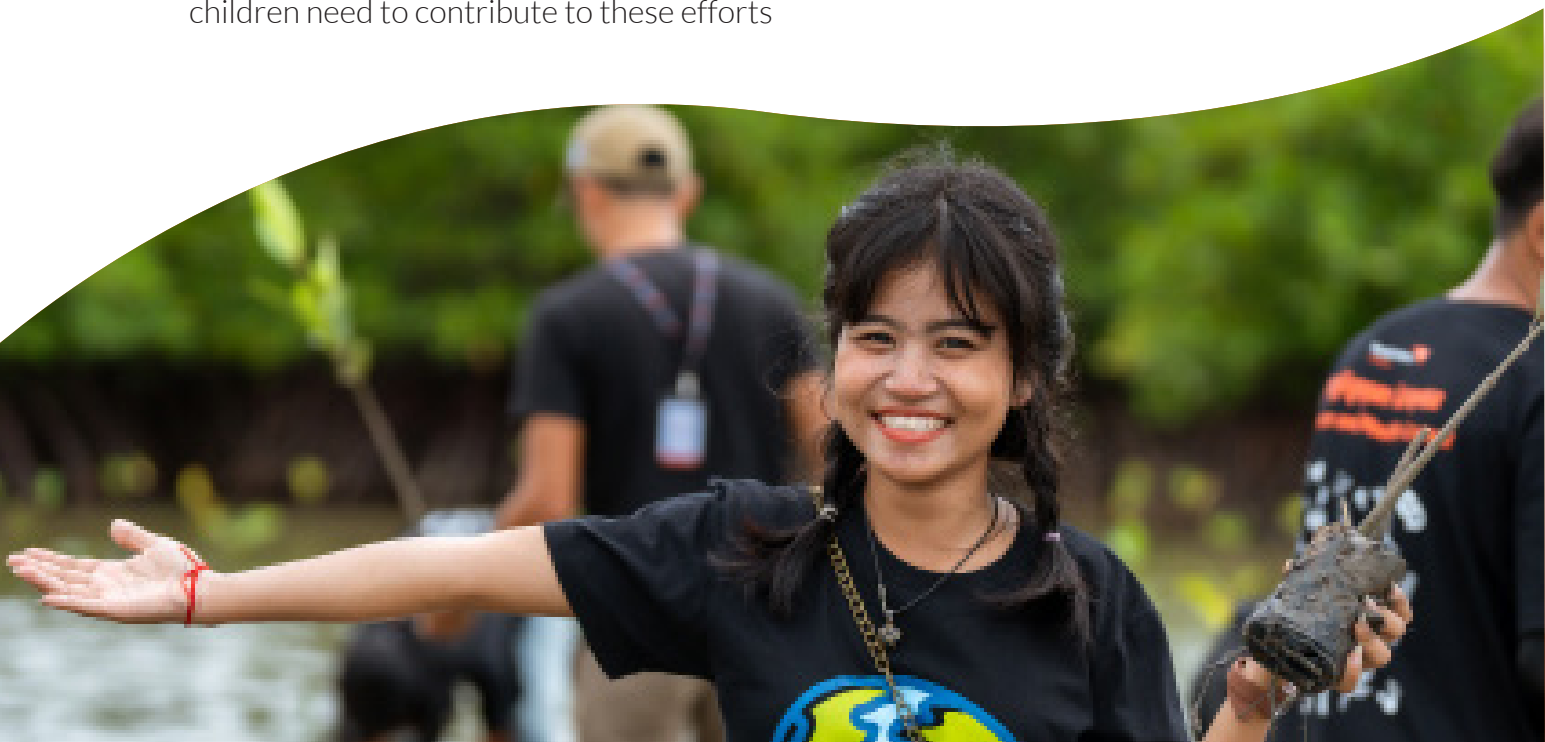


OBJECTIVES

We chose to study the impacts of climate change and disaster in our communities because we ourselves have experienced the negative impacts of these in our lives, schooling and family's income. We also want to understand how children like us feel and what their ideas are on how the impact of climate change and disasters could be mitigated.

We specifically wanted to understand:

- Climate change and disasters they have personally experienced
- The impacts of climate change and disasters on different aspects of their lives
- Their current knowledge of climate change and disasters
- Their preparedness for disasters
- Their sources of information and preferred information platforms on climate change and disasters
- Their knowledge on existing climate action/disaster risk reduction initiatives and the support children need to contribute to these efforts



We interacted with a total of 98 participants through both the key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). 35% of our participants are males and 65% are females. We interviewed children, youth, club leaders, teachers, commune council and community people.



From the KIIs, 27 out of 35 participants are children aged 8-17, three are community leaders, two are state teachers, one is a parent, and two are child and youth club leaders. As for the FGDs, out of 63 participants across all provinces, 22 are children aged 8-17, 23 are child and youth club leaders and 18 are community leaders, parents, teachers, and community members. Please see the Annex for the full list of participants in both KIIs and FGDs.

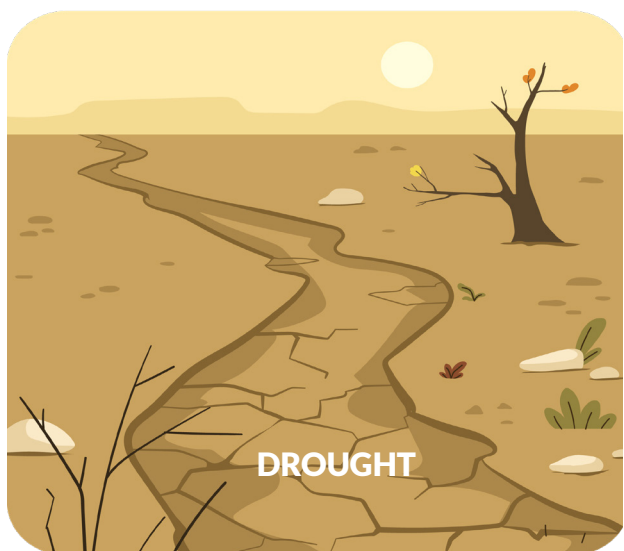
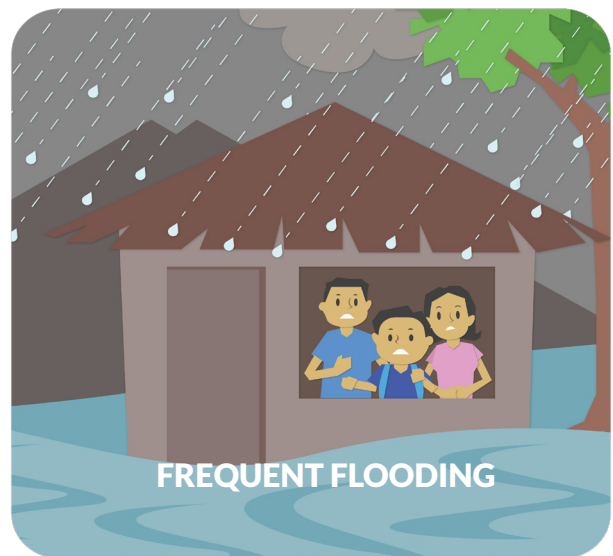
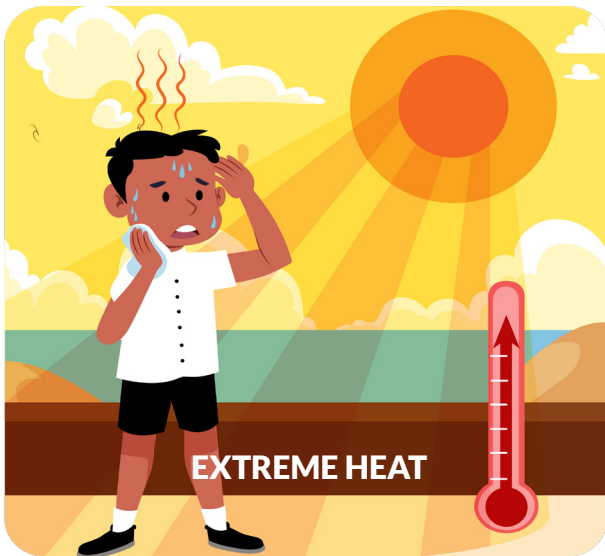
We wanted to collect different perspectives on climate change and disasters from those who have really been directly affected and impacted, especially the most vulnerable ones. We interviewed children so they can explain their first-hand experience on the impact of climate change and disasters on their lives. We interviewed child leaders because they can explain what children in the community are already doing to address environmental and disaster problems in their community, as well as what their plans are, what more can be done, and what support they need to implement their own initiatives. We interviewed community leaders because they can explain from their perspective how climate change and disasters impacted communities over the years, especially children, and so that they can also provide recommendations on how they can further support children and their initiatives.

We conducted interviews with participants in their homes, school and children's clubs in community. Our interviews lasted for about 30-40 minutes. After we interviewed them, we wrote down their responses in an excel saturation grid and tallied the most dominant responses and quotes related to it.



I. CHILDREN'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS

The disasters children in our communities most commonly experienced were extreme heat/heat waves, frequent flooding, and drought. Among the 27 children interviewed, extreme heat/heat waves were the most salient answer (raised by 25 respondents), followed by frequent flooding (14 respondents) and drought (reported by nine respondents). Similarly, the interviewed youth leaders were most concerned about extreme heat/heat waves, drought, and strong typhoons(wind). Among the community leaders, extreme heat/heat waves and strong typhoons (wind) are the most common answers, followed by deforestation, garbage problems, and drought.



Here are some quotes from the children we interviewed regarding their personal experiences of climate change and disasters:



“This year, the extreme heat has lasted a long time and has had serious effects, leading to plant and animal deaths, low family income, and insufficient food consumption. Moreover, I can’t travel out of my house or go to school because of the heat wave. The extreme heat harms children’s health, especially some children who have had to suspend school due to high temperatures”

(KII with a female child club leader aged 16 years old in Kampong Thom province).

The youth leaders in Kampong Thom province also added: “Recently, it has become difficult for us to travel to school, attend gatherings, do business, and it affects crops, causing death and water shortages”.

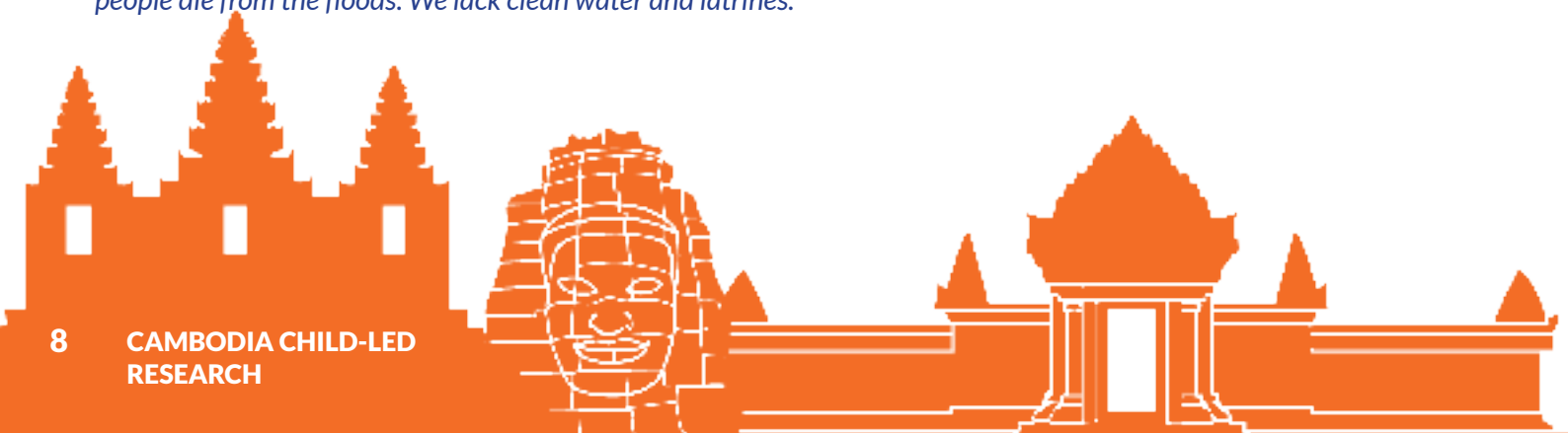
On frequent floods: “Our community has seen decreased rice yields. It affects children’s homes and lives, putting them at risk of losing their education” (Male child participant, aged 16 years from Kampong Chhnang province).

These results were consistent with the findings from the FGDs with children, child and youth leaders, and community leaders, as these participants similarly experienced extreme heat/heat waves, frequent flooding, and drought.

The children who participated in the FGDs said that the extreme heat/heat wave affects their studies as well as their ability to commute to school and other places. In addition, it affects their mothers’ farming, as it leads to low yields due to lack of water and causes plant deaths. At the same time, frequent flooding destroys the community’s roads, making it difficult to go to school. They have to look for a safe place to stay during flooding.

The village leader and state teacher from Kampong Thom province also talked about extreme heat/heat wave’s impacts on their communities, *“It is hard for us to travel for work, and our children’s health is affected. They can’t go to school, school hours are reduced, and some schools are closed. Moreover, our crops are destroyed.”* Regarding drought, they shared, *“Our farm is destroyed, and we lack water. Animals are also dying, and more children are getting ill.”*

And regarding frequent flooding, they said, *“Every year, our community houses are flooded, roads are destroyed, and people die from the floods. We lack clean water and latrines.”*



● **Children Are Negatively Impacted by the Consequences of Climate Change**

The interviewed children said the aspects of their lives most negatively impacted by the consequences of climate change were primarily their physical health, followed by their mental health, and then their family's livelihood.



“The extreme heat led me to get the flu, fever, cough, and dizziness. The heat often affects our health, causing the flu frequently, and makes us feel uncomfortable in the classroom because it is too hot” (Child participant during the FGD at Kampong Chhnang province).

“The extreme heat led me to get the flu. My community members and children in my village are also getting the flu. Moreover, children cannot play around as we used to.” (Child Participant during FGD with secondary school children aged 11-17 years from Kampong Chhnang province).

“Due to the extreme heat, crops die and delays in agricultural work, leading to food shortages for some children’s families. Because of the extreme heat wave, our family cannot plant or raise livestock; it led to low family income, a lack of food supply, and affected our family members health” (Community leader during the FGD in Banteay Meanchey province).



- **Children are very worried about climate change**

Most of the interviewed children (14 participants) said they are very worried about climate change, while eight of them reported feeling worried/extremely worried. *“I am really worried about my cow; it has no grass and water to eat and it might lead to death. It affected our family’s income, caused food shortage, and affected children’s education and health. All children are worried about their lives, education, and play, as climate change becomes more serious each year.”* (Female child aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

- **Children are sad and afraid about climate change and disasters**

Many of the respondents said they feel sad (12 respondents) and feel afraid (12 respondents) because of the climate change and disasters. *“I feel sad because animals and plants are dead”* (Female child aged 12-17 years during the KII in Kampong Thom province).

“I feel sad because I can no longer play like before and worry about disasters. I hope that things can return to normal of climate change” (Female child aged 12-17 years during the KII in Kampong Thom province).

“I am afraid because if climate change continues, we will get sick, not be fully educated, and our family lives will not improve. I do not know when climate change will occur and do not know how it can affect us and the community even more” (Child participant during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

“I feel afraid because the disasters are becoming more serious each year” (Child participant during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).



CHILDREN'S MOTIVATION TO ENGAGE IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION INITIATIVES

Many of them said that they feel very motivated to act on climate change and disasters (19 of 27 respondents). One respondent aged 12-17 years old said during FGD in Kampong Thom province said that, *"I am strongly encouraged to participate in activities that contribute to climate change because I want to see the community grow."* Children aged 8-11 years who participated in the group discussion in Kampong Chhnang province also shared, *"I am very encouraged to participate in environmental activities to address climate change. I need to learn more about the concepts of planting trees, plastic management, and pesticide use."*

• Children's source of motivation to engage in climate change and disaster risk reduction initiatives

The most salient source of motivation among the respondents is solving specific problems, followed by love of plants, and the desire for a better life for future generations. The interviewed children mentioned:

"I have a problem to solve, which is the deforestation in my community. I participate to reduce chemical use in rice and vegetable farming, plant trees, reduce plastic use, and clean the village. I participate in community activities such as village clean-up campaigns, promoting the use of plastic bags, and reducing littering. I have developed a habit of participating in reducing environmental pollution, which comes mainly from self-motivation, and also from family and community motivation, which is a source of encouragement for me." (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province)

One of the interviewed children mentioned, *"I love green environments; my preference is for planting, especially trees. I am love to planting vegetable, and trees at my house, my school and along the road in the village. I am always joining cleaning and planting trees in my communities."* Another said, *"I want to be a role model for my community on climate change action. I am always participating in clean-ups and planting trees in my communities"* (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the KII in Kampong Thom province).

• Factors that demotivate children to take action on climate change and disasters

When children see a lack of concern among other people in their community, and when they do not have resources, they feel discouraged to engage in climate action and disaster mitigation efforts.

"I often get in a bad mood because my community does not pay much attention to climate change. This is a source of frustration for me, because my community is less concerned about climate change" (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

"Despite their high level of knowledge, most people destroy forests and the environment. It is like they are just going with the flow. It is kind of alarming to see that. We children are concerned about deforestation and the authorities' neglect in promoting climate change" (Child participant aged aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

"I don't have money to be able to respond to climate change issues in my community. I think I cannot change climate change, I don't have enough knowledge about climate change, the environment, or climate action" (Child participant aged aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

CHILDREN'S LEVEL AND SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS

Twelve out of 27 respondents feel that they have enough knowledge about climate change and disasters. However, nine of them reported having little knowledge, and others admitted they still do not understand some aspects of climate change and disasters. The children who reported having enough knowledge indicated that *“children in some communities participated in climate change outreach activities in schools and community children's clubs. However, many more children have not yet attended these meetings.”*

“I am aware of the factors that cause climate change because the threat of climate change is a regular occurrence in my daily life” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Banteay Meanchey province).

“I think I have little knowledge about climate change and disasters. I need to learn more about it” (Child participant aged 6-11 years during the KII in Banteay Meanchey province).

“We are children; we do not understand and have no knowledge about climate change and disasters” (Child participant aged 9 years during the KII in Banteay Meanchey province).

• Mitigation strategies that affect climate change and disaster outcomes among children

Collecting Garbage



Planting



Bicycling



Avoiding Plastic Bag



The activities that have the most impact on mitigating climate change and disasters according to the interviewed children, youth leaders, and community leaders, include **collecting garbage, planting, bicycling, and avoiding plastic bags**. Additionally, the group discussions highlighted the importance of composting, spreading awareness, donating clothes, and improving energy consumption efficiency.

“My contribution to reduce the impacts of climate change are planting vegetables and planting trees. People in the community grow some fruits and vegetables at home through reduced chemical farming and more through organic farming” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

“My community has reduced their use of plastic bags through the activities of children in the community who have been involved in campaigns to reduce the use of plastic bags, which are a major source of environmental damage” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Banteay Meanchey province).

“I go to school by bicycle instead of motorcycles to get rid of pollution and reduce climate change” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

“The children in our community participate in garbage collection on a regular basis, and this group of children regularly collects garbage on the streets, schools and public places” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the KII in Banteay Meanchey province).

- **Frequency of engagement in activities aimed at addressing climate change**

Twenty children (out of 27) mentioned three main mitigation practices they personally do: bicycling, planting, and collecting garbage. Similarly, community leaders and youth leaders also indicated collecting garbage and planting as practices they personally do to mitigate climate change and disaster impacts. They also highlighted the importance of reducing use of plastics.

“I always walk and ride my bicycle to school. I always collect garbage around my house, and I often join village cleaning activities in my community” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Banteay Meanchey province).

“We should reduce or avoid using plastic bags and to increase use of eco-bags instead. I use the leaf for packing my food and cakes” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

“When we have a trip or we have an obligation to do something and we finish the food, we take the leaves of the plant to pack that food to eat” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).

- **Sources of information on climate change and disasters**

The majority of the respondents said that classes in school, clubs in community and social media are their main sources of information on disaster and climate change. Those who do not have their own phones rely on radio for information.

“Most children in the community always receive disaster and climate change information in school through their teacher and from their school book” (Female child aged 8-11 years during the KII in Banteay Meanchey province)

“Our information about everything is from Facebook, including on disasters and climate change. It is easy and famous in our community. We also get information from social media such as from YouTube” (Child participant aged 12-17 years during the FGD in Kampong Chhnang province).

Community leader and youth leaders from Kampong Chhnang province also cited social media as their main sources of information on climate change and disasters.

- **Preferred platforms for learning about climate change and disasters**

18 out of the 27 children we interviewed said that social media is their preferred platform for knowing more about climate change and disasters. This is followed by classes in school (17 respondents) and clubs in community (16 respondents). Similarly, community leaders and youth leaders who participated in the FGDs also said that social media and clubs in community are effective platforms for information dissemination. They also said that informal discussions with community people is an important platform.

“We prefer social media because, along with other members in our community, we check information about climate change and disaster through Facebook. It is fast and easy for our communities to understand” (Child participant aged 12-17 years old during the FGD in Kampong Thom province).



IV.

THE ROLE OF CHILDREN IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF DISASTERS

The community and child leaders have shared about children's contributions to mitigate the impacts of climate change in their communities. A commune council member from Kampong Chhnang province said *"Children in the community have contributed to reducing climate change as they have been involved in promoting proper waste management, reducing the use of plastics, and cleaning up the environment with tree planting."*

● Ongoing campaigns or activities for children

Community leaders and youth groups have indicated that they are actively engaged in various campaigns or activities on reducing use of plastic, storing garbage properly, and replanting trees. Children and youth have been actively involved in these campaigns and conducted the activities in person.

● Planned or future campaigns/activities

The community leaders said that they need to conduct more training to prepare children for different disasters and to enable them to lead the campaign to reduce plastic, plant more trees, and promote climate change activities. A community leader said, *"We plan to promote disaster management, climate change adaptation, reducing the use of plastics, proper waste disposal and planting trees."*

● The support children need

Both community and child leaders said they need materials, encouragement, and financial support to conduct more environmental activities and contribute to the mitigation of climate change and disaster impacts. A male youth leader explained, *"We still need the support of the authorities and other organizations. However, we need the cooperation of our community members to work with us in mitigating climate change, such as proper disposal of garbage. We also seek the Royal Government to enforce the law on waste management and garbage disposal."*



Increase access to information and improved education on climate change and disaster for the most vulnerable children in Cambodia.

For community and local leaders:

- Increase the number of campaigns, awareness initiatives, or activities aimed at educating the community about the effects of climate change and strategies to safeguard children from disasters.

For teachers:

- Children have expressed that classroom instruction significantly enhances education and awareness regarding climate change. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate additional sessions on climate change and disaster preparedness into the school curriculum.
- Schools should establish more clubs for children and youth that concentrate on climate change and disaster education.

For children and young people:

- Maintain active participation in school and community clubs focused on climate change education.

Integrate children and youth participation in climate change initiatives and disaster preparedness programs in schools and communities.

For community and local leaders:

- Fund climate change and disaster initiatives and activities to children and the youth
- Jointly implement the climate change and disaster initiative with children and youth group

For teachers:

- Collaborate with appropriate organizations to execute disaster preparedness programs for children and other community members.
- Collaborate with educational institutions, community organizations, and local authorities to spearhead climate change initiatives and disaster within the community.
- Provide assistance either financing or technical support to children and youth clubs to enhance their climate change initiatives.

Promote mitigation solutions for climate change and disasters

For community leaders:

- Regarding waste management, authorities should strengthen law enforcement and fine for group or individuals who dispose of waste in public areas.
- Run local campaign to promote mitigation solutions such as no plastic, composting, energy consumption efficiency, planting and cycling.

For relevant organization:

- Further research on the behavior of community people in relation to climate change and disasters to look for further mitigation solution



KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Number of Interviews and Type of Participants	Location
15 Children	<i>Kampong Thom Province</i>
10 Children	<i>Banteay Meanchey Province</i>
2 Children	<i>Kampong Chhnang Province</i>
2 Child and Youth Club Leaders	<i>Kampong Chhnang Province</i>
3 Community Leaders	<i>Kampong Chhnang Province</i>
2 State Teachers	<i>Kampong Chhnang Province</i>

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)

Number and Type of FGDs	Location
3 Children Groups (22 participants)	<i>One group per province (Kampong Chhnang, Banteay Meanchey and Kampong Thom)</i>
2 Community Leader Groups (12 participants)	<i>One group in Kampong Chhnang province, One Group in Banteay Meanchey province</i>
1 Community People Group (6 participants)	<i>Banteay Meanchey Province</i>
2 Child and Youth Club Leader Groups (11 participants)	<i>Kampong Thom Province</i>
2 Child and Youth Club Leader Groups (12 participants)	<i>Kampong Chhnang Province</i>





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