



Laos

Child-led Research



Children's Voices in Laos: *Calling for Urgent Action on Climate Change and Disasters*



Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to WV East Asia's Young Minds CAMP for teaching us how to do research and collect data. Our communication skills got way better, especially when working with schools and communities. We also figured out how to solve problems quickly and learned a lot about climate change and disasters.

One big challenge was collecting data online because the children did not have phones. So, we used paper-based questionnaires and then put the data into the system ourselves. We plan to share our research with classmates and the community as much as we can. Plus, we want to use this research to get funding for a child-led projects to tackle this issue even more.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks our mentors. Without them, this would not have been possible.

Our Mentors:

Main: Thepthida Somphakdy, Public Engagement and Campaign Coordinator, World Vision International Lao PDR

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We also would like to thank these school directors who supported us especially during our data collection:

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Southakone Sonevixay, Sonexay Sonechalern School Principal

Phousen Malongya, SOS School Principal

Khamkeo Ounanongnoth, Keopanya School Principal

CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING CONSIDERATIONS. World Vision International Lao PDR 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 International Lao PDR 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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Contents



Introduction 5

Objectives 6

Methodology 7

Findings 8

Recommendations 12



Introduction

We are a group of four researchers from the Huaphanh province / Xamnuea district in Laos who conducted a quantitative study on the impacts of climate change and disasters on children in our communities. In recent years, our communities in the high mountains have faced many natural disasters. Most people here depend on nature to make a living, such as through collecting food from the forest or practicing slash- and-burn farming. These activities have made our environment's condition worse, leading to more disasters that affect everyone, especially children. These disasters have disrupted our schooling, hurt our livelihoods, and caused health problems for both children and adults.

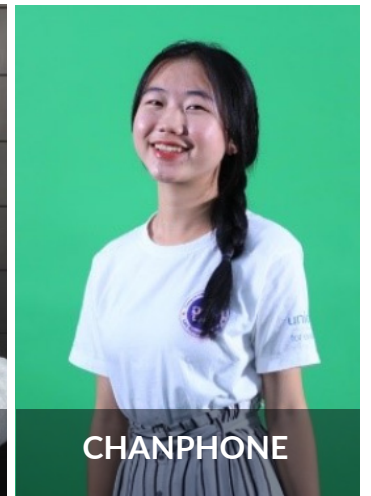
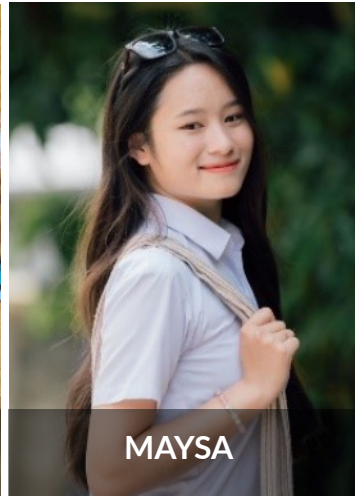
With the support of World Vision East Asia through the Young Minds CAMP (Child-Led Actions, Mobilizations & Partnerships) (YMC) platform, our mentors at World Vision International – Lao PDR, and the school principals of selected data-collection sites, we were able to plan, design, and carry out our research project from July to August 2024.

Although we used the KOBO Toolbox for the online survey, our data collection method was hybrid. We conducted the survey in person to address the challenges of limited internet access and lack of mobile phones in the schools. Most importantly, we wanted to ensure that respondents clearly understood our questions so they could accurately share their thoughts with us. We received responses from a total of 163 participants from four schools in Sam Neua District, Houaphanh Province.

However, after cleaning the data, we are left with 147 completed responses as 16 responses had technical errors. We surveyed the targeted respondents because, although most of them have firsthand experience with the impact of climate change and disasters, they may not be fully aware of the issues relating to these phenomena. Additionally, we wanted to hear their ideas on how to solve environmental and disaster problems in their community.



We are a group of four researchers from Laos. We are all from all from Huaphanh province / Xamnuea district.



Objectives

We chose this research topic because we wanted to explore children's experiences and understanding of climate change and disasters, as well as how these issues affect them. We also wanted to know how children feel about the climate crisis and hear their ideas on how the impacts of climate change and disasters could be reduced.

We specifically wanted to understand:

- The 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 level of preparedness for disasters
- Their sources of information and preferred platforms for learning about climate change and disasters
- Their views as children and youth on how they can contribute to protect the environment and mitigate climate change and disaster risks



Methodology



We conducted our research in four schools across four villages in Sam Neua District, Houaphanh Province, using the Kobo Toolbox to collect data through a questionnaire that has 18 questions. Although we used an online survey tool, our data collection method was hybrid. We conducted the survey in person to address challenges like limited internet access and the lack of mobile phones in some schools. Most importantly, we wanted to ensure that respondents clearly understood our questions so they could accurately share their thoughts with us. For participants without mobile phones, we provided paper-based questionnaires and then entered their responses using the researchers’

phones. In some cases, if time allowed, we did this in front of the participants. In other cases, we completed it after the session to save time.

We specifically conducted a one-day event in each school and this event included an introduction to child-led research, our research topic and objectives, followed by an explanation of the consent form to ensure participants fully understood and agreed to voluntarily take part in our study. We took extra care with privacy by asking participants during registration if they wanted to be photographed or not. Those who said “No” were given a sticker to indicate their preference. Fortunately, very few declined. The survey took around 30-60 minutes, depending on the age of the respondents—the younger they were, the longer it took. We made sure to spend as much time as needed to get quality answers from respondents. Afterwards, we held a knowledge-sharing session where participants could express their feelings and share what they learned. We also included ice-breakers, energizing games and small gifts (WVIL books and t-shirts) between sessions to keep the participants engaged.

To make the most of our time and to show appreciation for the participants spending their day with us, we organized a one-hour panel discussion on how to win an international scholarship. Our mentor, Thepthida, shared her tips on securing scholarships, and Seesavanh, the child-researchers’ team lead, shared his experience in the YMC.

The entire data collection process took four days, from August 21-24, 2024.

After closing the questionnaire, we reviewed the responses in the Kobo Toolbox, which automatically organized the raw data. To ensure accuracy, we sought help from the WV Laos M&E team and our mentor, who guided us in organizing the responses by location, gender, age, and other important details. The success of our activities was largely due to the active participation of the children and the valuable support from our adult mentors.



A. Climate Change & Disasters Experienced by Children in Their Communities

The five most significant climate change problems and disasters children experience in our communities are the following:



**Heavy rains
(50%)**



**Extreme cold temperature
(48%)**



**Flooding
(33%)**



**Landslides
(27%)**



**Extreme heat/Heat Wave
(26%)**

There is no significant difference in terms of gender on the climate change problems and disasters experienced by children. Note though that female respondents reported extreme heat/heat wave.

Among the **female respondents**, heavy rains was the most significant climate change problem (**52%**). It is followed by extreme cold temperature (**48%**), extreme heat/heat waves (**34%**), and flooding (**33%**).

For **male respondents**, **49%** said the most significant climate change problem/disaster they experience was also heavy rains, while **47%** said it was extreme cold temperature, and **33%** said it was flooding.

B. Impacts of Climate Change & Disasters on Children's Lives

Based on the survey results, the aspects of children's lives that have been negatively impacted by climate change and disasters the most are:



- **Physical Health (59%)**
- **Education (50%)**
- **Mental Health (42%)**
- **Family Livelihood (34%)**
- **Recreation (19%)**



C. Level of Worry About Climate Change and Disasters



- **40%** of the survey respondents are very worried about climate change and disasters
- **29%** are extremely worried
- **15%** are moderately worried
- **8%** are a little worried

D. How Children Feel about the Threats of Climate Change & Disasters



- **22%** of the respondents said they feel **afraid**
- Others felt **anxious and hopeless (13% each)**
- Some felt **helpless (11%)**
- Though some remained **optimistic (17%)**

E. Children's Level of Motivation to Engage in Environmental Activities



- **38%** of the respondents said they are **motivated** to engage in environmental activities including climate change and disaster mitigation efforts.
- **29%** said they are **somewhat motivated** to do so.
- **24%** said that they are **very motivated** to do so.



F. Children's Sources of Motivation to Take Action on Climate Change & Disasters

The following are survey respondents' top sources of motivation to take action on climate change and disasters:



- *Love of plants* **(20%)**
- *Better life for future generations* **(16%)**
- *Setting a good example* **(16%)**
- *Love wildlife* **(11%)**
- *Upgrading personal knowledge* **(10%)**

G. Children's Sources of Demotivation

The following are survey respondents' top sources of motivation to take action on climate change and disasters:



- *People in my community do not care about climate change.* **(25%)**
- *Our government might not take enough climate actions.* **(22%)**
- *I do not have enough knowledge about climate change.* **(20%)**
- *I do not have the resources or money to practice environment-friendly activities.* **(14%)**

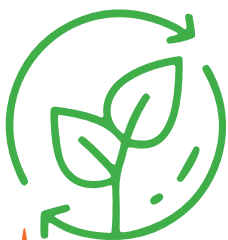
H. Commitment to Mitigation Practices

The top five environmental that respondents often do are the following:



- *Walking*
- *Consuming energy more efficiently*
- *Use water more consciously*
- *Growing vegetable*
- *Collecting garbage*

The ones which they rarely do are the following:



- *Composting*
- *Using public transportation*
- *Donating clothes*
- *Organic food*
- *Say no to or avoid using plastic bags*

I. Level of Preparedness for Disasters

The respondents were asked to rate their level of preparedness on a scale of 0 to 10. Zero means they are not prepared at all, while 10 means they are very prepared and ready for any natural disaster that may impact their household. The results showed that many respondents perceive themselves as having moderate level of preparedness for disasters:

26%	16%	11%	7%
5 out of 10	6 out of 10	3 out of 10	10 out of 10

J. Sources of Information & Preferred Platforms for Learning about Climate Change & Disasters

The childrens' top sources of information on climate change and disasters include:



- **Social media (76%)**
- **Classes in school (54%)**
- **TV News channel (43%)**
- **Podcasts (30%)**
- **Textual or visual platforms such as books, newspapers, comics (28%)**

The children's preferred platforms are the following:



- **Social media (78%)**
- **Classes in school (63%)**
- **TV news channel (35%)**
- **Podcasts (30%)**
- **Informal discussions with family (23%)**

K. Support Children Need

When asked what support children need the most to lead/facilitate environmental/climate change/disaster risk reduction-related activities, the following were the top answers:

- **Training (47%)**
- **Funding (35%)**
- **Technical support from related experts (31%)**
- **Materials (16%)**



Given that **more than 60%** of our respondents said they **never had a chance to join any activities related to climate change and DRR**, we recommend the following actions to be taken by different members of our community:

For community and local leaders:

- Plan more events and activities to help people learn about climate change and disasters.
- Start disaster preparedness projects for children and others in the community.
- Initiate a children/youth clubs and groups, and collaborate with relevant organizations to hold climate change and DRR activities.

For teachers:

- Set aside enough time in class to talk about climate change issues and disasters preparedness.
- Encourage and support extracurricular activities that help address climate change and disaster effects.
- Initiate the establishment of children/youth clubs and groups, and collaborate with relevant organizations to hold climate change and DRR activities and provide more support to children's clubs that focus on environmental and climate change issues.

For child-focused organizations:

- Continue to educate, advocate and encourage the climate change and DRR activities among the public, especially children and youth in hard-to-reach communities through their preferred platforms, namely social media, school classes, TV news channels, podcasts and informal discussions with family.
- Funding and holding more events and activities to help people learn about climate change and disasters.
- Start disaster preparedness projects for children and others in the community.
- Support a children/youth clubs and groups, and collaborate with relevant government and local authorities to hold climate change and DRR activities.

It is worth mentioning that when asked what support children need the most to lead/facilitate the environmental/climate change/DRR related activities, training ranked first at (46.9%), funding (35.3%) followed by the technical support from related experts (30.6%) and materials at (15.6%).

For children and young people:

- Continue to learn more about climate change and disaster impacts.
- Start engaging in online and offline activities that help protect the environment and reduce climate change and disaster impacts.
- Reach out to adults and peers for support in engaging in and implementing activities





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