



BUILDING RESILIENCE AND RESPONDING TO DISASTERS



With its southernmost tip only 10 degrees above the equator, Cambodia is right in the middle of the tropics. Its climate experiences limited seasonal change, alternating equally between the dry or hot season runs from December to April and the monsoon or rainy season from May to November.

The annual flooding of the Mekong River and the Tonle Sap Lake presents the greatest risk of natural calamity. Floods in 2011 displaced over 1 million people and damaged homes, schools and fields. This was the worst case of flooding since the year 2000.

During floods, children are particularly vulnerable given the destruction of sanitation facilities, schools and safe areas to play in. Contaminated floodwater is an ideal breeding ground for waterborne and mosquito borne diseases such as dysentery, malaria and dengue. Access to safe drinking water, clean food and health services diminish during flooding season.

Climate change threatens to increase the intensity and frequency of monsoon rains and flooding. Cambodia is the country with the lowest capacity to adapt to climate change in Southeast Asia primarily because the government's disaster management policy focuses too much on relief response rather than risk reduction, which includes preparedness and prevention.

The high rate of illegal logging in Cambodia is setting the stage for an environmental disaster. Trees are a natural defense against soil erosion and excessive flooding because their roots help keep the earth in place. In the twenty 20 years, an estimated 1.4 million hectares of forestlands have been lost to illegal agricultural clearing, and charcoal and firewood gathering. Illegal logging along with poaching endangers Cambodia's natural wildlife.



THE FACTS

- World ranking in terms of population exposure to flooding: **5th** (Prevention Web)
- Number of people displaced by 2011 floods: **1 million** (World Vision Annual Report)
- Annual GDP loss to flooding: **USD\$0.09 billion** (Prevention Web)
- Area of forestland lost in the last 20 years: **1.4 million hectares** (Asia Sentinel)
- Number of young children killed by 2012 EV71 epidemic: **56** (The Phnom Penh Post)

- Asia Sentinel (2012)
- Prevention Web (2012)

WORLD VISION'S RESPONSE

WorldVision works to build household and community resilience to adverse impact of disasters and climate change and responds urgent community needs when disasters happen.

In September 2011, World Vision responded to deadly floods in 18 of Cambodia's 24 provinces, affecting over 1 million people as their homes, schools, and agricultural fields were damaged or completely destroyed. World Vision responded to the needs of 10,571 households across eight provinces.

Child Friendly Spaces were set up in three districts where 502 children evacuees could play safely, learn life and survival skills while remaining in good health and spirits. World Vision coordinated with Provincial Health District and District Health Centers to provide hygiene and sanitation training in order to prevent the outbreak of disease from contaminated floodwater.

WorldVision is a leading member of the 30-member National Disaster Risk Resilience Forum and a founding member of the National Humanitarian Accountability network. We maintain a National Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund with an annual budget of USD\$100,000. World Vision's disaster response efforts, while effective, have never been tested against significant disasters.

To prepare for small-scale disasters, World Vision works with Commune Committees for Disaster Management and Village Disaster Management groups to implement disaster response plans that include early warning systems. World Vision integrates and advocates for training on risk reduction and climate change in other sector interventions including

education, health, child protection, and economic development and agriculture. We maintain the highest level of accountability in each phase of disaster response – preparedness, response and mitigation to ensure that children are protected from all forms of danger and abuse.

To prepare communities for monsoon flooding, the Cambodian government has developed the Strategic National Action Plan For Disaster Risk Reduction aimed at building resilient communities through proper administrative and infrastructural mechanism at the community and national level. A Disaster Law is also being drafted, which will integrate a comprehensive program of disaster risk reduction with climate change adaptation.

markets for community products. In this way, rural communities can boost their income, send their children to school and have better living standards.

A SAFE PLACE FOR SREYNOU

Last October, heavy rains caused massive flooding in Takeo Province where 10-year-old sponsored child Sreynou Nim lives. One month after the flooding, the water still had not receded. For days, she stepped out of bed into water that came up to her thighs.

As the rains continued, there were times when Sreynou's family had to spend the night on a road on higher ground in a makeshift tent. Sreynou says, "When there is a big flood, I am afraid of drowning, snake bites, and more storms."

Due to the flooding, Sreynou, who was in Grade 5, was unable to attend school. Her school was far away and with her village surrounded by water, it was much too dangerous to go. "I missed my school, friends and lovely teachers," she says. "I wished the water would go down sooner so I could see my classmates and teachers. I wanted to play jump rope with them."

In response to the flooding, World Vision set-up a Child Friendly Space in Sreynou's village, only a few steps away from her home. "When WorldVision Cambodia staff arrived and set up a space for children in my village, my friends and I could play and learn just like we were in school again," Sreynou said.

At the Child Friendly Spaces, children in Sreynou's village sang songs, played games, read books and learned important lessons on basic hygiene and sanitation skills. Children also learned how to be aware of their environment and how to protect themselves from danger.



Sreynou's family also benefitted from World Vision relief distributions. Sreynou's parents are rice farmers and last year's harvest were completely destroyed by the flood. Without assistance, they had to depend on a salvaged food and fish they were able to catch. World Vision relief distributions included rice, PUR water filters and sanitations kit, mats, blankets, mosquito nets, water containers and flashlights. ■