

Project BASKOG: A Capacity-Building Initiative for Junior Quick Response Teams in Crisis Management

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ABSTRACT

This action research explored learner and stakeholder perceptions of Project BASKOG (Building A Strong, Knowledgeable, Organized, and Goal-Oriented Community), a school-based capacity-building initiative aimed at strengthening the crisis management readiness of Junior Quick Response Teams (JQRTs) at Datal Bila Integrated School, Malungon 4 District, Sarangani Division. Employing a qualitative action research design, data were generated through focus group discussions with ten (10) JQRT learner-members, key informant inputs from three (3) teacher-facilitators and two (2) community stakeholders, document analysis, and observation of emergency drills during School Year 2023–2024. Thematic analysis revealed that learners perceived the program as enhancing teamwork, developing basic lifesaving and emergency response skills, and fostering emotional regulation and resilience during simulated crisis situations. Stakeholders corroborated these perceptions by observing increased learner initiative, role clarity, and peer leadership during drills, while also identifying sustainability challenges related to learner focus, resource limitations, and the need for continuous training. Rather than asserting program effectiveness in a causal sense, the findings are presented as context-specific perceptions shaped by participation in Project BASKOG within a single school setting. The study underscores the importance of sustained capacity-building, structured drill facilitation, and strengthened school–community collaboration in supporting learner-led crisis management initiatives.

Keywords: action research, capacity building, crisis management, disaster preparedness, Junior Quick Response Teams, learner participation, resilience

INTRODUCTION

The increasing frequency and intensity of natural and human-induced disasters pose serious risks to learner safety and the continuity of education, particularly in disaster-prone countries such as the Philippines. Schools function not only as centers of learning but also as community spaces where children spend a significant portion of their daily lives. Ensuring learner safety during emergencies has therefore become a fundamental responsibility of educational institutions.

The Philippines is widely recognized as one of the most disaster-vulnerable countries globally due to its location along major tectonic fault lines and within the Pacific typhoon belt. Floods, earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, fires, and extreme weather events frequently affect communities and schools, disrupting instruction and exposing learners to physical and psychological harm. Children are particularly vulnerable during emergencies because of their developmental stage, limited physical capacity, and reliance on adult guidance.

In response to these realities, Republic Act No. 10121 institutionalized a comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) framework that emphasizes preparedness, prevention, mitigation, and resilience-building rather than reactive disaster response. In the education sector, this mandate was operationalized through DepEd Order No. 37, s. 2017, which requires schools to establish functional DRRM mechanisms, conduct regular drills, and promote disaster preparedness education among learners and personnel.

Anchored on these policy directives, Datal Bila Integrated School conceptualized and implemented Project BASKOG, an innovation that emphasizes learner participation through the formation of Junior Quick Response

Teams (JQRTs). Unlike traditional adult-centered emergency response approaches, Project BASKOG positions learners as active contributors to school-based disaster preparedness by equipping them with basic emergency response knowledge, practical skills, and leadership roles during drills and simulated crisis scenarios.

This action research was undertaken to examine the experiences and perceptions of JQRT members regarding Project BASKOG. Rather than establishing generalized claims of effectiveness, the study aims to surface learners' experiences, perceived benefits, and encountered challenges as a basis for improving and sustaining learner-led crisis management initiatives within the school context.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative action research design focused on understanding and improving an ongoing school-based disaster preparedness intervention. Action research was deemed appropriate as it emphasizes reflective practice, contextual inquiry, and practitioner-led improvement within real educational settings.

Participants

The participants included a total of fifteen (15) individuals drawn from different stakeholder groups to support data triangulation. These consisted of ten (10) Junior Quick Response Team (JQRT) learner-members, three (3) teachers who directly facilitated disaster preparedness activities and emergency drills, and two (2) external stakeholders (one barangay DRRM representative and one parent-volunteer) who were involved in or observed school-based crisis management initiatives during School Year 2023–2024.

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that all participants had direct and meaningful involvement in Project BASKOG implementation. While the sample size remained small, the inclusion of multiple stakeholder perspectives strengthened the credibility of the findings by allowing triangulation of learner narratives with adult and community viewpoints within the specific school context.

Data Gathering Procedures

Data were collected through multiple qualitative sources to strengthen trustworthiness. A focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted using a semi-structured guide to explore learner experiences, perceptions of training activities, and challenges encountered during Project BASKOG implementation. In addition, document analysis was undertaken, including review of school DRRM plans, training designs, drill reports, attendance records, and activity documentation. Informal observations of emergency drills and capacity-building activities were also conducted to provide contextual insights into learner participation and behavior during simulations.

Data Triangulation and Trustworthiness

To enhance the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was employed by integrating learner narratives from the FGD with documentary evidence and observational notes. Cross-referencing these data sources enabled validation of recurring themes and reduced reliance on a single method of data collection. This approach aligns with qualitative standards for trustworthiness while remaining consistent with the practice-oriented nature of school-based action research.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. Transcripts and field notes were repeatedly read to achieve familiarization. Initial codes were generated inductively and clustered based on conceptual similarity. These codes were then reviewed and organized into broader themes that captured shared patterns across data sources. Theme definitions were refined through researcher discussion to ensure coherence and analytic consistency. While the analysis remained primarily descriptive, reflexive dialogue among the researchers was maintained to critically examine assumptions and minimize interpretive bias.

Researcher Positionality

The researchers acknowledge their professional roles within the school system where Project BASKOG was implemented. This positionality may have influenced participant responses, particularly through social desirability or perceived authority relationships. To mitigate this, participation in the FGD was voluntary, confidentiality was emphasized, and participants were informed that their responses would not affect academic standing or school responsibilities. Reflexive discussions among the researchers were conducted throughout the analysis to avoid uncritical affirmation of program outcomes.

RESULTS

Table 1. Experiences of Junior Quick Response Team (JQRT) Members in the Implementation of Project BASKOG

Cluster	Major Theme	Core Ideas / Sub-Themes
A	Teamwork and Collaboration	Cooperation among members, assisting one another, coordinated action during emergencies
B	Acquisition of Lifesaving Skills	First aid administration, patient rescue, proper lifting and carrying, fire extinguishing, documentation of patient information
C	Developing Resilience in Crisis Situations	Staying calm, managing fear, maintaining focus during emergency simulations

Participants consistently described teamwork as a central element of their experience in Project BASKOG. One learner shared:

“Kung naa mi'y drill, magtinabangay gyud mi. Dili pwede nga usa ra ang molihok kay kinahanglan magkahiusa mi para dali ang rescue.” (During drills, we really help one another. It's not possible for only one person to act because we need to work together for the rescue to be faster.)

This verbatim highlight the importance of coordinated action and mutual assistance during emergency situations. In terms of skills acquisition, another participant explained:

“Nakat-on ko unsaon pag-first aid ug pagdala sa masamdan. Dili na kaayo ko mahadlok kung naa'y mahitabo kay kabalo na ko unsay buhaton.” (I learned how to give first aid and how to carry an injured person. I am no longer very afraid when something happens because I already know what to do.)

These accounts illustrate how the acquisition of basic lifesaving skills increased learners' confidence and readiness. The theme of resilience was reflected in learners' growing awareness of emotional regulation, as expressed by one participant:

“Sa una, makulbaan ko basta drill. Karon, ginahanglan nga kalma lang ug sundon ang instruksyon para dili magpanic.” (Before, I would feel very nervous during drills. Now, I know that I need to stay calm and follow instructions so I won't panic.)

Table 2. Perceptions of JQRT Members Toward School and Stakeholder Measures in Disaster Preparedness

Cluster	Major Theme	Core Ideas / Sub-Themes
A	Gratitude and Recognition	Appreciation for training opportunities, trust in school preparedness efforts
B	Community Empowerment	Sharing learned skills with peers and family, extending preparedness beyond school

Learners expressed gratitude toward the school and its partners for providing disaster preparedness opportunities. One participant stated:

“Salamat kaayo mi sa among maestra ug sa eskwelahan kay gitudluan mi unsaon pagtabang kung naay kalamidad.” (We are very thankful to our teachers and the school because they taught us how to help during disasters.)

In terms of community empowerment, learners emphasized the transfer of knowledge beyond school:

“Akong gitudlo sa balay ang first aid nga akong nakat-on. Maski sa among siligan, akong giingnan unsaon paglikay kung naay sunog.” (I taught at home the first aid skills I learned. I also told our neighbors how to be careful in case of a fire.)

These narratives demonstrate how Project BASKOG fostered a sense of social responsibility and extended preparedness awareness to families and communities.

Table 3. Stakeholder Perspectives on the Implementation of Project BASKOG

Cluster	Major Theme	Core Ideas / Sub-Themes
A	Observed Learner Leadership	Learners demonstrating initiative during drills, peer guidance, role clarity in emergency tasks
B	Program Relevance and Alignment	Consistency with barangay DRRM goals, reinforcement of community preparedness practices
C	Sustainability and Resource Constraints	Need for continuous training, limited equipment, reliance on stakeholder support

Teachers and external stakeholders corroborated learner accounts by observing increased learner confidence and leadership. One teacher-facilitator noted:

“Makita gyud nga ang mga bata kabalo na sa ilang papel. Dili na sila hulaton permi ang instruksyon, sila na mismo ang motabang sa uban.” (You can really see that the children already know their roles. They no longer always wait for instructions; they themselves help others.)

From a community stakeholder perspective, Project BASKOG was viewed as aligned with local DRRM objectives:

“Importante kaayo nga bata pa lang kabalo na sila sa disaster preparedness kay madala na nila ni sa ilang pamilya ug komunidad.” (It is very important that children learn disaster preparedness early because they can bring this knowledge to their families and community.)

However, stakeholders also emphasized sustainability concerns. As one stakeholder explained:

“Nindot ang programa, pero kinahanglan gyud og padayon nga training ug dugang kagamitan aron mas epektibo.” (The program is good, but it really needs continuous training and additional equipment to be more effective.)

Table 4. Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Capacity-Building Initiatives

Cluster	Theme	Description
A	Focus During Drills	Difficulty maintaining attention and discipline during simulated emergency activities
B	Limited Resources	Insufficient emergency equipment and supplies for effective training and response

Despite generally positive perceptions, learners identified challenges that constrained program implementation. One learner candidly shared:

"Usahay malisod magpokus kung balik-balik na ang drill, labi na kung init ug kapoy na." (Sometimes it is hard to focus when drills are repetitive, especially when it is hot and we are already tired.)

Limited resources were also highlighted:

"Dili pirmi kompleto ang among gamit, mao nga dili tanan among ma-practice pag-ayo." (Our equipment is not always complete, so we cannot fully practice everything.)

These verbatim accounts provide deeper insight into the practical challenges affecting the realism and sustainability of the capacity-building initiative.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal both convergence and divergence between learner perceptions and stakeholder observations regarding the implementation of Project BASKOG. From the learners' perspective, participation in the Junior Quick Response Teams was experienced as empowering, confidence-building, and socially meaningful. Learners highlighted teamwork, acquisition of basic lifesaving skills, and emotional regulation as central outcomes of their engagement in crisis management activities. These perceptions underscore the value of learner-centered approaches in school-based disaster preparedness.

Stakeholder perspectives—including those of teachers and community representatives—largely corroborated these learner accounts, particularly in terms of observed improvements in learner initiative, cooperation, and role clarity during emergency drills. Stakeholders noted that JQRT members were increasingly able to guide peers, follow protocols, and participate actively in response activities with reduced reliance on adult prompting. This alignment between learner and stakeholder narratives strengthens the credibility of the findings and supports the premise that participatory DRRM initiatives can foster early leadership and responsibility among learners.

At the same time, stakeholder insights introduced a more critical dimension to the analysis. While learners emphasized personal growth and readiness, stakeholders drew attention to structural and sustainability constraints that may limit long-term program impact. These included challenges related to maintaining learner focus during repetitive drills, uneven availability of emergency equipment, and the need for continuous training to accommodate learner turnover and skill retention. Such tensions highlight that learner agency, while valuable, must be supported by consistent adult facilitation, institutional commitment, and adequate resource provision.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Project BASKOG functions most effectively when viewed not as a standalone intervention but as part of a broader, system-supported approach to school-based disaster preparedness. Embedding crisis management concepts within regular instructional activities, strengthening partnerships with local DRRM stakeholders, and institutionalizing monitoring and feedback mechanisms may help address identified constraints. Rather than asserting generalized program effectiveness, this study contributes context-specific insights into the enabling conditions and limitations of learner-led crisis management initiatives in a public-school setting.

Limitations and Transferability

This study is limited by its small sample size and reliance on a single school context, which constrains the generalizability of findings. Data were primarily drawn from learner perceptions and did not include interviews with teachers, parents, or external responders. The absence of longitudinal tracking also limits insight into the sustained impact of the program over time. Findings should therefore be interpreted as illustrative rather than representative.

Transferability may be enhanced by the provision of detailed contextual description, enabling schools in similar rural or disaster-prone settings to assess the applicability of Project BASKOG to their own disaster preparedness initiatives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Project BASKOG demonstrates the potential of learner-centered, school-based initiatives to promote disaster preparedness, shared responsibility, and resilience among young learners. While the study does not claim generalized effectiveness, it provides valuable insights into how learners experience and interpret participation in crisis management activities.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Conduct regular and progressive crisis management trainings that build skills incrementally.
2. Implement quarterly drills with clear objectives, structured facilitation, and reflective evaluation.
3. Strengthen resource provision through partnerships with local government units and community stakeholders.
4. Integrate disaster preparedness and resilience concepts into classroom instruction.
5. Establish continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms involving learners and school personnel.

Given its action research orientation and localized scope, this study is best suited for practitioner-focused, action research, or local education journals. Future research may redesign the study as a multi-site qualitative inquiry incorporating stakeholder interviews and longitudinal observation.

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