



Bringing hearts and minds together for children

## SUCCESS STORY

# A GENDER CHAMPION IN DRRM



***“I used to be a timid and simple girl in our school. My first involvement in the Safe Schools Project was only out of curiosity and excitement. The rest are sort of learning new things and experiences; trying to be somebody beyond who I used to be. Now, I am the focal person for Girls in Emergencies of Plan International Visayas, and the President of our school’s School Watching and Emergency Response Team (SWERT)—a responder and gender champion!”***

Danica, 16, recalls the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Youth Encampment that she joined in 2016 during the implementation of Safe Schools 2 project, together with 89 students from different schools in Western Samar. During the 3-day youth camp, they learned about DRRM and different life skills such as first aid, basic life support, and water safety skills. Danica, who is now an incoming grade 12 student of a public school in Zumarraga, Western Samar, was also given an opportunity to know what a School Watching and Emergency Response Team (SWERT) is. This experience encouraged her to pursue and join her school’s SWERT.

### **Student-led School Watching and Hazard Mapping**

The SWERT follows Department of Education’s (DepEd) Order 23 series of 2015, encouraging every school across the country to engage learners in the conduct of Student-led School Watching and Hazard Mapping by identifying and addressing hazards and risks in their respective schools. It aims to: a) improve students’ level of awareness on the potential hazards within and around schools; b) increase the participation of children in addressing potential disasters by reducing vulnerabilities, and; c) inculcate a culture of safety in the day to day experience of children in school.

Plan International Philippines innovated DepEd’s Student-Led School Watching and Hazard Mapping guidelines by including participation of the students in emergency preparedness and resilience education.

Through the Safe Schools 2 Project, Plan International Philippines organized 10 SWERTs in selected schools of Daram and Zumarraga which included Danica’s school.

### **Empowered to empower others**

Danica underwent age-appropriate capacity building activities and, together with other SWERT members from different schools, was trained on basic DRRM concepts, comprehensive school safety framework, children’s rights, and gender. They were also taught how to conduct school risk assessment using DepEd’s school watching checklist and tools for Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (HVCA), school DRRM planning, and peer-to-peer education on DRR and school safety.

Danica then became part of the peer educators who took the lead in facilitating learning sessions to co-students on the basic concepts of DRR and comprehensive school safety. They would go

from one classroom to another to disseminate information and conduct actual demonstration of various lifesaving skills to more students.

***“By being a peer educator, I gained self-confidence and developed social and leadership skills. It also strengthened camaraderie, trust, and confidence among the members of our team.”***

The SWERT also actively participated in promoting and operationalizing DRR/Climate Change Adaption (CCA) and school safety in San Isidro National High School, together with the teachers. Danica and other SWERT members conducted actual school hazard mapping and participated in the consultations for their school contingency and DRRM planning. They also took part in the hazard drills conducted both by their school and community.

***“We were already invited in our barangay council to share the activities we were doing in schools. Some of our trainings and initiatives were replicated by the barangay youth council. During the joint School and Family Disaster Preparedness Drills, the SWERT helped facilitate simulation drills in the different puroks (sub-village).”***

Later on, Danica noticed majority of students that expressed interest in joining the SWERT were boys. She thought that perhaps it came from the connotation that SWERT is just for responders and those who are physically strong and fit like boys. Incidentally, Plan International Philippines invited Danica to participate in its Girls Get Equal campaign where she learned more about gender, particularly the involvement of girls in DRRM activities. This motivated her to encourage more girls to become part of the SWERT; and then advocated to have a balanced representation of boys, girls, LGBT members, and learners with disability in SWERT.

Danica is now the President of SWERT in her school and the focal person for Girls in

Emergencies of Plan International Philippines. She aims to encourage more students to be part of their team, and plans to replicate the activities conducted under the Safe Schools Project. She also hopes that through SWERT, her school can develop more girl leaders just like her.

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The Safe Schools Phase 2 is a 3-year project implemented by Plan International Philippines with the support from Prudence Foundation in selected schools of Daram and Zumarraga, Western Samar from 2016-2019. The project sought to contribute to the global efforts to reduce the suffering of children and their communities due to the effects of human-induced and natural disasters through developing and increasing their resilience against hazards and risks. It intended to apply lessons learned from a similar safe school project and create models for resiliency in the context of small vulnerable islands. It targeted 1,487 school children (701 girls and 786 boys) from 1,982 learners of ten schools in the communities of Daram and Zumarraga.