VIETNAM

COUNTRY BRIEF

Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on the Education Sector With a Focus on Tsunami-Prone Areas, Including Multi-Hazards

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PARTNERSHIPS FOR STRENGTHENING SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS FOR TSUNAMIS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION (TSUNAMI PROJECT) PHASE III
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Chạy lên cao!
INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Viet Nam has faced many types of disasters, causing great harm to people, property, and infrastructure, along with other serious consequences to the living environment, production, and the economy.

In the past 20 years, disasters have become more difficult to predict in terms of frequency of occurrence, especially phenomena such as super typhoons, heavy rains, floods/droughts, and the like.

Viet Nam is also located on western side of a volcanic belt, and as such must always be on alert for tsunami, which can occur at any time. Nine tsunami sources in the East Sea and the surrounding area are able to affect Viet Nam:

1. Fault zone of 109°E;
2. Northern South China Sea (East Sea);
3. Borneo-Palawan Trench;
4. Manila/Philippine Deep Trench;
5. Taiwan Sea;
6. Sulu Sea/Philippines;
7. Celebes Sea/Philippines;
8. North Banda Sea;

Tsunami hazard for the coastal areas of Viet Nam is assessed by the maximum wave height and the time it takes for the tsunami to propagate from the source to the coast. Among the abovementioned nine tsunami sources, the Manila/Philippine deep trench source area is considered the most dangerous for Viet Nam. If an earthquake with a maximum magnitude up to M=9.3 occurs in this area, the coast of Viet Nam risks being exposed to waves as high as 16m (Figure 1), with the central coastal area facing the greatest tsunami danger.

In recent years, the Government of Viet Nam has focused on warning and responding to tsunamis for coastal localities, supporting the development of solutions and evacuation/action plans for each level of government, local schools, and coastal communities.

In the past two years, Viet Nam has also been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. All fields—including economic sectors, education, and society as a whole—have been affected, requiring timely solutions.

This country brief paper documents the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Viet Nam's education sector, as well as on selected schools in Quang Nam province where a high level of disaster risk has been measured. At the same time, the government's solutions to disaster risk have been evaluated and analysed, and some solutions have been proposed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

\[1\] Decision 645/QD-TTg promulgating the national plan to respond to earthquake and tsunami disasters on May 27, 2022.
In Viet Nam, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted socio-economic development activities in general and many different aspects of education in particular, as well as posing enormous challenges to public health. According to the World Health Organization, 10,478,639 people had been infected by COVID-19 in Viet Nam as of July 5, 2022, with 43,087 deaths.²

During the spread of the pandemic, tens of millions of people across the country were required to stay in their homes and obey regulations on community isolation, studying and working in their places of residence. This led to a large number of schools to shut down, causing disruptions in the educational and career-oriented activities of younger generations (Figure 2).

School year plans have been interrupted, and educational curricula and content have had to be adjusted to compensate. During the period of the social distancing policy, nearly 20 million students and more than 1 million teachers had to temporarily stop going to school, switching to online teaching for many months; more than 70,000 students were unable to graduate on time.

The fact that students had to stay at home for months on end without direct communication and contact between families and schools has affected the quality of their education, development, and comprehensive capacity, and especially their physical and mental health. In addition, teachers, students, and parents faced many difficulties both in life and learning activities. Children lost a healthy environment in which to gain knowledge, physically and mentally.

For most students, school is an essential place where they can interact with their peers, get support, and access health and wellness services. The United Nations Children's Fund warned that closing down schools created a potential crisis for children.

In addition to educational delays, many children suffered from social isolation and elevated anxiety levels, with some even being exposed to abuse and violence. The rapid transition to online education also severely affected students, especially those studying away from home.

² [https://covid19.who.int/region/wpro/country/vn](https://covid19.who.int/region/wpro/country/vn)
For educational institutions lacking the necessary facilities or capacity, offering exams online posed further difficulties and may increase the risk of cheating.

The government and the Ministry of Education and Training, along with other ministries and branches, came up with many drastic solutions to implement the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure the safe opening of schools, adapting to the new reality.

The Prime Minister requested the Ministry of Education and Training to assume prime responsibility in coordinating with ministries and localities to formulate and implement the school year plan proactively and flexibly, creating favourable conditions for students to ensure both their health and their academic results.

The Prime Minister also requested the Ministry of Education and Training to coordinate with the Ministry of Health and the People’s Committees of provinces and centrally-run cities to organize immunization for students after specialized agencies directed them to vaccinate students at all levels.

Guidelines for COVID-19 vaccination for students aged 7-18 have been issued. The Ministry of Health provided supplements and vaccinations for all teachers at all levels according to government regulations, and was required to thoroughly understand, inform, and communicate necessary information to teachers, parents, and students.³

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SCHOOLS IN TAM KY CITY, QUANG NAM PROVINCE

In Quang Nam, as in other provinces, COVID-19 had a serious impact on educational activities in schools during 2020 and 2021. Teachers and pupils had to adapt either by attempting to move fully online or by conducting hybrid online/in-person courses. Schools, teachers, and pupils faced difficulties in infrastructure, skills, and studies, further complicated by social isolation.

In Quang Nam, especially in the mountainous and coastal rural areas, limitations in infrastructure and internet connectivity affected teachers and students attending online classes.

Online study also affected both pupils' psychophysiological health and parental supervision. In some cases where computers were unavailable, pupils had to use smartphones, which reduced their ability to concentrate on learning.

However, the COVID-19 vaccine has been given to all people in Quang Nam, and the situation is returning to normal (Table 1).

In Tam Ky city, Quang Nam province, the statistics for the 2021–2022 school year are as follows:

- 10 secondary schools, 193 classes, 7,821 pupils;
- 14 elementary schools, 335 classes, 12,847 pupils;
- 197 kindergartens, 197 classes, 4,827 pupils;
- 1,284 teachers and education staff members.

### Table 1. Vaccine situation in Quang Nam (as of 06 July 2022).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>1 dose</th>
<th>2 doses</th>
<th>3 doses</th>
<th>4 doses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Over 18 years (1,086,649 cases)</td>
<td>1,083,147 (99.96%)</td>
<td>1,080,516 (99.45%)</td>
<td>884,205 (81.4%)</td>
<td>27,232 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12 – 17 years (133,495 cases)</td>
<td>132,608 (99.3%)</td>
<td>130,377 (97.7%)</td>
<td>5,115 (3.8%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 – 12 years (161,254 cases)</td>
<td>38,419 (23.8%)</td>
<td>10,332 (6.41%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Under the impact of COVID-19, students and teachers had a period of online study and/or hybrid online/in-person courses. While they experienced the same problems as the rest of the province, these challenges were remedied by various methods as schools conducted extra teaching to compensate for infected pupils’ lost class time, improved teachers’ capacity for online teaching, and helped pupils who did not have conditions suitable for online learning (such as no computer/smartphone or internet connection).

In the last school year, the number of pupils with good or excellent grades was equal to or higher than previous years.

**Le Loi Secondary School**

Le Loi Secondary School is located in the countryside of Tam Thang commune, Tam Ky city, Quang Nam province, 5 kilometres from the coastline (Figure 3). The main livelihoods are agriculture, fishing, and unskilled labour. The rate of enrolment was high, but the rate of smartphone ownership was reportedly low.

In 2021, Le Loi Secondary School had 31 teachers and staff and 429 pupils. Given its rural location, online learning facilities for pupils are still relatively limited.

As of July 2022, 26/31 teachers (≈84%) and 100/429 pupils (≈23%) had been infected with COVID-19 and fully recovered. As a result, organising extra/compensatory lessons was quite complicated due to the high number of quarantined teachers and pupils.

The school made great efforts through methods that included teaching in groups, arranging for pupils who did not have computers or smartphones to study together with pupils who did, etc., in order to overcome these difficulties and complete its targets on schedule.
GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS TO PREPARE FOR THE IMPACT OF TSUNAMIS, PANDEMICS, AND OTHER DISASTERS

Disaster prevention and control systems in Viet Nam

Viet Nam is heavily affected by disasters and climate change. As such, the government has established prevention and control systems from the central to local levels (Figures 4 & 5). These systems have actively worked to ensure timely responses to the disasters which usually occur in Viet Nam.

Legal groundwork 1998-2013

The National Assembly and the government have published numerous legal documents relating to disaster prevention, including the following:

- Law on Water Resources (1998);
- Law on Dikes (2006);
- Ordinance on Exploitation and Protection of Irrigation Works (2001);
- Decree No. 08/2006/ND-CP of January 16, 2006, stipulating in detail some articles of the Ordinance on Flood and Storm Prevention and Control, amended and supplemented on August 24, 2000;
- Decree, No. 50-CP of May, 10, 1997, issuing regulations on the setting up and operation of local funds for flood and storm prevention and control;
- Decree No. 14/2000/ND-CP of May 05, 2000, amending and supplementing a number of articles of the regulations issued together with the Government’s Decree No.88/1999/ND-CP of September 1st, 1999, promulgating the Regulation on Bidding;
- Decree No. 113/2007/ND-CP of August, 26, 2007, detailing and guiding the implementation of a number of articles in the Law on Dykes;
- Decree No. 04/2010/ND-CP of January 15, 2010, issuing provisions on sanctions for administrative violations in the field of flood and storm prevention and control.

Law on Disaster Prevention and Control and related plans and policies

The National Assembly promulgated the Law on Disaster Prevention and Control in 2013. It was amended and supplemented with some articles in 2020. Throughout the entire content of the Law are seven basic principles for disaster prevention and control:

1. Proactive prevention, timely response to, and urgent and effective remediation of the consequences of disasters.
2. Disaster prevention and control are the responsibility of the State, organizations, and individuals, in which the State plays the key role while organizations and individuals play a proactive role and communities help one another.
3. Disaster prevention and control is carried out under the ‘four-on-the-spot motto’: command on the spot, manpower on the spot, means and supplies on the spot, and logistics on the spot.
4. Disaster prevention and control considerations must be integrated into national and local socio-economic and sectoral development plans and master plans.
5. Humanity, fairness, transparency, and gender equity must be guaranteed in disaster prevention and control.
6. Disaster prevention and control activities must be based on scientific grounds, combining traditional experiences with scientific and technological advances and structural with non-structural solutions, as well as protecting the environment and ecosystems and adapting to climate change.
7. Disaster prevention and control activities are assigned, decentralized, and closely coordinated among involved forces, and conform to the levels of disaster risks.

On the basis of the Law, and in order to implement the guidelines, policies, and direction of the Party and the government on disaster prevention and control, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 379/QĐ-TTg (17/3/2021) in March 2021 approving the National Strategy on Disaster Prevention and Control to 2030, with a Vision to 2050. As mentioned in this document, disaster prevention is an important task of the whole
**DISASTER PREVENTION & CONTROL SYSTEMS IN VIET NAM AT THE NATIONAL & SUB-NATIONAL LEVELS**

**Figure 4.** Organizational chart of the disaster prevention and control system at the central level.  
(Source: Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority)

- **National Steering Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention & Control**
  - **Head:** Deputy Prime Minister
  - **Deputy Standing Head:** Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development
  - **Deputy Heads:**
    - Deputy Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development
    - Chairperson of National Committee for Search & Rescue
    - Ministry of Public Security
  - **Members:** Representatives of leaders of relevant ministries & departments

- **Standing Agency:** Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development
- **Standing Office:** Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority

**Figure 5.** Organizational chart of the disaster prevention system in localities.  
(Source: Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority)

- **Standing Office of the Steering Committee**
- **Commanding Committee for Disaster Prevention & Control and Search & Rescue**
- **Standing Office of the Commanding Committee**
  - **District-Level Commanding Committee for Disaster Prevention & Control and Search & Rescue**
  - **Commune-Level Commanding Committee for Disaster Prevention & Control and Search & Rescue**
  - **Young Pioneers**
  - **Provincial departments & branches**
  - **Research institutes, social & political organizations, business associations**
political system, and a whole-of-society responsibility and obligation. It includes three stages: prevention, response, and recovery from the consequences of disasters.

The Strategy sets the goal to “proactively prevent disasters, adapt to climate change, minimize loss of life and of the people’s and the state’s property; to build a nation capable of managing disaster risks step by step, communities and society are safe from disasters, creating conditions for sustainable socio-economic development, and maintaining security and national defence.”

In 15/03/2022, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 342/QD-TTg promulgating the National Plan for Disaster Prevention and Control up to 2025. The goal of the plan is “Identifying key tasks in disaster prevention and control that need to be focused on in the period 2021-2025 in order to implement the National Strategy on disaster prevention and control to 2030, with a vision to 2050; improving capacity for disaster prevention and control and adaptation to climate change in order to proactively respond to and reducing damage caused by disasters.”

The plan has clearly defined groups of construction investment projects and non-structural projects for the period 2021-2025 and has assigned ministries, branches and localities to implement them.

Localities, based on these documents, will guide the development of plans for disaster prevention and control at local levels. In Quang Nam on July 14, 2021, the Provincial People’s Committee signed Decision No. 1962/QD-UBND on promulgating the plan for disaster prevention and control in Quang Nam province for the period of 2021-2025.

According to this plan, the province has clearly defined types of disasters and corresponding disaster risk levels. For each level of disaster risk, the plan clearly identifies the responsibilities of departments, branches, and localities in the response phase. The plan also provides a list of means, materials, and human resources to participate in disaster prevention in each district, city, and town.

**Government preparation to respond to tsunamis and earthquakes**

On 29 May 2007, the Prime Minister issued the Regulation on Earthquake and Tsunami Prevention and Control (Decision No. 78/2007/QD-TTg). Recently, on 27 May 2022, the Prime Minister issued the National Plan to Respond to Earthquakes and Tsunamis (Decision No. 645/QD-TTg, abbreviated as “Plan 645”) with the goal of "reasonably mobilizing resources, implementing tasks, solving measures to prevent and respond to earthquakes and tsunamis.”

Plan 645 includes earthquake and tsunami scenarios in Viet Nam which clearly defines the magnitude and risk level of earthquakes and tsunamis for each area. It also assigns tasks to ministries, sectors, and localities, and identified the forces, means, and contents to be deployed in each stage of prevention, response, and recovery.

For Quang Nam, the tsunami risk identified under Plan 645 is up to level 4 (the highest, corresponding to a wave height from 8-16m), with the time for the tsunami to propagate and arrive at the shore ranging from 24.5 hours and potentially reaching inland up to 2-3 km. Although the coastal area of Viet Nam in general has never recorded the occurrence of tsunamis, the risk of this type of disaster is nevertheless considerable.
RECOMMENDED MEASURES FOR MULTI-HAZARD PREPAREDNESS IN COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

Solutions to reduce damage caused to residential communities

In order to effectively prevent, avoid, and reduce the impact of multi-hazards, it is necessary to synchronously deploy the following solutions:

- Clearly define the point of view that while hazards cannot be removed, people can still find adaptive measures to mitigate damage. As such, it is necessary to focus on solutions to adapt, avoid, and protect production and life.

- Put people at the centre: It is critical to do communication and education work well, with the goal that people in all regions and all target audiences are deeply aware of the harmful effects of natural hazards and are able to identify all types of natural hazards in order to prevent and respond to them proactively and effectively, with the motto; "Prevention is the main thing, saving yourself is the main thing."

- Encourage community members to implement the "4-on-the-spot" motto (forces on the spot, leadership on the spot, logistics on the spot, supplies on the spot), rather than wait for external assistance in emergency situations.

- Pay more attention to, increase investment in, and properly make use of forecasting and warning systems, especially for types of disasters that cause great loss of life and property. This is important information for decision-making departments and sectors.

- Ensure that localities develop detailed disaster prevention plans for each sector and locality, taking into account the pandemic risk. This plan needs to clearly define specific tasks and solutions for disaster prevention and control (structural and non-structural) in each area, and assign specific responsibilities to
departments, branches, and localities. Disaster prevention plans need to be considered and integrated into local socio-economic development plans.

- Fully and synchronously implement the solutions on disaster prevention, control, and mitigation outlined in the disaster prevention plan. It is necessary to prioritize the implementation of soft solutions such as protecting and improving the quality of natural forests, protection forests and watershed forests.

Solutions to reduce damage caused to schools

**Education sector**

Proactively assume the prime responsibility for, and coordinate in the implementation of, the identified in Decision No. 553/QD-TTg, dated April 6, 2021, “Raising public awareness and community-based disaster risk management to 2030”:

- Implement activities to raise awareness for teachers on disaster reduction and prevention.
- Build a contingent of high school teachers with a solid knowledge of disaster prevention.
- Integrate some contents of disaster prevention and control into subjects and continuing education programs at all levels;
- Develop a plan to ensure the safety of students, equipment, learning tools, and educational infrastructure in the event of a disaster;
- Include a standard "safe schools before disasters" in the Standards of Safe Schools (QD 4458/QD-BGDDT, August 22, 2007);
- Coordinate with relevant units to build a communication model on extra-curricular disaster prevention and control knowledge on the basis of disaster monitoring and monitoring works in the area.

**Schools and teachers**

Raise awareness and equip students with knowledge and skills on disaster prevention and control and responding to climate change in order to gradually build a safe school system by implementing the following measures:

- Organize training to share experiences in disaster prevention and control, and especially to build the skills of administrators, teachers, students, parents, and communities to actively take measures to prevent, combat, and minimize the damage caused by large and complex disaster situations.
- Organize the development of plans to ensure the safety of students, equipment, and support tools for lecturers, teachers, and communications personnel to be ready to respond to disasters and manage disaster risk, building a "school safe from disasters" according to the standards of the Ministry of Education and relevant laws.
- Propose and implement solutions and initiatives related to disaster prevention and control for students and teachers, including mobilizing the community and increasing the participation of parents in planning and improving capacity for adapting to climate change, contributing to minimizing the damage to people, property, and the environment caused by disasters.
- Coordinate with relevant departments to build communication models to spread knowledge of disaster risk prevention, control, and mitigation for all levels on the basis of disaster monitoring, forecasting, and warning works and local disaster reports; allow students to visit hydro-meteorological monitoring works, tsunami warning stations, and units operating in the field of meteorological and hydrological forecasting in the area.
- Praise teachers and students with high achievements in disaster prevention, control, and mitigation; honour and reward outstanding personnel, replicating the model of good people and good deeds, ideas, and initiatives of practical value.
- Establish a school-level Disaster Prevention and Control Committee, and at the same time develop a specific disaster prevention plan (including epidemics) for the school to proactively prevent, combat, and respond in time to limit impacts and prevent the loss of life and property.
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Legislation

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2. Law No. 60/2020/QH14 dated June 17, 2020, of the National Assembly: Amending and Supplementing a Number of Articles of the Law on Disaster Prevention and Control and the Law on Dikes.
4. Decree, No. 50-CP dated May 10, 1997, Issuing the regulation on the setting up and operation of the local fund for flood and storm prevention and fight.
8. Decision No. 02/QD-TWPCCT dated March 27, 2015, of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam on the assignment of tasks to members of the Central Steering Committee for disaster prevention and control.
9. Decision No. 44/2014/QD-TTg dated August 15, 2014, of the Prime Minister detailing disaster risk levels.
10. Decision No. 264/2006/QD-TTg, dated November 16, 2006, of the Prime Minister stipulating the Regulation on reporting earthquakes and tsunami warnings.
14. Decision No. 18/2021/QD-TTg, dated April 22, 2021, of the Prime Minister stipulating the Regulation on prediction, warning, communication and risk scales.
15. Decree No. 78/2021/ND-CP dated August 1, 2021, on the establishment and management of the Disaster Prevention and Control Fund, and implement its good management, revenue and expenditure, and settlement.
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5. Tsunami awareness raising - Project documents and reports by UNDP (Vietnamese language)