

## Risk Management Actions in Peru's Educational System<sup>1</sup>



Photo: INDECI

*A brief account of how synergies among Peru's public and private institutions, as well as the participation of the educational community are laying the foundation for the use of knowledge, innovation, and education to create a culture of prevention at the national level. This is related to Priority 3 of the Hyogo Framework for Action: Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.*

In recent years, the Ministry of Education, the National Civil Defense Institute (INDECI) and Practical Action—ITDG have been working together in a coordinated effort to promote risk reduction issues in educational institutions in Peru, the results of which are now becoming visible. Training and awareness-raising processes among teachers and students, changes in existing curricula, the incorporation of appropriate and accessible methodologies and technologies in schools, the dynamic participation of students and educators in debates and reflection processes that generate policy proposals, the growing importance of this issue on the political agenda, and initiatives undertaken in different areas of the public sphere all seem to indicate that risk management has become a permanent effort in Peru. To consolidate these efforts, we must face our vulnerability in a decisive and creative manner.

### Experience to date

In recent years, these three institutions have developed trainings on risk management and children's rights aimed at teachers and students, which seek to build capacity within the education community and thus reduce its vulnerability. They have also promoted changes to the existing curricula, in order to incorporate

rights-centered risk management into the planning, assessment, and activities of educational institutions.

In addition, they have advanced the creation of risk management networks with teachers and students in different regions such as Áncash and San Martín, through the validation and promotion of local organizations such as school district and civil defense committees within educational institutions. Today these networks replicate, promote, and expand risk reduction processes in poor communities.

These networks have reached communities in a variety of ways, through awareness-raising marches in populated areas, drawing and writing contests in schools, reforestation campaigns, and radio programs reflecting upon risk reduction. During the January 2007 emergency in San Martín caused by overflowing rivers that affected 7,000 families<sup>1</sup>, these school networks organized activities with students and organizations working in these regions (such as the "Vaso de Leche" [Glass of Milk] committees and local soup kitchens), in order to collect provisions and support the affected population that lost not only their possessions but also their livelihoods due to the flooding of their farmlands. These school networks conducted training sessions for parents associations (APAFAS)<sup>2</sup> to encourage them to apply a risk-management approach in their communities, thereby reducing the risk of the many hazards they face.

Drawing on this experience, a group of students recently decided to organize the National Network of Students in Action, which includes

<sup>1</sup>Emergency Report n° 053 – January 22, 2007 / COEN-SINADECI / 20:00 Hours. (Report N° 16, San Martín)

<sup>2</sup>APAFAS: "Asociación de Padres de Familia," or Parents Association

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Photo: INDECI

current and former students from seven regions of the country that participated in last month's National Encounter of Students for Risk Management Actions, organized jointly by Practical Action – ITDG and the Ministry of Education. This national network firmly believes that incorporating risk management and a children's rights-based approach into education policies and activities will reduce the vulnerability of both schools and communities, and the network's activities are aimed at achieving this goal.

Another result of these coordinated efforts has been the development of teaching materials by and for educators, such as proposals and methodological tools for incorporating risk management into educational activities. These include the Guide for Assessing Vulnerability and Risk Reduction Capacity in Educational Institutions, the Guide for Incorporating Risk Management into Educational Institutional Planning, and the Guide for Incorporating Risk Management into Teachers' Training, which have been submitted to and reviewed by the Ministry of Education and INDECI. These methodological proposals draw on local initiatives developed by ITDG, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, through its risk management projects and activities in educational institutions.

### The campaign titled "Disaster Reduction Begins at School"

We believe that the global campaign "Disaster Reduction Begins at School" is an endorsement of those efforts aimed at raising awareness among local authorities and the community in general, in order to promote risk reduction processes in Peru's educational system. Within the framework of the global campaign, last year we

celebrated the "International Day for Disaster Reduction" with a press conference intended to raise awareness among authorities and the community at large about the importance of incorporating risk management in educational institutions and promoting safer schools throughout the country. Teachers and more than 50 students representing a number of educational institutions from Lima, Áncash, and San Martín participated in this event, and with their viewpoints and unique forms of expression they urged the authorities to continue working on risk reduction in schools. The event also represented a good opportunity to distribute educational materials such as publications, videos, posters and photographs.

The press conference was held with the participation of the representative of UNICEF for Latin America, the Chief of the Peruvian Civil Defense Body, the Ministry of Education's National Director of Community and Environmental Education of, and the Regional Director of Education in Lima. The event was organized by the Ministry of Education, along with Save the Children, Oxfam, German Agro Action, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Centre for Disaster Prevention and Studies (PREDES), CARE, and Practical Action – ITDG.

Also within the context of the global campaign, articles on risk management and education were published in national newspapers. In addition, educational activities were carried out in each region, which included the development of education materials related to risk management such as storybooks and murals of education centers and public places. Other activities included awareness-raising marches in Áncash and San Martín, reforestation campaigns in a number of provinces in San Martín and the production of school wall newspapers.

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Photo: Plan Paraguay/Luis Vera

### National directives<sup>3</sup>

With the participation of the educational community<sup>4</sup>, a number of lessons learned from the experiences of both public and private institutions have been captured. This connection to social processes, aimed at reducing risk in vulnerable populations, has allowed the educational community to reflect on guidelines and ideas for developing proposals and incorporating risk management and a children's rights-based approach into the country's educational policies.

Drawing on the framework agreement signed by the Ministry of Education and Practical Action – ITDG<sup>5</sup>, we have coordinated a number of actions with both the headquarters and the regional educational offices. In this way, we were able to ensure that experiences gained by the communities were included in the curriculum proposal titled “Learning to Prevent,” which was part of National Directive 052, issued by the Ministry of Education, and in effect from 2004 to 2006. We also participated in the formulation of a number of national regulations at the request of various agencies within the Ministry of Education, marking the beginning of a joint effort between the two institutions. We believe that this initiative has already taken some important actions in this regard.

In order to contribute to the participatory development of the New National Risk Management Directive of the Ministry of Education, we jointly organized two workshops: the first one to discuss the scope, strengths, and limitations of the previous directive, and the second one to propose the guiding principles and the content of the new directive.

The workshops resulted in a comprehensive review of Directive 052, which was issued in 2004, and the development of a consolidated document with proposals for the new directive. The participants of the second workshop discussed point by point the proposal for the new directive in order to ensure that it reflected the consensus of all those present.

Both workshops benefited from the participation of teachers, principals, specialists from regional education offices, experts from INDECI's National Education and Training Office, and education and risk management specialists from other NGOs, such as PREDES and the Andean Community's Disaster Prevention Project (PREDECAN). The experiences, perspectives and contributions of all the participants were extremely valuable in the formulation of the proposal document.

### A New National Directive for Risk Management

Clearly, the “Learning to Prevent” curriculum proposal, included in National Directive 052, and its implementation in institutional plans for education centers, set the stage for recent efforts to include the issue of risk management at the curriculum planning phase in schools throughout the country. We believe that “Learning to Prevent” was a pivotal initiative because it was developed at a time when the issue of disasters in schools focused solely on drills and infrastructure assessments. Learning to Prevent proposed that the education sector include this issue in the existing curricula, with relevant content that focuses on prevention but also places emphasis on response.

<sup>3</sup> “The directives consist of a set of orders that specify in an executive manner what is included in other higher standards (ministerial and other resolutions). They also provide the necessary instructions so that different agencies within the Ministry of Education are able to apply these resolutions in a concrete manner. *Jaime Marcos, environmental education specialist, Ministry of Education*”

<sup>4</sup> Education community is understood here as teachers, students, parents, school administrative staff, and the local community.

<sup>5</sup> A framework agreement signed in 2003 between the Office for Integrated Education and Prevention, of the Ministry of Education, and Practical Action – ITDG.

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Photo: INDECI

The most important part of the content of the new National Directive 015-2007-ED, "Actions for Disaster Risk Management in the Educational System", approved by Resolution 78-2007-ED in February 2007, is a new focus that not only promotes actions for disaster prevention and response by those groups and institutions that specialize in such emergencies, but also fosters the participation of the entire education community in activities to reduce vulnerability in schools. This issue is no longer reserved for specialists; now, the entire education community is tasked with linking risk management to national education proposals.

The following components of the directive are also noteworthy: the creation of a national education network linked to existing local networks involved in risk reduction activities, the promotion of research on risk management related issues; the incorporation of actions for risk management into multi-annual education plans in each region, the advancement of collaboration between public and private sectors in a number of communities to promote risk reduction activities, the creation of local teachers teams specialized in risk management, in ongoing coordination with the civil defense committees of local governments; the development of attitudes, capacity and values among students through curricular activities and the organizations involved in risk management; and the incorporation of risk management into the Institutional Education Project, the Central Curriculum Project and the Annual Work Plan.

Currently, under the National Directive 015, the National Community and Environmental Education Office is promoting the

dissemination and monitoring of the risk management actions being implemented by educational institutions throughout the country. This office is also promoting the participation of Peruvian schools in a drawing and painting contest sponsored by the secretariat of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Americas, and Practical Action – ITDG. In addition, the Ministry of Education, along with ITDG and other NGOs and donor agencies, is preparing a National Methodological Guide on Risk Management to facilitate the application of National Directive 015 in schools at the national level.

#### A Webpage for Risk Management Networks

With the valuable support of DIPECHO, Save the Children, Oxfam America, German Agro Action, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), a webpage is currently under construction, that will offer a number of networks of NGOs, educators, students, donor agencies and academic institutions that work on or participate in disaster management activities a space for dialogue and the exchange of experiences. This virtual space will be available to all participating institutions, and will be open to those who share the ideals of a safer world for all. The website address is: [www.infodes.org.pe/redgr](http://www.infodes.org.pe/redgr)

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## Understanding Disasters from a Child's Perspective Antofagasta, Chile



Photo: UNICEF.05.chile.anthonysael

*The viewpoints of five students who attended the Natural Disaster Course of the DELTA UCN program for managing information and understanding disasters.*

Mass media globalization has allowed people to obtain, in just a very few seconds, information about what is happenings anywhere in the world. Very quickly they receive, sometimes in awe, information about the aftermath of natural phenomena that have triggered disasters, or about what might happen as a result of devastating events, such as mega-earthquakes, through computer simulations.

The way the world is perceived, based on the information made available by the media, is indeed a topic of interest, especially when we consider that children are often the main media consumers.

For this reason, information that affects how children perceive risks and the events that to some extent affect their communities,

and how they think these communities should respond to natural phenomena must be handled responsibly. This could be done through study programs that help them to understand and learn about risks, natural phenomena and disasters so that they, in turn, can contribute to building safer cities and societies in the future.

Over the years, this has been a very enriching experience in Antofagasta. Since 2005, the Northern Catholic University of Chile has led the process through courses and workshops on natural disasters and related issues, under the auspices of the DELTA Program (Developing and Leading Academic Skills) intended for children ages 10 to 17. The comments of some of these young participants are presented below. This process is related to Priority 3 of the Hyogo Framework for Action, which places emphasis on the need to use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.

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### Children and disasters

*Mauricio Ignacio Lagunas Véliz, age 13, Las Rocas E-87 School, Antofagasta – Chile: mauricio\_ragnarok@hotmail.com*

Sometimes we wonder why disasters happen, why we lose our loved ones, how we could have prevented them, or how we could avoid them in the future.

Natural events like earthquakes, mudslides, tsunamis, and other phenomena have always happened and will continue to happen. Normally, because they are so strong, they tend to be very catastrophic. But no matter how disastrous they can be, some of their consequences could be prevented.

People must accept with responsibility that their safety depends, above all, on themselves. Disasters affect all of us: children, the elderly, adults, the disabled, and sick people. We all put our lives at risk if we are unable to forecast and prevent the dangers.

Most victims are usually children and the elderly, since young people and adults can hang on to something or climb a tree. They stand a better chance of escaping.

One thing that can help us prevent a disaster is to carry out emergency drills. We also need to be aware that this is not a game. Because it could happen at any time, we need to be prepared.

Education is fundamental for avoiding disasters. We children can teach our parents and friends what we have learned in lectures and/or at school.

During the natural disasters course of the DELTA program, offered at the Northern Catholic University of Chile, Cynthia Rojas Castillo, teacher and journalist, helped us to understand the different types of disasters, how to prevent them, and how and why they produce negative consequences. This has all been very interesting since these phenomena occur quite frequently around the world, and could therefore also affect us.

### How can we, as children, teach our parents about risk and disasters?

*Sergio Javier Soza Díaz, age 13, “Julia Herrera Varas” F-99 School, Mejillones – Chile, sergiotenistasoza@hotmail.com*

Adults have the bad habit of thinking “Since it’s me, nothing bad will happen.” But this mindset is clearly wrong, and since they usually do not pay attention to the advice of experts (who usually do not belong to our families), we, as children, (myself included) must learn how to prevent disasters, whether they are due to earthquakes, mudslides, tsunamis, avalanches, fires, etc.

To do this, these recommendations will come in handy. By just looking around us, wherever we are, we can try to identify risks. It is also good to learn some history about the city we live in, to know if there were disasters in the past, and what areas were affected.

A safe city is a place where people help each other, where things are built with people in mind. In 2020, Antofagasta will be a safer place, and people will be more aware of risks in the city regarding disasters due to natural hazards and other events. And this will be possible because we the children of today will be the adults of tomorrow.



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### Prevent and educate

*Roberto Daniel Leaño Álvarez, age 13, Las Rocas E-87 School, Antofagasta – Chile. izzyglow@hotmail.com*

Dear ISDR readers, my name is Roberto and I would like to tell you about disaster prevention. One of the biggest problems is that no matter how hard people try, it is often not possible to convince our city mayors and nations' presidents to help prevent and/or mitigate disasters and risks.

In terms of prevention, our biggest problem in Antofagasta are mudslides (although there are other issues as well). This, because there is no way of stopping them in high areas, not because of the lack of mitigation measures but because slopes are steep and, especially, because poorer people live illegally in the most dangerous areas. In other words, the highest-risk areas are occupied by a large number of families and, additionally, they themselves build their houses, using poor quality materials.

The truth is that we cannot completely prevent a disaster from happening; a disaster is fatal, no matter how or when it happens, even if we take adequate prevention measures. We can, however, reduce its negative effects if we act in anticipation, because prevention is cheaper than reconstructing and experiencing great losses.

### How citizens react to a disaster

*Ricardo Araya Arcos, age 12, "Juan Pablo II" D-129 School, Antofagasta – Chile. casad0c0nhij0s@hotmail.com*

In any type of urban disaster (earthquakes, tsunamis, or other events), people always panic, for one simple reason: the lack of information.

The government, the authorities and people themselves are not adequately informed about prevention measures, and even if they are, panic (which can be overwhelming) makes them run away without considering the risks.

Emergency drills should not be announced in advance, so that people are taken by surprise and not given warning or time to prepare. They should not be a show that make some people look good in the eyes of the of the community. What is important is to know where the flaws are in terms of people's reaction.

We must take our mistakes into account and learn from them. We can improve many aspects with a bit of willingness and awareness, recognizing that nature will always be unpredictable.

### Disaster in Aysen, eleventh region of Chile

*María Perez Pereira, age 12, "Japón" D-58 School, Antofagasta – Chile. mary\_chika\_top@hotmail.com*

Beginning on January 23, 2007, frequent tremors of varying magnitude were felt in the Aysén area, causing panic among the area's residents.

In light of this situation, the government sent a group of specialists to study the seismic recurrence. Tremors did not stop, and we were told that a volcano is forming in the Aysén fjord. People are afraid of what might happen, but no one is thinking that aside from the tremors there are other risks to consider, such as landslides.

The strongest tremor so far was felt on April 21, an VIII-intensity event on the Mercalli Scale. Its epicenter was located near Puerto Aysén, Chile, and it had a 6.2 magnitude on the Richter scale. When the earthquake occurred, everybody got scared but no one was injured or died as a result.

Problems arose along the fjord coastline. Several landslides caused waves greater than 6 meters, which destroyed many houses in the Punta Tortuga area.

It was a tragedy, but it could have been a disaster. Fifty fishermen were safely evacuated by boats, while ten people were still missing by sundown having been dragged by the waves caused by the landslides.

The bodies of six people were never found, and the risk of more tremors and landslides continues to frighten the community. Aysén was declared in a state of emergency due to the possibility of other earthquakes. Fear still persists.

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