

NEWSLETTER

Disaster risk reduction begins at school

Nº 1, September 2006

With the purpose of fostering the topic of risk management education, UNICEF and the ISDR have decided to issue this newsletter, which will be published every six months, along with the "ISDR Informs" Magazine, and will accompany the World Campaign for the next two years.

We encourage all those individuals, organizations and institutions that wish to share experiences, lessons learned, and news, related to education and children's rights in emergency situations, to send their contributions to eird@eird.org

Since this will be a four-page newsletter, brief contributions, that include contact information, are encouraged and appreciated.

Content:

- Regional meeting on education
- Outcome
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Regional meeting on Education

On June 14-16, 2006, a meeting titled "Identifying collaboration tools and mechanisms for the inclusion of disaster risk reduction management into the education sector in Latin America" was held in Panama City. The event was organized by the ISDR Regional Unit and UNICEF, and gathered experts in education and risk management from various organizations such as the OAS, Save the Children, Plan International, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red



Photo: J. Jenkins PAF/OWHO



Crescent Societies, CEPREDENAC, CRID, UNESCO, PREDECAN, ITDG, and CECC, as well as different Ministries of Education from countries in the region. The primary goal of this gathering was to identify concrete actions in Latin America, including products, cooperation tools and modalities, to advance the integration of disaster risk management into the education sector, with an emphasis on primary teaching, in order to ensure that the right of children to live in a safe environment is observed, and guarantee them access to education in emergency situations.

The following were the specific goals set at the meeting:

- Strengthen a diagnostic assessment of disaster risk management education in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Determine the minimum acceptable standards for the content and methodologies, to be included in national disaster risk management programs, carried out by the Ministries of Education in the region.
- Define the core components that define schools as being “safe”.
- Facilitate coordination and cooperation among the different sectors involved in risk management and education.
- Identify new institutional support strategies
- Disseminate the 2006-2007 World Disaster Reduction Campaign titled, “Disaster risk reduction begins at school.”

Outcome

During the three-day meeting, experts from the aforementioned organizations, discussed four different issues:

1. A diagnostic assessment of risk and disaster education in Latin America

Participants discussed the diagnostic assessment of risk and disaster education in Latin America and the Caribbean, carried out in 2004 by the ISDR. It was determined that, while this analysis provides important information on the current situation of risk and disaster

education, it is necessary to restructure it by chapters, and address both the progress made by, and the hindrances that exist in, each country included in this study. It was also determined that countries of the English-speaking Caribbean should be included in the diagnostic assessment.

In addition, at the workshop, participants prepared a guide that lists aspects that should be included in the diagnostic assessment, as well as the steps needed to complement, validate and publish it, once it is complete.

One of the most important contributions was the information provided by PREDECAN, on another diagnostic assessment, carried out in the South American subregion, as well as a number of documents developed by other agencies on the same topic.

2. Minimum aspects to be considered for the incorporation of risk management into primary school curricula

Based on the analysis of various curricular proposals that are currently being developed in the region, it was determined that it is necessary to strengthen the participation of Ministries and Secretariats of Education in risk management national platforms. Another important recommendation highlighted the need to create strategic alliances and networks with children, youth, communities, development sectors, associations, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and the media, among others, to advance risk management at local and regional levels, and to incorporate risk management into the planning and implementation of institutional educational projects.

It was determined that the academic, infrastructure and operational aspects of risk reduction must be enhanced, in order to achieve the effective incorporation of this topic into primary education curricula.

3. A dissemination strategy for the World Campaign “Disaster risk reduction begins at school”

After reviewing the biennial World Campaign titled, “Disaster risk reduction begins at school”, that the UN/ISDR and its partners launched on June 15, 2006, at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris France, which aims to inform and mobilize governments, communities



and individuals to ensure that disaster risk reduction is fully integrated into school curricula in at risk countries, and that school buildings are built in such a way that they can withstand natural hazards, it was considered necessary to design a strategy for disseminating the Campaign and raising awareness in the region. With this in mind, four different target groups were identified, and a number of awareness activities were listed per group. In addition, a number of strategies were proposed in order to get children and the educational community involved in the World Campaign, including a drawing and painting contest based on the main theme of the Campaign, a video that captures the experiences of children from the region, showing how they have coped with disaster situations, and how their actions have helped their communities prevent and/or respond to disasters; and the creation of a poster to disseminate the goals of the Campaign.

At the meeting, a group composed of different organizations was created, and will serve as a strategic ally to disseminate and raise awareness of the topics included in the World Campaign.

4. Safe schools. Schools as shelters

After a long discussion with various experts on whether

or not it is appropriate that schools serve as shelters, as well as some considerations regarding the right to continuous education and basic services, participants prepared a list of both advantages and disadvantages of using schools for this purpose. It was pointed out that, if an educational center is to be used as a refuge, minimum criteria should be established to determine whether or not schools are safe to serve as shelters. A number of recommendations were made so that the minimum acceptable requirements are put in place, should a school need to be used for this purpose.

Furthermore, participants suggested that an analysis of the different educational materials, that exist in the region, on the topic of risk management, is carried out, so that a basic toolkit is developed and made available to all schools. The toolkit should contain awareness, training and assessment materials, so that these are used based on the specific needs of each educational center.

Proposed activities

After conducting an exercise to prioritize the activities proposed by each of the work groups, it was determined that the main activities to be carried out first will be:

a) Complete the Diagnostic Assessment on Risk Management

To date, information has been gathered on other diagnostic assessments conducted in the region, and the terms of reference for complementing and validating the Diagnostic Assessment on Risk Management are currently being prepared. In addition, a strategy is being developed, in order to put a concrete action plan in place, so that the diagnostic assessment is finalized.

b) Hold a workshop to strengthen the participation of Ministries of Education and related networks in national platforms, and to incorporate risk management into the planning and implementation of institutional school plans.

Initial communication has been established with representatives of some Ministries of Education in the region, with the purpose of including this activity in their agendas for the first quarter of 2007.

c) Implement the current campaign:
Prevention also begins at school, focusing on awareness raising.

After the meeting, efforts have been made to work on some of the products proposed for the campaign. In this context, UNICEF and Plan International have developed the basis for the drawing and painting content, and it is expected

that the announcement will be made in October 2006. Furthermore, the terms of reference for making the video of children's experiences is being prepared, and the Campaign's promotional poster has already been designed.

d) **Basic Guide: Safe Schools in Safe Territories**

Given the importance and the discussions that this topic generated, it was considered necessary to disseminate the acceptable minimum criteria for schools to be used as shelters, and for them to be considered safe in general. A number of strategies are currently underway for the dissemination of these criteria.

News

Since the meeting, a contact group has been working on education-related issues. For instance, it participated in reviewing the rules of the drawing and painting contest, and provided feedback on the different actions that various organizations are currently carrying out.

Organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, the OAS, Save the Children, CEDIRE, the IFRC, CRID, Plan International, PREDECAN, SINAPROC, ITDG, and CECC have all strengthened their support to disseminate, and participate in, the activities proposed by the Campaign. These organizations are currently carrying out a number of activities that will contribute to achievement of the goals set forth by the Campaign.



Foto: Plan República Dominicana - Ricardo Piantini