



What can be done?

Governments

All governments should commit to teacher training and curriculum development to support large-scale teaching of disaster risk reduction.

Youth and children in many countries benefit from a wide variety of different treatments of natural hazards, disaster preparedness and prevention. These practices are highly varied in approach, intensity and quality but it is probable that half the nations in the world have some form of teaching about natural hazards and safety in some of their school. In some cases, educational policy and supply of teaching materials are decentralized to the sub-national level. The challenge is to build on these practices, promote them in neighboring schools and to encourage such teaching in nations where it is rare or absent.

All governments should review the safety of their schools and develop a comprehensive policy toward school safety by taking all locally relevant hazards into account and using location of schools, maintenance of buildings, design and construction methods as risk reduction tools.

Low cost, effective technology exists for strengthening and for building new, safe schools at little additional cost. While earthquake hazard to schools has received some attention, very little has focused on other hazards. These include meteorological phenomena such as high wind, storm surge, tornado, lightning strike, wild fire and flood. Other geophysical phenomena also threaten schools: landslide, mudslides, and avalanches, effects of volcanic eruptions and later lava flow, and tsunami.

UN & other international organizations

The UN and other international organizations can work with professionals, educators, communities, children and youth to ***develop a short list of “quick win” actions that can rapidly increase the safety of schools and raise risk awareness among all those concerned with schools.***

“Quick wins” are actions in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are almost certain to bring big benefits quickly. The Millennium Project’s list already includes ending user fees in primary schools and expansion of school meal programmes in support of UNESCO’s “Education for All” initiatives, as well as actions to support other MDGs including free mass distribution of malaria bed-nets and massive replenishment of soil nutrients.

The UN and other International Organizations can ***dynamize coalitions and partnerships, facilitate the creation of knowledge networks including South-South exchange, build capacity and guide others to existing resources for training.***

Donors

Donors can ***link these issues to all MDGs not just the education MDG.*** Previously some thought of disaster risk reduction as a separate agenda that would siphon resources away from the core mission of development. Now the two are seen as one. Similarly, there are many potential synergies among education, disaster reduction, and the other MDGs. These, in turn, link to more integral strategies such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). If the school becomes a centre from which emanates into community methods for participatory risk assessment. A community mobilized in this way is more likely to find local solutions to other MDG related development problems.

Donors should ***pick a dozen “fast track” countries*** that have considerable numbers of schools in dangerous locations or otherwise at risk and show ***the potential for rapid scaling up of school protection***. These countries should receive a large increase of assistance to push such programmes forward.

In Highly Indebted Poor Countries that have many schools at risk and do not show “fast track” potential, ***assistance is also required, but perhaps could be combined with “debt for safety” swapping in order to stretch donor country resources***.

The private sector

Included in the private sector are the ***many private schools in the world***. Where they are parts of national or even international networks and associations – such as the Montessori schools, schools accredited by the International Baccalaureate Organization, as well faith based schools (e.g. Aga Khan schools, Catholic schools, Yeshivas) their ***apex organizations can provide guidance and resources so that their students also study safety and their schools are also safe***. In some cases, ***private schools can twin*** with public sector schools, helping them achieve standards of structural safety perhaps greater than that mandated by national standards and enriching their curricula and teaching resources (libraries, computer or internet access, etc).

Professional organizations involved with schools and building ***should work with Governments to establish and enforce strict building codes of conduct so that high standards are met in school construction***.

A new culture of respect for building codes of conduct within professional bodies involved with building schools should be established.

Educators and other professionals

Professionals are working hard to enrich education with knowledge important to sustainable human development, peace, justice, and safety. Nevertheless, there are ways that their efforts can ***focus more clearly on natural hazards without detracting from the work they do in other important areas***. Considering the loss of life, injury, and disruption of education and normal child and adolescent development caused by natural hazards, one would think that more professionals would seek out more direct and rapid ways of communicating with parents, policy makers, community leaders, and the children and youth themselves. Professionals such as educators, researchers, engineers, and journalists might be the first point of contact.

Communities and schools

Schools can start right now with the addition of some teaching about safety and natural hazards. It is as easy as taking an hour a week to lead a class out the door and to begin to look with a critical eye at the geographical surroundings of the school building and compound. Paper and pencil are all that is required for teachers and students to begin to map these possible hazards. Even where there are large classes, few resources, or the pressure to “teach to exams,” an hour a week spent in this way can repay enormously in terms of lives saved and the risk awareness of the future generation.

Parents

Parents who have lost children in school during disasters can join together as a ***community based organization*** to do whatever they can to prevent other parents from feeling the pain and grief they know so well. In a similar way, just as one example, parents of children who have suffered sudden heart attacks in the UK have formed a group to work on this issue.

Parent Teacher Associations exist in various forms in many countries. These can become the forum for discussions of what their children and youth learn about safety and hazards and how schools can be protected.