EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES (EiE) COMMUNITY

The Role of Education in Disaster Prevention

Monthly Call | 15 October, 2024

About the Education in Emergencies (EiE) Community Calls

Staff, alumni and fellows from across the Teach For All network come together regularly to share ideas, solutions and resources to support students and communities impacted by emergency situations. If you'd like to become a Member of the EiE Community and receive invites for future calls, please complete this short form!

Community resources

- Insights from the last EiE Community call
- Register for the next EiE Community call
- Join the EiE Facebook Community

Key insights from this call (Watch call recording here)



WHAT WE MEAN BY 'DRR'

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- Framing is Key
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KNOWING AND REDUCING OUR DANGERS

- Knowing our Dangers
- Student Leadership
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PREPARING TO RESPOND & EDUCATION CONTINUITY

- Response Skills and Provisions
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
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Insights on what we mean by 'DRR'

Scale of the Issue

With the increasing severity and scale of disasters impacting children around the world, emergency responses are insufficient - we have to get ahead of the problems. Disaster Risk Reduction ('DRR') is aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risks and managing residual risks, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development. As such, there is **no such thing as a 'natural disaster'** - there is so much mankind can do to prevent disasters and reduce the impact of hazards. Such crises emerge because countries fail to act on early warnings, eliminate risk and invest in disaster prevention.

To get a sense of the scale of how disasters impact education, this handful of **statistics** help put it into context for us. One billion children live in extremely high-risk countries which are vulnerable to climate change. 140 million people will be displaced by 2050 due to the worsening impacts of climate change. Between 2015

and 2019 there were more than 11,000 reported attacks on education or military use of school, harming more than 22,000 students and educators in at least 93 countries. Low-income countries lost on average 18 days of school instruction per year due to climate-related school closures.

Framing is Key

As we all know, adults are the **duty bearers** for fulfilling child rights. So if teachers are to protect their students during disasters, it's important for **teachers to 'put their own mask on first'**. As frontline responders, teachers should first look at their own preparedness plans, which can include writing a simple 'Family Safety Plan' assessing the risks they face, planning on how to reduce and mitigate these dangers, and how they would respond in the face of them.

In order to see a systemic shift in how to protect students from disasters, the **socio-ecological model** is critical. Through this child-rights approach, the child remains at the centre, and it reminds us that they grow up within their household and family. As the child starts to go to school, teachers play a big role in their lives. These schools and teachers are located within communities, and the broader society. And all this is situated within a specific time and culture that the child lives in.

Another framework that helps accelerate DRR efforts is the **collective impact approach**, which is a proven way of tackling complex 'wicked' problems. The components of this approach include getting all the various stakeholders on board and building consensus around a common agenda for change, in order to turn something into a social movement. Also, agreeing on a shared vision and how to measure results of change, and engaging in mutually reinforcing activities. All of this is facilitated by open and continuous communication, and a 'backbone' coordination organization.

5 Hazards that Schools Face

The hazards that schools face across the world can generally be divided into five buckets. Firstly, schools face risks from **natural hazards or climate change**, which includes instances such as earthquakes, flooding, cyclones and environmental degradation. Secondly, schools can be impacted by **technological hazards**, which are man-made risks. For example, if a school is located close to a factory and is impacted by toxic waste. Thirdly, there are **biological and health hazards**, which can include pandemics such as COVID-19 or ebola, or issues such as malaria. The fourth set of risks are related to **conflict and violence**, which also includes violence inside schools, such as bullying or sexual and gender-based violence. The fifth type of hazards are **everyday dangers or threats**. For example, when a school is located close to a main road and students are impacted by road traffic accidents. Or there are wild animals that often come through the school compound.

4 Impacts on Education

The impacts that disasters have on education can broadly be divided into four themes. Firstly, **physical impacts on students and teachers** which includes death or injuries inside schools. Between 2000 and 2020 there were 35,000 child fatalities inside schools across 16 events that impacted schools (not including pandemics). And there are countless road traffic accidents that impact students on their way to or from schools. Secondly, **physical impacts on school facilities** where school buildings are not appropriate or resilient to local hazards. So far this century more than 30,000 schools have been totally destroyed and more than 50,000 schools have been significantly damaged. Thirdly, **educational impacts on students**. Since 2020, 62

million crisis-affected children in 27 countries have had their education disrupted by climate shocks. Students across the world continue to miss out on schooling, less days of learning, canceled exams, etc. Between January 2022 and June 2024, an estimated 404 million students faced school closures due to extreme weather events. This was the result of at least 81 countries shutting down schools temporarily due to floods, storms, and heatwaves. When it comes to droughts, today almost 160 million children are exposed to severe and prolonged droughts. By 2040, it is estimated that one in four children will be living in areas with extreme water shortages, having significant impacts on their ability to go to school or focus on learning. And lastly, there are **psychosocial impacts on students and teachers** caught up in disasters. The damage and disruption caused by crises can be overwhelming and stressful for students, impacting their mental health and wellbeing. It's important to remember that not all children respond in the same ways - some can react right away, others may show signs of difficulty much later, and some might have more severe, longer-lasting reactions.

Insights on knowing and reducing our dangers

Knowing our Dangers

Teachers can help their students learn about the disaster and climate risks they face, through a few simple strategies. For example, community-mapping and **school-mapping**. Take your students on a walk throughout the school grounds and throughout the neighborhood, looking around and finding visible hazards. For example, there is no fence around school and wild animals keep getting in and injuring students. For example, there are road traffic accidents in a certain spot on the way to and from school.

A **'Hazard Hunt Checklist'** is another participatory activity that teachers can do with teams of students, using just a checklist on a clipboard. They walk throughout the school premises and assess what risks there might be (in relation to local/common disasters). For example, any issues with securing furniture or large equipment if in an earthquake-prone area, or clear exit route or textbooks up high on shelves if in a flood-prone area. Similarly students and teachers can use a 'School Maintenance Checklist'.

Student Leadership

Children are the most vulnerable population during and after any disaster - but children are more than victims of disasters. **Students have an important leadership role to play in reducing risk**, by collaborating with governments, schools and communities, and sharing their critical skills, individual experiences and ideas for solutions. Additionally, climate change is firmly in the minds of young people around the world, who feel compelled to do something.

There are various ways that teachers can empower students to understand and act on the risks they face. For example, through the establishment of Child Clubs, Student Councils/Student Parliaments, or other **student-led platforms** that exist in schools, children can lead initiatives related to DRR. This could look like raising awareness of rubbish around the school, or the dangers of water not flowing properly through the community. They could find ways to plant more trees around the school premises, knowing the importance of shade and reducing temperatures. They can design posters or radio campaigns to promote key messages on the dangers faced in school. This case study explores how although Cuba is at risk of hurricanes and flooding, there was incomplete knowledge about DRR in communities. So DRR

was not only incorporated into the national curriculum, but **children were given leadership roles** in community DRR programmes in order to elevate the roles of children and educate communities in DRR.

Reducing our Dangers

There are many actions that can be taken to **reduce schools' exposure to risks**. Such strategies can be shared across the School Management Committee, parents and community members, to foster collective leadership in driving forward the solutions. For example, regular school maintenance from water and pest damage; repairing any damaged school walls, fences, rooves, ceilings, or windows; netting or cordons around any school construction; removal of any debris; fitting classroom doors to open outwards; creating emergency exits (with exit route signs); flood-proofing the school; moving classroom furniture to prevent it from moving/falling and blocking exits or injuring students; securing school water tanks, fans, lamps, bookshelves or other heavy equipment; preparing fire suppression materials (e.g. buckets with sand); an early warning systems (e.g. school gong, alarm bell, megaphone or loudspeaker); and improving road safety (e.g. creating a pedestrian crossing, installing speed bumps or mirrors, creating danger and safety signage).

When it comes to water, there are a number of actions that could be taken to reduce **water-related dangers**, such as: rainfall/water level monitoring; water supply creation (e.g. pipes, boreholes, storage tanks, rainwater harvesting or recycling grey water); protecting the water supply from contamination (e.g. covers, quality testing, filters); ensuring there is water drainage in the school (e.g. through channel and culvert construction, cleaning drains and clearing gutters); and constructing school handwashing and sanitation facilities.

Behaviour Change and Conservation

There are a number of **conservation actions** that schools can take to contribute to reducing resources and waste. For example, recycling solid waste; using cleaner energy sources in schools (e.g. solar or low-emission cookstoves in school canteens); using natural light during the day and energy-saving lightbulbs after dark; unplugging electronics when not in use to save electricity; setting cooling temperatures to 26'C or warmer; cutting down on paper usage in the school; buying school supplies locally; encouraging students and teachers to walk, cycle or ride-share to get to school in order to reduce fuel consumption.

When it comes to the **outdoor school environment**, there are various conservation strategies that teachers and students can lead on, including: composting school waste; planting trees (useful for erosion control, flood prevention, creation of shade); and cultivating a school garden or tree nursery.

Schools can also lead the way in terms of **DRR behaviour change**, through building the knowledge, mindsets and skills for: handwashing and hygiene; evacuation Standard Operating Procedures (see section below) and safety drills; first aid for injury response; social coherence, bullying and violence prevention; use of seat belts and bicycle helmets and the use of flotation devices in flood-prone areas.

Insights on preparing to respond and education continuity

Response Skills and Provisions

Teachers can help their students **learn skills for the most-likely disasters and emergencies that they face.** For example, communities at risk of wild fires or fires close to their school compound can have their students practice how to use a fire extinguisher, fire blanket, bucket of sand and how to escape from smoke. Teachers

can also prepare provisions or kits for the most common risks they face - including a 'Go Bag' or 'Grab Bag' which the teacher can take out with them if a school evacuation happens. In the kit there could be a whistle, the names of the students, instructions on how to reunify each student with their nominated family member, activities to keep students engaged and calm during the incident, etc. Teachers can also get themselves ready on how to organise for a disaster response - for example, how to divide up roles and responsibilities when the time comes. More strategies and guidance can be found from page 21 in Save the Children's Participatory School Disaster Management Toolkit.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

To ensure schools, teachers and students are prepared to respond during an emergency, there are a number of key Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that save lives and reduce risks. Firstly, the purpose of a **building evacuations** is to protect students and staff in case of fire or other hazard. There are 4 building evacuation rules that should be followed: *Do not talk* (so you can hear the teacher); *Do not run* (so you do not get hurt); *Do not push* (so no one else gets hurt); *Do not go back* (so you stay safe). The building evacuation SOP can be found here on page 136.

Secondly, teachers and students might need to **assemble and shelter outside,** for example away from the school building if there's a fire or an earthquake. The purpose of which is to protect students and staff and provide for their comfort until the all clear is given to return to class, or until everyone can be safely reunified with their families. Teachers should know where their school's outside assembly area is (and the back-up option incase the normal one is not safe), and know where to assemble their class group. The assemble and shelter outside SOP can be found here on page 137.

Thirdly, teachers may need to **evacuate their class to a safe haven** in case of hazards in the school environment (e.g. if near a coastline and there is a tsunami warning). Teachers should know where their safe haven is (and the back-up option incase the normal one is not safe), and take any supplies that might be needed for the class whilst there. Students should use a buddy system, stay together, and move quickly and quietly. The evacuate to a safe haven SOP can be found here on page 138.

Fourthly, it might be necessary to **shelter-in-place indoors** in order to protect students and staff when there are dangers outside of school. For example, severe weather or flooding, a bee swarm, or an environmental hazard such as a toxic chemical release. Teachers should: close doors and windows, as appropriate; supervise students indoors with quiet activities, recreation, eating and sleeping; and create private space for a makeshift toilet, using a bucket or plastic bags. The shelter-in-place SOP can be found here on page 139.

The fifth SOP is for **lockdowns**, which aim to protect students and staff by keeping any threat outside. This could include, for example, a wild animal on the loose, a crime occurring in the neighbourhood, or a violent intruder. Students should stay silent and follow teacher instructions, help to block school doors with furniture, hide behind furniture, away from windows and doors, staying out of sight. If teachers or students have cellphones, these should be set to silent. The lockdown SOP can be found here on page 140.

The final SOP is for **safe family reunification**, to ensure that students and their families are safely reunited in case of emergency or disaster. Students under the age of 18 should only be permitted to leave the school (or the safe haven) in the company

of a parent/guardian or a pre-designated adult approved in advance by their parent/guardian. The safe family reunification SOP can be found here on page 141.

Practicing Drills

Schools and teachers can also practice hazard-specific safety drills with their students, according to what risks they are exposed to in their local area. For example, **fire safety rules** on how to react to a fire alarm, how to extinguish a small fire, how to react when caught in smoke, what to do when trapped in a room, and if you are on fire. More details on page 142.

Drills can also be held for **earthquakes** ('drop, cover, hold on') and what to do during an aftershock (page 143), **tsunamis, floods and storms** (page 144), **lightning** ('squat, balance on your toes, touch your heels together, cover your ears'), **hazardous materials** (page 146), and more.

Planning for Education Continuity

Following a disaster it's important for schools and teachers to plan for education continuity, including alternative locations or temporary learning facilities, flexible school calendars, and alternative modes of instruction. Each year thousands of schools are forced to close due to hazards - some school authorities are able to adjust school holidays, build in extra school days to the year calendar, add make-up classes on some weekend days, or extend the length of the school day to address learning loss. If students don't have the opportunity to **make up student/teacher contact hours**, significant disparities in learning outcomes can be expected.

There are also other approaches, called '**alternative modes of instruction**' that can be considered. Some of these include; self-learning kits for independent study and homework; peer-to-peer education or learning circles; accelerated (or condensed) learning programs; radio-based lessons; tablet-based, or computer-based instruction; tented classrooms; tree-shade schools; Whats-App lessons; etc. Teachers can also work with the local community to find alternative buildings for use as public shelters, so that their school isn't used as a shelter for disaster-displaced families to live in.

When children and teachers are **coping with a variety of losses**, it's important to make time for activities that help them adjust to their abnormal circumstances, strengthen the attachments in their lives, build resilience and empower them. Self-directed and guided play activities, physical exercise, quiet time, rest, fun, music, opportunities for expression of grief and hope, learning about disaster risk reduction, and age-appropriate participation in recovery activities are all important to resilience and recovery, and will help support long-term educational achievement.

More strategies can be found on pages 40 - 44 here.

Key Resources

1. Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES)
2. Child-Centred Risk Reduction and Resilience – Multilingual Glossary
3. Template for School Emergency Drills and Exercises: Quality checklist and evaluation forms
4. Template for School Maintenance Checklist

5. Participatory School Safety Management Toolkit
6. 'Safe Schools' teacher professional development modules
7. DRR and Resilience in Schools manual (Zimbabwe)

Attendees dialed in from:

Teach For Afghanistan, Teach For America, Teach For Bangladesh, Ensina Brasil, Enseña por Colombia, Enseña Ecuador, Teach For Ethiopia, Teach For India, Teach For Italy, Teach For Lebanon, Enseña por México, Teach For Nigeria, Teach For Pakistan, Empieza Por Educar, Teach For Uganda and Teach First!