Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction & Resilience in the Education Sector

Child-Centred Risk Reduction Research-into-Action Brief:

Developing and Implementing Comprehensive School Safety Policy

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Statement of purpose

The Research-into-Action Brief series provides concise summaries of academic and grey literature on a range of topics for practitioners working in the fields of child-centred risk reduction (CCRR), climate change adaptation, and school safety. This purpose of this brief is to provide a concise review of research findings for practitioners on the policy development process and its application to school safety.

Find the full Research-into-Action Brief series at:

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Abstract

Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) has become an important policy design framework to help reduce disaster impacts in the education sector, and practitioners have a crucial role to play. Here, we review how policies are developed and the roles practitioners can have in developing and implementing policies. We then discuss how the CSS Framework was developed through both top-down and participatory policy development processes, and highlight how practitioners can be involved in implementing, monitoring and improving the CSS Framework.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Community	A group of diverse people who are linked by social ties and engage in joint action in a particular place or setting.
	Shared rules that evolve out of common practices and the 'way things are done' within communities.
Policy	The process of defining and creating desirable community changes.
Policy Compliance	Individuals and groups conforming to policy goals out of internal motivation or self-interest, rather than a fear of punishment.
Policy Enforcement	Ensuring policies are followed by monitoring behaviour and punishing undesirable behaviour through fines, sanctions or other negative actions.
	Policies purposefully designed by external policymakers seeking to achieve a specific goal.
Participatory Policy Development	Policies developed through participatory processes that draw out a community's vision.

Introduction

Every community struggles with how to deal with unintended risk. Within the education sector, these unintended risks have profound impacts. Decisions made about where schools are built, and how they are constructed and maintained, have resulted in children dying and being injured in collapsed schools. Oversights, such as lack of fire suppression equipment, have resulted in injuries to students and staff. Not planning in advance about how to protect equipment and supplies from rising water has led to repeated destruction of these assets in annual flooding. Many small actions and

omissions combine in ways that risk student safety and educational continuity.

Risks to children's rights to safety, survival, and education are beginning to be addressed in policies. The policy process takes many forms across different communities, but there are common challenges and successes. Recent research highlights the important role practitioners have as facilitators and mediators in realising policy goals. A fuller understanding of the policy-making process will enable practitioners to take on more effective roles in policies that seek to protect children's rights.

Policy development and implementation

Policy is the process of defining and creating desirable community change. At a basic level, policymaking process lays out a specific vision of what should exist at local, regional, and national scales (Simon, 1988). It establishes specific goals that will lead to this vision and creates programs or services (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000; Johnson, 2008; Junginger, 2014). Some policy evolves out of common practices, traditions, and the 'way things are done' within communities. This is called emergent policy and may not be associated with written documents. In contrast, 'top-down' policy is generally made by policymakers who define a goal of the 'way it ought to be' and then write policies, laws, or memoranda of understanding that direct behaviour to achieve this goal. While different approaches, emergent 'demand' often leads to top-down policy formulation.

"Policy is the process of defining and creating desirable community change…"

Policy implementation is the process of taking the policy vision and making it a reality. During the implementation of a top-down policy, the policy's vision of 'what should exist' meets with a community's emergent policies that collectively dictate 'the way things are.'

Practitioners who implement policy are advocates and mediators between the top-down policy's vision and the emergent policies of the community. They serve as guides, helping the community move towards the policy's vision in ways that respect and align with their emergent policies. Practitioners must regularly compare the vision of what should exist and what does exist, asking questions as shown in Figure 1.

Once created, public policy is most often stable. It has long intervals of only incremental change, if any at all. However, this stability may be 'punctuated' by periods of rapid, large-scale changes when policymakers, after ignoring an issue, suddenly focus on an issue. These periods of rapid change often occur when advocates converge as broad coalitions and shift the way an issue is understood (Baumgartner, Jones & Mortensen, 2014).

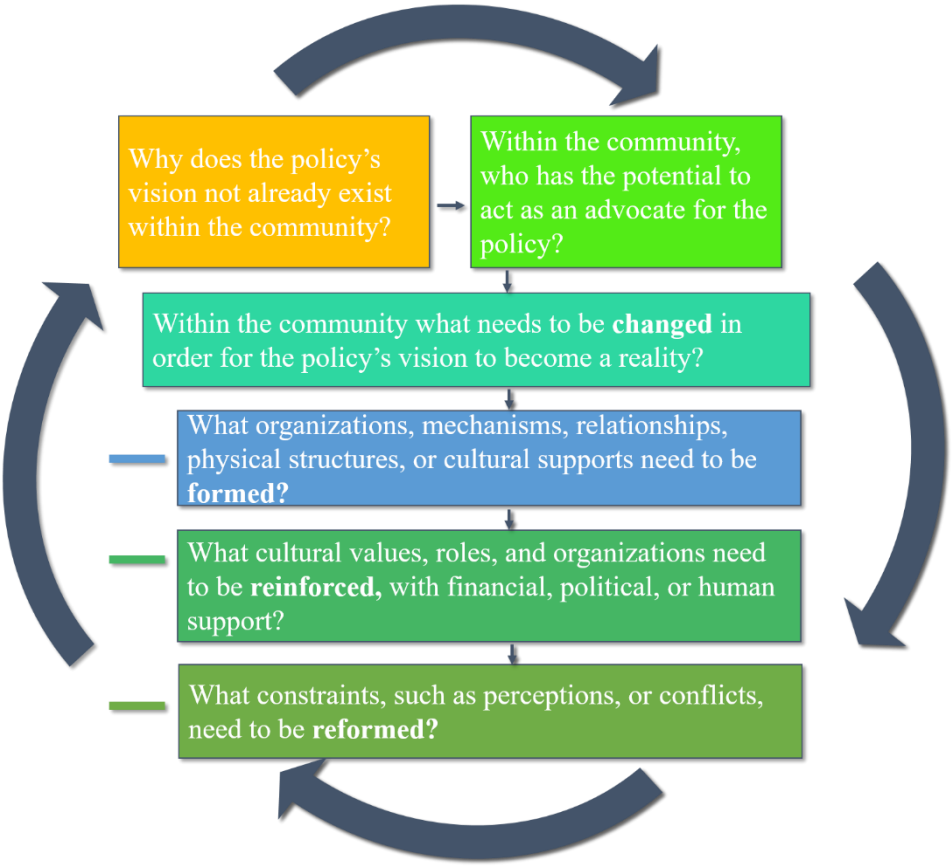

Figure 1. Policy Implementation Framework, inspired by the work of (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000; Holland, 2014; Snowden & Boone, 2007).

Successful policy implementation

Communities tend to change only when a broad majority deem it necessary and tend to resist change when they perceive change as being imposed on them from the outside. Communities values and practices also naturally change over time. When a policy's vision is quite different from emergent practices in communities, policy implementation can be particularly challenging. Practitioners can help implement policies through public awareness and education, as well as acknowledging and rewarding the desired behaviour. Without sufficient public support policies that mandate behaviour are often ineffective (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Wong, Rawson & Owens, 2011). In these circumstances, practitioners are most successful when focusing on minor changes and gradually progressing towards the policy's vision (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000; Boulton, 2010; Johnson, 2008; Snowden & Boone, 2007).

Yet, even as desired behaviour becomes accepted in a community, not all people will comply. Policy enforcement brings along those who lag behind by monitoring behaviour and imposing fines or penalties on those who do not engage in the desired behaviour.

Because communities are complex, policies that allow for gradual, long-term change, community participation, and reflection are most successful (Christiansen & Bunt, 2014; Loorbach, 2010; Junginer, 2014). Reflection ensures that the information and experiences from implementing the policy flow back and shape adjustments in policy implementation or even in policy redesign (Johnson, 2008).

The role of practitioners

Policy development can occur through both top-down processes and participatory processes. In top-down policy development, policymakers external to the community, such as governments or NGOs, form a vision and identify strategies for encouraging the desired civic behaviour (Hartley, 2005; Loorbach, 2010). Participatory policy development more closely mirrors how emergent policy forms. Stakeholders work together to develop policy goals and strategies appropriate for their community. This process better respects the community's ability to make its own decisions and can help prevent the community from becoming dependent on external assistance (Binder, De Michelis, Ehn, Linde, & Wagner, 2011; Christiansen & Bunt, 2014; Gaillard, 2010; Junginger, 2014; Manzini, 2015). While both approaches are widely used, many well-intentioned top-down policies have failed when they inadequately account for local culture. As a result, many policymakers have shifted toward a participatory process. Practitioners play an influential role in advocating for both types of policy development (see Figure 2).

	Top-down Policy Development	Participatory Policy Development
Role of Practitioners	• Provide information regarding the nature of the problem and possible solutions • Encourage innovation during implementation (Junginer, 2014; Wheatley, 2006) • Evaluate the policy in light of community practice and provide feedback to policymakers • Facilitate community representation at regional, global and international forums	• Facilitate community in determining vision • Bring expertise and professional networks • Mediate between competing groups • Empower marginalized voices
	• Facilitate learning between communities, regions, and nations developing policy through and with communities (e.g. web portals, regional and global events, shared campaigns, alliances, and case study documentation)	

Figure 2. Roles of Practitioners in Policy Development

Case Study: Developing the Comprehensive School Safety Policy Framework

The CSS Framework grew out of a process of top-down visioning and bottom-up advocacy. It emerged out of a broader global shift away from disaster response and towards disaster risk reduction (DRR) at the beginning of the 21st century. This approach to reducing hazard exposure and social vulnerability before a disaster was facilitated by the establishment of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005 (UNISDR, 2005). Schools were an early focus of the new DRR agenda. A 2006 global assessment showed that disasters not only injured and killed students and teachers, but disrupted education and destroyed school infrastructure (Wisner, 2006). In response, the UNISDR established an interagency advocacy group with major UN agencies and International NGOs to advocate for risk reduction education. The group became known as the 'UNISDR Thematic Platform for Knowledge and Education' (TPKE).

Advocates and education sector leaders also informed and promoted a vision of safe schools in a series of meetings, dialogues, and publications at the global level (Figure 3). Their collective vision evolved through documents such as the Ahmedabad Action Agenda for School Safety (2007) and Disaster Prevention Guidance for Education Sector Decision-makers (Petal, 2008), as well as through scholarly research (Wisner, 2006; Peek, 2008).

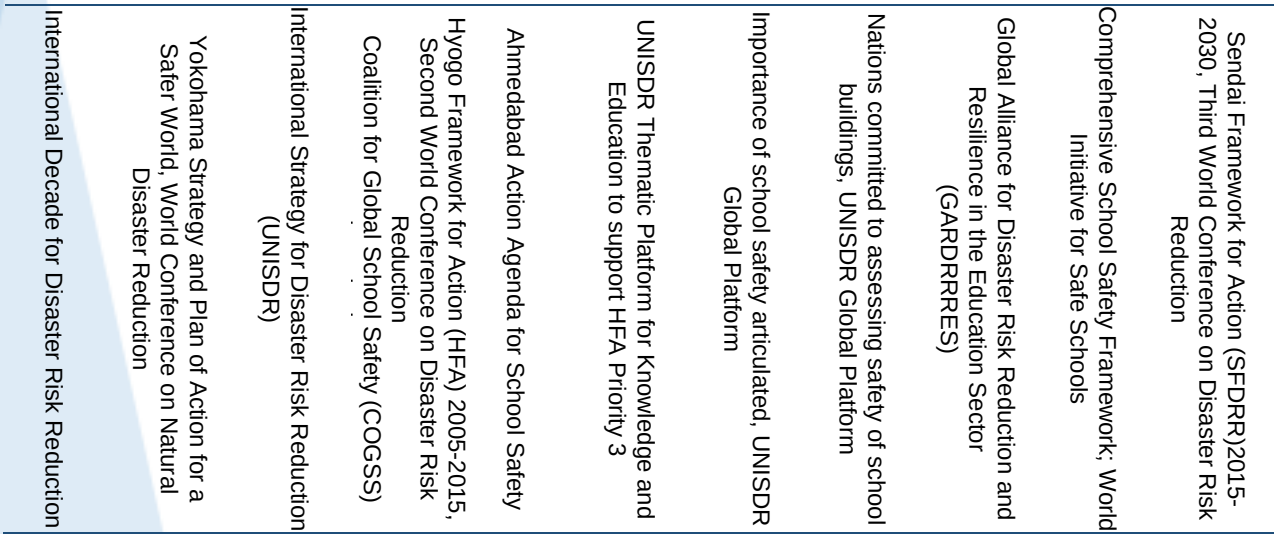

Figure 3. Global Actions related to Disaster Risk Reduction and Comprehensive School Safety

The top-down, global statements for school safety mirrored activism and emergent policies in communities. The earliest roots of public policy for school safety began after the 1933 Long Beach earthquake. This disaster forced students to study in tents for three years. The state of California passed the Field Act, which required higher building standards and construction oversight for schools. Subsequent disasters with devastating effects on the education sector — such as the 2001 Gujarat, 2005 Kashmir, and 2008 Sichuan earthquakes — motivated even broader

coalition building. Scientists and engineers, development practitioners, and parent-activists, built coalitions around the dangers of school collapse. Others broadened the conversation to include risk reduction education (Monk, 2004). Dozens of grass roots activists from across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and North America supported one another's advocacy efforts under the independent banner of the Coalition for Global School Safety.

By the start of 2010, these top-down and bottom-up efforts came together to form the CSS Framework. The Framework brought together visions for safer school facilities, school disaster management, and risk reduction and resilience education. Early forms of this concept were articulated in the work of NGOs in Nepal and India (AIDMI, 2007; Alam, 2007), and reflected in global dialogue shorty after (Petal, 2008). In 2010, a baseline study on school safety from disasters sparked critical dialogue with sixty practitioners and this led to increasingly detailed illustrations of the Framework (Bastidas & Petal, 2012; Petal & Green, 2010).

Separately, the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) developed minimum standards to ensure safe learning environments for children and adults in crisis situations. By the second edition, the standards addressed many areas of concern similar to the CSS Framework. These included building and maintaining safe learning facilities, training in disaster prevention and response, and incorporating formal and non-formal curricula in DRR into emergency and recovery contexts (INEE, 2010).

Bottom-up and top-down forces adjusted themselves around 'all-hazards' and 'child-centred' approaches to risk reduction in the education sector. The Children in a Changing Climate Coalition presented the first articulated CSS Framework to the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2012; later that year, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization endorsed it (see paragraph 180 of SEAMEO, 2012).

Top-down visioning and bottom-up advocacy continued to shape the CSS framework. Influenced by both their child-rights perspective and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), groups adjusted their vision of school safety to a more holistic one that engages with education sector actors. In 2013, the TPKE became known as the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES). GADRRRES represents a broad coalition of advocacy organisations. It further developed the CSS Framework to align with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted in 2015 (GADRRRES, 2017). This Framework is show in Figure 4.

The goals of the framework are to:

- Protect learners and education workers from death, injury and harm in schools;
- Plan for educational continuity in the face of all expected hazards and threats;
- Safeguard education sector investments; and
- Strengthen risk reduction and resilience education.

Opportunities for punctuated change:

Global shift to focusing on disaster risk reduction (rather than response)

Evidence of the devastating impacts of disasters on the education sector

Initial top-down policy documents:

Ahmedabad Action Agenda for School Safety

Disaster Prevention Guidance for Education Sector Decision-makers

Initial participatory and bottom-up efforts:

Coalition for Global School Safety

Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies

"As a common policy vision emerged… advocates realised the importance of monitoring progress…"

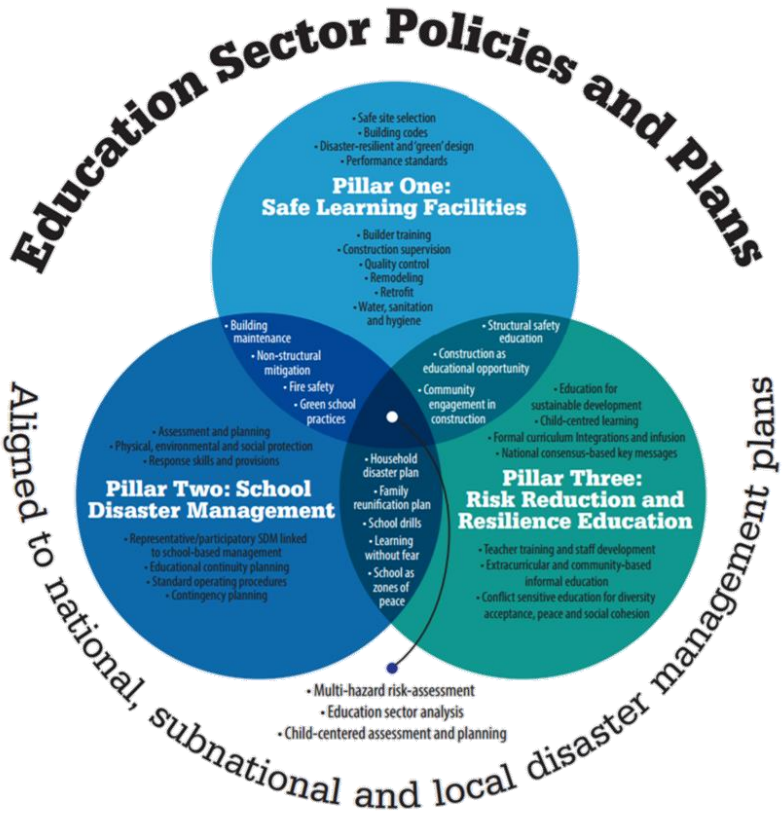

Figure 4. The Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) Framework.

In 2015, UNISDR and GADRRRES launched the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS) as a government-led global partnership for advancing national level actions on school safety. By the beginning of 2017, 42 countries had signed up as WISS Champion Countries.

As a common policy vision emerged through the CSS Framework, advocates realised the importance of monitoring progress. GADRRRES organisations developed CSS Targets and Indicators, by which progress against the CSS goals could be measured at the national and global level (GADRRRES, 2014). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations School Safety Initiative recommended that member states collect data on CSS targets and indicators, thereby initiating a reflective process of monitoring and adjustment.

Conclusions

Practitioners, researchers, and advocates have set a goal to reduce disaster impacts in the education sector, and the CSS Framework has emerged as an important policy design framework. Now efforts are shifting to setting global and country-level targets and developing indicators for monitoring progress. By gathering baseline data on existing school safety policies, practitioners can bridge the gap between research and practice. The information flow from communities and schools back to those designing and implementing policy shows vast promise. Such efforts can build a reflective policy process — a process where policy designers' better account for local practice and practitioners continuously

adjust implementation so that the outcomes better achieve the policy's vision.

Important lessons for practitioners

- **Build Demand**. Build broad and deep support for CSS policies by exposing communities and policymakers to CSS goals continuing to articulate current problems with school safety.
- **Frame Issues Effectively**. When experiencing indifference, or even hostility, to CSS policy change, develop new ways to frame the CSS goals and proposed policy in terms of the values most important to communities and policymakers.
- **Strengthen Advocacy**. Recognise the importance of external advocates, working together in coordination and cooperation, in supporting CSS policy change. Connect external advocates and interagency organisations that can support and advocate with governments.
- **Promote Participatory Processes**. In both top-down and participatory CSS policy development, facilitate broad stakeholder involvement and empower marginalised voices, such as teachers and youth to articulate goals, identify problems and innovate strategies.
- **Encourage Compliance, then Enforcement**. Support effective CSS policy implementation through a gradual process of community change. Where possible, entice policy compliance by appealing to stakeholder self-interest and rewarding desired behaviour. Use sanctions and fines to address actors who lag behind.
- **Mediate between Vision and Reality**. Frequently compare the goals of CSS with education sector practices at all levels, such as by regularly assessing CSS targets and indicators. When and where progress stalls, evaluate community practices at all levels and support policy revision that better account these practices.
- **Recognise Opportunities for Punctuated Change**. Understand that change in CSS policy may be incremental and slow, until opportunities for punctuated change, such as disasters. When these opportunities arise, be ready with robust advocacy coalitions and policy proposals.

Practitioners can:

- *Build demand*
- *Frame issues effectively*
- *Strengthen advocacy*
- *Promote participatory processes*
- *Encourage compliance, then enforcement*
- *Mediate between vision and reality*
- *Recognise opportunities for punctuated change*

Follow-up questions

1. Describe the difference between top-down and participatory policy development.

2. How does school safety policy tend to be formed in your community?

3. What aspects of school safety need to be achieved through encouraging compliance? What aspects are ready for policy enforcement?

4. Who are the stakeholders for comprehensive school safety in your community and how can you involve them in policy development and implementation?

Readings

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