

What to consider before you begin checklist

Stage 1: Prepare

Safety

What ability does the community already have to construct a safer school building?

Safer school construction requires technical knowledge and a skillset that may not be present in some communities. Creating connections between communities and appropriate experts builds trust needed in later stages.

What is the community's ability to understand safer construction messages?

Communities may be unfamiliar with hazards and safer school construction. While few people need to know the details, everyone benefits from understanding key concepts. Efforts to engage the community should focus on raising awareness in culturally accessible ways. Skits, cartoons, announcements, and other strategies may be useful in low literacy contexts. Care should be taken first to test communication approaches to avoid misinterpretation.

Building abilities

Will the project leave behind new knowledge, skills or technology? Will this have a long-term impact on safer construction and community resilience?

Risk communication alone is not enough to introduce safe construction practices into a community. Organisers must lay the groundwork for building these skills and encourage ongoing community involvement in Comprehensive School Safety. When school construction is over, knowledge remains in the form of skills and active school management committees.

What support will the community need to perform their role in the project?

Communities may not initially be capable of project management. If the project involves the community as a key partner or as the sole manager of the project, they need detailed training and tools. It is essential to identify methods for raising awareness, training, supervision, and management.

Society and culture

What is the broader environment in which safer school construction will function?

Good programming starts with good planning. A solid foundation for any safer schools program can include: conducting a diagnostic analysis of the hazards, the education sector, construction practices, and the people involved. Planning allows program managers to build on existing processes and strengthen a sustainable culture of safety within and beyond education.

Has the community established their priorities around education?

In impoverished communities, people are concerned about education. In many cases they are happy to get extra classrooms or school buildings, no matter how they are built. They may be worried that any additional costs for safer construction could prevent school construction altogether. Keeping these communities engaged during planning, and throughout construction can help them understand the value of safety and any options that are possible, even with little or no cost.

How does the community perceive hazards?

Communities naturally focus on disasters that happen frequently and need immediate action. During planning, risk-awareness activities should highlight less frequent but potentially more devastating hazards. This safety education needs to be coupled with effective, culturally appropriate risk-reduction strategies.