

Stage 2: Plan

What to consider before you begin checklist

Safety

Is the site safe from natural hazards? Will any hazards be addressed through design, construction and school emergency procedures? Will students be able to travel safely between home and school?

A hazard assessment is a crucial part of any safer school construction project. These assessments are best when they include all participants. A hazard assessment should draw on community knowledge of local hazards and external knowledge of regional, infrequent hazards and climate change. Communities can then identify and suggest solutions, for example dangers that happen when travelling to and from school, frequent environmental hazards, and conflict.

Do local builders use safer construction techniques?

Local construction practices may not include important hazard-resistant techniques, especially for infrequent or changing hazards. Even if hazard-resistant techniques were once common, these good practices can disappear if materials become harder to find, experienced builders leave, or government policies change. Communities may also start using new types of construction materials without incorporating hazard-resistant techniques.

What local materials will ensure safety and be cost-efficient and easy for communities to maintain after construction?

Cost, safety, and long-term maintenance should be considered when choosing materials. The lowest-cost material may be the best choice. However, if this material degrades quickly or require maintenance the community cannot do, the long-term cost may outweigh any immediate cost savings.

Building abilities

Does the community need support or training during the planning stage?

When school management committees take a lead role in project planning, they may need support or training. They may need help in decision-making processes, tracking resources, and successfully integrating local and external knowledge. Planning tools such as SWOT analysis (identifying community Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), criteria checklists, and hazard mapping can help.

What new knowledge and training is needed to begin hazard-resistant school construction?

Skilled and unskilled labourers need training in new construction techniques. They need to be provided with opportunities to practice these new techniques under close supervision. The greater the difference between current practice and the new technique, the more training and support they will need.

Sustainability

Is the proposed project possible? Can it be completed within the funding, time, and other resource constraints of the community and involved groups?

Planning must be a community-wide activity. The process should seek broad community input about needs, hazards, and local capacity, as well as solutions to challenges. Planning in this way helps ensure the project will reach completion. A community-wide planning process can also be complex, and raise competing priorities from different groups. Involving all people in planning ensures all voices are heard and that necessary compromise will not undermine the commitment to safety.