

Sound Practice No.5

Healthy Schools Program

Background

The concept of growing and living in a safe, secure and healthy environment is not always a condition that most of Ecuadorian families are aware of. Having a concept and creating a culture of integral safety is what this program is all about. Providing a comprehensive perspective of sound practices to avoid inner family violence, children abuse, malnutrition, environmental degradation and natural and man made hazards negative impacts, throughout the school years.

Program Design

The Healthy Schools Program success is based on a sustained capacity building program focused on training teachers through 120 hours of practical training which includes the design of an emergency plan for the school and the identification of different risks in and around the school. To provide some kind of incentives, an agreement between the municipality and the Secretary of Education allow those teachers who decide to enroll in the program to gain additional points that adds to promotion requirements. In addition, the curricula of different subjects such as Natural Sciences,, History and Geography for example, is revised as to introduce natural hazards and disaster impact in the appropriate units of study. Introducing a subject to teach basic elements of Disaster Risk Management is considered at the high school level.

To complement this program, the School of Engineering and the School of Medicine of National Central University (Universidad Central del Ecuador) have joined the program so last year undergraduate students, with the support of their tutors, work on the vulnerability assessment of the structure and infrastructure (i.e. electrical and water connections) and provide health elements on a variety of aspects that go from first aid procedures in case of emergency, to good health eating habits.

The program is coordinated by the Health and Safety Offices of the Municipality in partnership with other important actors such as the Ministry of Education, Civil Defense, Red Cross, Metropolitan Police, Fire Department and the Land and Territory Office of the Municipality.

Timelines and Milestones

A shift in people's safety culture will for sure take several years to happen, ten years is the horizon of this program that started in year 2003 with a pilot capacity plan that includes the participation of 63 teachers of the same number of schools from the district.

The second step would be the review of current curricula so trained teachers can transmit the knowledge acquired to students and through a participatory experience spread it to parents and administrative employees as well.

Structural vulnerability evaluation comes next; the methodology used will be based on a previous experience in Quito, The Quito Seismic Safety Program which already provides retrofitting alternatives and cost estimates for a number of school building typologies.

Once the program is fully underway, the goal is to focus on 1200 public schools of the district, each year 10 schools in each of the 8 Administrative Zones will be selected and the most vulnerable one in each zone, 8 a year, are expected to be retrofitted.

Potential for Replication

This practice has a very high potential for replication, the municipality of Quito has taken the leadership but is working closely with the Ministry of Education through its Provincial Office, particularly on curricula revision process.

All the training material is available now, a general module that discusses the issues of "Emergencies and Disasters", basic concepts on DRM and specific applications to the case of Quito that include among others, hazard and risks maps for the district. Power point presentations containing these lectures are also available.

Key issues

There are some critical factors that could jeopardize the completion of the program, above all the retrofitting phase. Securing enough human and economic resources is key to success, an intensive campaign to catch the private sector attention is considered to be one of the alternatives.

The municipality with the support of the Secretary of Education can well deal with the training and curricula review phase of the program, including the vulnerability evaluation, but certainly additional support for the construction phase will be required.

Knowledge Base Coding Reference:

Name of the Practice:	Healthy Schools Program
Contact Person(s):	Lorena Vinueza-Director, Norma Miranda-Project Manager Direccion de Seguridad Ciudadana, MDMQ
Contact Address:	lorenvin17@yahoo.com
Written by:	J. Fernandez, 3cd Program - Component 1 Coordinator, based on a series of interviews and documentation provided by L. Vinueza and Dr. N. Miranda, Direccion de Seguridad Ciudadana, MDMQ