ABSTRACT

This article presents trends in policies related to comprehensive school safety in the Pacific region. Seven Pacific Island countries were surveyed in 2017. The majority had enabling policy environments that support school safety as well as specific policies supporting safe facilities, school disaster management and disaster-related education. Yet policy gaps were identified in all these areas. Respondents identified ongoing challenges such as poor integration of disaster management and education policies, a failing to address comprehensive school safety responsibilities, a lack of targets and indicators and resource scarcity. This survey provides insights into how to improve the design and implementation of policies used for risk reduction and resilience in the education sector of the Pacific region.

Comprehensive School Safety Policy: trends in the Pacific Region

Alefiyah Jiwanji[1], Associate Professor Rebekah Paci-Green[2] and Kate McFarlane[3]

1. Independent Consultant in Education and Development, Suva, Fiji.
2. Western Washington University, Bellingham, United States of America.
3. Save the Children, Melbourne, Victoria.

Submitted: 4 April 2019. Accepted: 13 January 2020.

Introduction

When hazards strike, children are particularly vulnerable due to their physical fragility, their developing mental and emotional capacity and their dependency on adults for care (Peek 2008, Kar 2009). During emergencies and disasters, children's rights to safety and survival, protection, development and participation are all threatened. Thus, children can be significantly affected by disasters (Save the Children 2015, Kousky 2016). Effective and inclusive education systems are important to minimise the effects of disasters and emergencies on children.

Past disaster events have shown how unsafe schools can be when hazards strike. School collapses have been triggered by earthquakes, landslides and cyclones and have killed tens of thousands of children (Petal 2008, Bastidas & Petal 2012). Children, while perhaps not physically affected, have had their education severely and sometimes repeatedly disrupted when school buildings are damaged or inaccessible. Research indicates this disruption puts children at risk of depression, anxiety, sleeping disorders, dropping out of school and child trafficking (Bastidas & Petal 2012; Dwiningrum 2017; Fothergill & Peek 2015; Mudavanhu 2014; Peek 2008; Tong, Shaw & Takeuchi 2012).

In response to these risks, school safety advocates have developed and successfully advocated for a framework to address and reduce risk (Bastidas & Petal 2012, Paci-Green *et al.* 2018, IFC 2010). In 2012, the *Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) Framework* was introduced and endorsed by the Southeast Asian Ministries of Education Organization (ASEAN 2016). The concept was reinforced with the development of comprehensive school safety global targets and indicators by the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES 2015). The CSS Framework conceptualises school safety as three overlapping 'pillars', being:

- Pillar 1: Safe Learning Facilities
- Pillar 2: School Disaster Management
- Pillar 3: Risk Reduction and Resilience Education.

These pillars are embedded within an enabling environment of education policies and plans as well as disaster management plans at different levels of government (GADRRRES & UNISDR 2017). Policies and practices in any of the three pillars, as well as the enabling environment, help reduce the impacts on the education sector from small-scale emergencies and larger-scale disasters, whether acute or chronic in nature. Together, these policies and

practices can address school safety comprehensively. To understand the national policies and practices that are in place to support school safety, a baseline survey was developed and conducted.

Method

In 2016–2017, Save the Children, on behalf of the GADRRRES, with support from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, conducted a global survey collecting baseline data on national comprehensive school safety policies and programs.

Save the Children developed the survey instrument based on the comprehensive school safety targets and indicators. The targets and indicators are a separate tool to measure progress towards the goals of the CSS Framework. The survey sought feedback from global coalitions, including GADRRRES and the Asia Pacific Coalition for School Safety, and advising academics. The survey consisted of 29, multi-part questions designed to assess national policies related to the enabling environment and the three CSS Framework pillars. The survey also asked respondents to identify facilitators and blockers of policy development and implementation.

Save the Children selected countries in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Asia-Pacific with a 'high' ranking in the 2015 World Risk Report and with whom it, or its partners, had established relationships in the government (Walter, Welle & Birkmann 2015). Save the Children trained consultants in each region to develop context-appropriate data collection methodologies. These methodologies included pre-populating the survey based on:

- Save the Children staff knowledge
- information from the Education Sector Snapshot (ESS) for CSS and Education in Emergencies (EiE) (if one existed)
- direct interviews with government officials, especially focal points within ministries of education and the national disaster management organisations.

Seven Pacific Island countries took part in the research; Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. In five countries, responsible education sector officials, such as disaster risk reduction focal points within the Ministry of Education or National Disaster Management Organisation, responded to the surveys. In the remaining two, survey responses were provided by Save the Children. To assist, Risk RED was commissioned to identify trends in school safety-related policies.

This paper summarises the findings of the survey to understand school safety policy gaps in the Pacific region and provide insights into how governments might design and strengthen policy approaches to risk reduction and resilience in education sectors.

Respondents completing the survey were doing so as part of their professional capacity and reporting on public policy, not individual behaviour nor personal opinion. As such, the research was exempt from human subjects review (ethics approval). However, good practice in human subjects protection was followed; the names of respondents were not included in the dataset and all data was stored in a secure location.

Limitations

There were limitations in respondent familiarity with relevant policies and data gaps. There was also limited access to definitive policy documents. Thus, these data are indicative rather than conclusive. The survey covered the seven most populous Pacific Island countries and more than 90 per cent of the population of the small island states. However, it does not cover the nine least populous countries and two territories of the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, the Independent State of Samoa, the Republic of Nauru, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Niue, the Republic of Palau, Tokelau and the Territory of Wallis and Futuna Islands.

School safety policy themes in the Pacific

The survey showed that Pacific Island countries are performing well and that some countries could improve. Governments and advocates may use this information to improve or scale-up current policies or develop new policies.

Disaster risk reduction and education policies integration

High rates of emergency and disaster management policies across the Pacific region point to the successful achievements of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015* (UNDRR 2005) as well as growing awareness by governments of the need for plans and policies addressing risks associated with emergencies and disasters. While all organisations surveyed had emergency response and disaster management policies in place, most policies were not fully integrated with the education sector.

Four countries had emergency and disaster management policies that referred to the education sector but only in the form of a single section or paragraph. Additionally, their education policies did not always incorporate school safety in a systematic way. Responses from five countries indicated they had education sector disaster management policies, EiE policies, or both. Yet, when asked what policy content countries covered in these policies, gaps emerged (see Table 1). Survey questions relating to 'response preparedness' and 'educational continuity planning' were addressed by the majority of responding countries. Concepts of 'the role of students and youth', 'standard operating procedures for disasters and emergencies' or systematic 'teacher training/professional development' in school safety

were addressed by very few. Notably, Papua New Guinea covered all policy topics listed in the survey.

Table 1: School safety policy topics included in national policies.

School safety topics included in national policies	Pacific Island countries that included the topic (N=7)
Risk assessment	3
Safer school facilities	3
School disaster management	3
Risk reduction and resilience education	3
Risk mitigation	3
Standard Operating Procedures for emergencies	2
Regular fire and/or hazard drills	3
Response preparedness	4
Education continuity planning	4
Role of students or youth volunteers	2
Teacher training in school disaster management	2

The successor instrument to the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015*, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (Sendai Framework) (UNDRR 2015), set targets and indicators to achieve Sustainable Development Goals for education. It requires nations to look at policy outcomes in terms of minimising death and injury as well as assuring access to basic education. Most countries responding to this survey collect data on the damage to its education sector infrastructure (n=5), injuries (n=4) and deaths (n=4) as they relate to hazard events. However, data collection on long-term education outcomes (numbers of days of school closure and school attendance pre- and post-disaster) was not common (n=3).

Availability of resources

Five of the participating seven countries reported having full-time school disaster risk reduction staff at the national and sub-national levels. Staff support schools in reducing risk and recovering from emergencies and disasters. Four of these also reported having full-time EiE staff to address educational continuity during conflict, emergencies and disasters. However, most responses showed there was no or only irregular funding to develop staff or to implement disaster risk reduction programs. Only Fiji reported a regular allocation for risk reduction and resilience programs included in its national education budget as well as regular allocation for EiE programs.

While funding and human resources are important aspects of comprehensive school safety policy, children and youth appear to be an untapped resource. The Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea were the only countries with education sector disaster management plans including guidance on how to encourage the participation of children in risk reduction and planning.

Policy comprehensiveness

Governments surveyed had broad disaster management policies covering each of the three comprehensive school safety pillars. However, these policies did not cover all aspects of each pillar.

Most countries had policies addressing Pillar 1 - Safe Learning Facilities. Six of the seven countries had policies for safe design and construction of new schools as well as policies that require monitoring of school construction. Five had policies that require safe site selection. Three countries indicated that their government had a policy for the routine maintenance of school buildings and two had policies for the non-structural mitigation of school buildings, for example fixing heavy furniture to the wall in earthquake-prone areas or storing essential materials above the height of anticipated flooding. Only two countries reported having policies for the assessment of existing school buildings and the retrofit or replacement of unsafe buildings. One country indicated that policies were unfunded or had not been implemented. None had a policy addressing annual deferred maintenance.

Policy coverage regarding the use of schools as temporary shelters was limited. Only three countries reported having a policy limiting the use of schools as temporary shelters. Papua New Guinea and Fiji had guidance in place for how to manage these shelters or how to select schools for this purpose. None had policies for the reimbursement of costs when schools are used as shelters.

Most Pacific Island countries had substantial policy coverage for Pillar 2 - School Disaster Management. Five countries had national school disaster or emergency management policies that addressed risk assessment, risk reduction and response readiness. Four indicated that the policy included educational continuity. These policies give a solid foundation to incorporate the less well-covered elements of child participation in risk assessment, risk reduction and educational continuity planning.

Teachers and administrators need to be trained to effectively implement school safety policies. Only three countries provided schools with guidance and procedures for risk reduction. Five countries provided schools with guidance and procedures for emergency response and three provided schools with guidance and procedures for recovery. Only two countries, Fiji and Tuvalu, included school disaster management in teacher

training curricula. Three national education authorities required staff to complete professional development in disaster management in schools. More systematic integration of disaster management into pre-service training and opportunities for in-service training is needed.

Most Pacific Island countries had policies addressing Pillar 3 - Risk Reduction and Resilience Education. All respondents were proactive in promoting risk awareness both at school and to the public. All seven countries had public disaster risk reduction campaigns with consistent and action-oriented messages. Three countries (Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands) had national key messages for public awareness and public education for disaster risk reduction (IFRC and Save the Children 2018). Most also reported having a national curriculum that included education on climate change (n=5), risk reduction (n=5) and resilience (n=4). However, fewer included climate change (n=4), risk reduction (n=4) or resilience (n=3) in teacher pre-service training. This indicates that, in some countries, teachers may be providing disaster risk reduction education with limited support. As such, the quality of school instruction on these topics may vary considerably.

Facilitators and blockers

Pacific Island country respondents were asked what factors they believed facilitated and blocked school safety policy development and implementation. They selected from a list of 15 potential facilitators and 20 potential blockers. Though facilitators and blockers vary by country, and sometimes by local jurisdiction, general findings from the survey and from relevant literature are useful to consider.

Facilitators

Of the seven Pacific Island countries, five responded to questions about factors that facilitated school safety policy development and implementation. Facilitating factors largely reflected themes of advocacy and evidence (see Table 2).

Pacific Island country respondents indicated that advocates were important to the development of a successful framework that identifies the problem, educates stakeholders and exerts pressure on authorities to develop and implement solutions. Research suggests that broad agreement on social values is a catalyst of policy (Pielke 2007). While education sector authorities are important, civil society and the emergency management sector seem to be instrumental advocacy catalysts for the Pacific Island country respondents. This is because education sector authorities are generally supportive of school safety policy but can only enact such policy when they form advocacy coalitions with civil society and emergency management authorities. Indeed, Asia and Pacific countries have strong sub-regional school safety mechanisms and advocacy efforts such as the ASEAN

Table 2: Top facilitators for both policy development *and* implementation.

Facilitating factor	Number of countries listing factor as an important facilitator N=5	
	Policy development	Policy implementation
Senior and mid-level disaster management officials use their position to advance school safety publicly.	3	3
There is strong evidence (proof) on the impacts of disasters on education, the dangers of unsafe schools, and/or the benefits of safe schools	3	3
Civil society groups use their position to advance school safety publicly.	2	3
School safety has become important for the government and public because of large disasters or frequent hazard impacts.	2	2

Initiative for School Safety and the Pacific Coalition for the Advancement of School Safety. Between 2015 and 2017, the latter brought education authorities and national disaster management organisations together with international non-government organisations and multilateral development organisations to identify priorities and advocate for recommended action plans that advance school safety across the region. It is expected that this effort will be relaunched during 2020.

'Evidence' was also selected as an important facilitator of school safety policy. Three Pacific Island countries indicated that strong evidence of disaster risk and effects was a major factor in policy action. Two countries indicated that large disasters had made school safety an important policy issue. The systematic collection of disaster risk data to document harm to children and staff as well as the destruction of school infrastructure and disruption of education, are vital to monitoring progress towards school safety goals, as well as towards the Sendai Framework and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UNESCO 2016). Evidence can be presented through the formal education curriculum, the practice of school and community emergency drills or informal education mediums, such as public education campaigns.

The theory of 'punctuated equilibrium' (Baumgartner & Jones 1993) posits that policy for a specific issue

is characterised by long periods of no change, due to institutional restraints, powerful interests in maintaining the status quo and public disinterest or unawareness of the issue. This may help explain the roles of advocacy and evidence as facilitators for policy action. However, policy equilibrium can be disrupted by major shifts in a political system or in public thought. Advocacy for safe school policies and evidence for disaster risk in schools serve as powerful stimulants for policy change, particularly through influence of public opinion and to exert pressure on policymakers.[1]

Blockers

Six Pacific Island countries provided answers about blockers to the development and implementation of school safety policy (see Table 3). Blocking factors largely overlap among Pacific Island countries and reflect the theme of resource scarcity and lack of capacity. These blockers are echoed in other studies (WestEd 2014).

The most frequent blocker to the implementation of policy reported was funding shortages. Five out of six countries listing it as a blocker of school safety policy. Three respondents also added that 'funds to implement the policy are hard to access and not distributed on time'. Another prominent theme was the lack of technical capacity and human resources. Five respondents selected a 'lack of technical capacity' as a top blocker. Two respondents indicated that 'the education sector staff who need to implement the policies do not understand them' was a blocker.

A lack of technical capacity may be linked with insufficient government budgets for risk reduction-related technology acquisition and training. Some respondents indicated difficulties in developing and implementing school safety policies due to a lack of training or guidance as well as heavy workloads and high staff turnover. Insufficient technical capacity and inadequate budgets to implement risk reduction and resilience programs were intertwined. However, when sufficient technical capacity and budgets are available, implementation of school safety policy may be hampered because there is insufficient staff.

Table 3: Top blockers for policy development and implementation.

Blocker	Number of countries listing factor as important blocker N=6	
	Policy development	Policy implementation
The government has not allocated sufficient funds to be able to carry out the policy activities.	4	5
The departments and staff are too busy, or change too often, to be able to conduct the activities to implement the policy.	4	5
The government does not have sufficient technical capacity or access to sufficient technical support for school safety.	2	5
Funds to implement the policy are hard to access and not distributed on time.	2	3
The government has no clear framework, ideas, approaches or steps on how to make schools safer.	1	1
The education sector staff who need to implement the policies do not understand them.	N/A	2
The policies are not aligned well with existing education sector strategies, priorities and standards.	2	0

Conclusions

This study identified that Pacific Island countries surveyed had made great strides over the past ten years in the development of disaster management policies and are gradually integrating these policies with those of its education sector. Most countries have policies in place that span the three pillars of the CSS Framework. These accomplishments indicate growing awareness of the responsibilities that education authorities bear for the safety and survival of children in schools. They also provide for children's equal and ongoing access to a quality, basic education. It is promising that Pacific region governments have begun to cross-reference disaster management and education policies. Where policy exists, efforts need to turn to funding for capacity building, training and integration into everyday practice of staff, students and school communities. From this strong base, comprehensive school safety policy will protect students and staff and ensure education continuity. It will also support a culture of safety that spreads from schools into communities and from communities to the nation.

1 See the GADRRRES case study on Protecting Children in Emergencies by Law in the Philippines. At: www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/61554.

The following recommendations are based on this and are informed by the CSS Framework and Global Targets and Indicators (GADRRRES 2015).

Integrate disaster management policies with the education sector better

Four out of seven countries have disaster management policies that refer to the education sector, however, it is typically in the form of a single section or paragraph. Comprehensive school safety topics are also rarely incorporated into education disaster management or EiE policies in a systematic way. This would help children's safety and survival in school as well as educational continuity following disasters.

Make school safety a policy and funding priority

Funding shortages are cited as the biggest blocker for the implementation of school safety policy activities in the Pacific, with only Fiji reporting a regular allocation of funds for risk reduction and resilience programs in its national education budget. In order to fully develop staff capacity and effectively implement school disaster management or EiE programs, it is recommended that governments make school safety a policy and funding priority, and that sufficient funds be allocated in education budgets.

Develop comprehensive school safety policies

Governments surveyed have instituted broad disaster management policies covering each of the three comprehensive school safety pillars. However, these rarely cover all aspects of each pillar. Lack of guidance on how to implement school safety activities within these policies was also cited by governments as a blocker to the implementation of school safety activities in the region. To address this, it is recommended that school safety policies be expanded to cover each aspect of the three pillars, and to incorporate implementation guidance and regulations.

Develop workforce capacity

Five out of six countries cited a lack of technical capacity as a top blocker for school safety policy implementation, with some governments reporting difficulties in developing and implementing school safety policies due to a lack of training and understanding. Technical capacity is also needed to attract budgets necessary to carry out risk reduction and resilience programming. Thus, training and coordination of existing disaster and education sector staff at the national and sub-national levels is recommended.

Increase student and teacher participation in school disaster management

Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea were the only countries with education sector disaster management plans including guidance on how to encourage active child participation in risk reduction and planning. Students remain a largely untapped resource. Teachers, too, are an untapped resource; only half the countries surveyed require teachers to complete the professional development necessary to effectively guide and implement school disaster management. Increasing child participation in school disaster management, as well as systematically incorporating school disaster management into pre-service and in-service training, is recommended.

Develop and sustain an ongoing national multi-stakeholder school safety platform

Continued advocacy for school safety was highlighted as a facilitating factor for school safety policy development in the Pacific. Advocates play a key role in the development of a successful school safety framework. While education sector authorities were certainly found to be important advocates, findings suggest that they are more effective in collaboration with civil society and disaster management authorities at national, regional and sub-regional levels. Each country needs an active and ongoing multi-stakeholder national school safety platform.

Share disaster data, technical knowledge and skills.

Many respondents indicated that strong evidence of disaster risk and their effects were major factors in facilitating policy action around school safety. Surveys however, indicate that many countries do not systematically collect nor share this compelling data. To allow for evidence-based comprehensive school safety policy development, it is essential that data, as well as technical knowledge and skills, be shared between governments and civil society organisations and solutions developed in partnerships.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Ana Miscolta for assistance with the data analysis and literature review as well as Dr Marla Petal and the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback on this paper. The authors thank the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (grant 203016) for funding the initial collection of data and the C&A and the C&A Foundation (grant 4436) for funding the initial analysis of the Asia-Pacific region data. No funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors provided specific funds for the data analysis and writing of this research.

References

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) 2016, *Common framework for comprehensive school safety. Association of South East Nations. At: https://aseansafeschoolsinitiative.org/asean-common-framework-for-comprehensive-school-safety-2/.*

Bastidas P & Petal M 2012, *Assessing school safety from disasters A global baseline report (No. UNISDR/GE/2013/4 – ICLUX – V1 – 1,000). United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. At: www.unisdr.org/files/35274_2012schoolsafetyglobalbaseline.pdf.*

Baumgartner F & Jones B 1993, *Agendas and instability in American politics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.*

Dwiningrum SIA 2017, *Developing school resilience for disaster mitigation: a confirmatory factor analysis. Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal, vol. 26, no. 4, pp.437–451. doi: 10.1108/DPM-02-2017-0042*

Fothergill A & Peek L 2015, *Children of Katrina. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.*

Garschagen M, Hagenlocher M, Kloos J, Pardoe J, Lanzendörfer M, Mucke P, Radtke K, Rhyner J, Walter B, Welle T & Birkmann J 2015, *World Risk Report 2015. Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and UNU-EHS. At: https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:3303/WRR_2015_engl_online.pdf.*

Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES) 2015, *Comprehensive School Safety Framework, Targets and Indicators. At: http://gadrrres.net/resources/css-targets-and-indicators.*

Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES) 2017, *Comprehensive School Safety Framework. At: http://gadrrres.net/resources/comprehensive-school-safety-framework.*

International Finance Corporation (IFC) 2010, *Disaster and emergency preparedness: Guidance for schools, World Bank, Washington, D.C. At: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17669.*

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Save the Children 2018, *Public awareness and public education for disaster risk reduction: action-oriented key messages for households and schools. At: www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/61592.*

Kar N 2009, *Psychological impact of disasters on children: review of assessment and interventions. World Journal of Paediatrics: WJP, vol. 5, no. 1, pp.5–11. doi: 10.1007/s12519-009-0001-x*

Kousky C 2016, *Impacts of natural disasters on children. The Future of Children, vol. 26, no. 1, pp.73–92. At: www.jstor.org/stable/43755231.*

Mudavanhu C 2014, *The impact of flood disasters on child education in Muzarabani District, Zimbabwe. Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies, vol. 6, no. 1, p.8. doi: 10.4102/jamba.v6i1.138*

Paci-Green R, Vigneaux G, Jensen S & Petal M 2018, *Developing and Implementing Comprehensive School Safety Policy, GADRRRES. At: www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/61521.*

Peek L 2008, *Children and disasters: Understanding vulnerability, developing capacities and promoting resilience—An introduction. Children, Youth and Environments, vol. 18, no. 1, pp.1–29. doi: 10.3763/ehaz.2001.0306*

Pielke R Jr 2007, *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*

Save the Children 2015, *Participatory school disaster management toolkit. At: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/309._sc_participatory_school_disaster_management_toolkit_2016_06_ltr.pdf.*

Save the Children 2017, *Comprehensive School Safety Policy: Trends in the Asia Pacific Region. At: www.preventionweb.net/go/61412.*

Tong TMT, Shaw R & Takeuchi Y 2012, *Climate disaster resilience of the education sector in Thua Thien Hue Province, Central Vietnam. Natural Hazards, vol. 63, no. 2, pp.685–709. doi: 10.1007/s11069-012-0178-5*

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2016, *Education for All Movement. At: www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/.*

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) 2005, *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. At: www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/hfa.*

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) 2015, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. At: www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework.*

WestEd 2014, *Asian Coalition for School Safety Needs Assessment: Survey and Interview Results.*

About the authors

Alefiyah Jiwanji is an independent consultant in education and development who specialises in education, children's rights and disaster risk reduction, especially in the Pacific region.

Associate Professor Rebekah Paci-Green, Western Washington University, specialises in natural hazard risk and risk reduction.

Kate McFarlane is a technical adviser in research and knowledge management at Save the Children and works in school safety, child-centred risk reduction and urbanisation.