

## GENERAL COMMENTARY ONE JOURNEY ... ONE GOAL

When it was decided to begin a process of incorporation of the issue of disaster risk management through an element of the educational sector - for example, the Self-Assessment Guide for Academic Programs of the Central American University Higher Council (CSUCA), the curriculum proposed by the Ministry of Education of Honduras, the syllabi of the Higher Education Institute of Paraguay or of the primary school United Evergreen in Belize - there was always a period of reflection on disaster risk management and discussion with the groups involved and it was at that stage that these tools were adjusted to the particular context of each school or area.

At the end of these exercises we could see that the participants “understood each other” better, felt comfortable building together, and had a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve. Moreover, we noted that, through the process, participants had a higher opinion of the concept of disaster risk management.

This allowed us to confirm the idea that speaking the same language can help us build together and aim high.

If we analyze the reasons why sometimes people do not respond to calls to reduce vulnerability, disease and adverse events, we may find a common negative factor: they do not relate to the messages they receive to their own lives and situation, because they do not understand the significance of statistics regarding, for example, **the likelihood of their being affected by an adverse event**. The problem is semiotic in nature: they cannot fully comprehend the concept, which prevents them from being able to apply it correctly, in their life and in their personal and social context.

This must be taken into account in order to generate individual and collective commitments to safety and life. This is the true challenge for social welfare institutions.

We must work hard so that all individuals, and especially the decision-makers at home, at school and in the community understand the significance of being prepared to respond appropriately to adverse events and of avoiding activities that cause threat and vulnerability, i.e. they must achieve mastery of the subject and its components. They must understand risk management as a means for achieving individual, institutional and communal resilience and as a tool for contributing to sustainable development.

It is crucial that students, teachers and parents understand that working on risk management is not an extra burden, or just another program out of the many elaborated in the offices of ministers, rectors, and school management authorities. The issue must be reconsidered within the concept of quality of education and the preventive and proactive role of education must be reaffirmed.

Educational communities must perceive the subject as an essential component in all processes and activities undertaken in formal education. Moreover, if the main objectives of education and curricula are studied carefully, we will find that there are always interesting opportunities for addressing the issue, both at the level of institutional management and in the classroom.

Those with a genuine interest in the project, who are committed to reducing risk and adverse events, will find in international agreements - which protect values, life and development, among others - sufficient arguments for justifying plans and projects aimed at prevention. Similar provisions are found in various legislations and in the national education plans that require work on the issue. We must find those spaces and these are readily available if we have a clear idea of what is sought and what needs to be addressed or resolved regarding prevention and safety.

It is not enough to want to do something - we must know how to do it well. Fortunately, there are great experiences in our countries that have provided important lessons on how to achieve successful risk management in the education sector. Moreover, there are documents like the present study, other sources and valuable information on institutions, networks and collection centers, organizations that promote and disseminate knowledge, such as the Regional Center for Disaster Information in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRID), which provides bibliographic resources to support national and international processes and projects.

In this task, we must be exhaustive when seeking information, so as not to omit important information and, thus, avoid regretting not having exercised our right to know what has been done and what is currently being done regarding the situation. I believe it is a great way to avoid the costs of not being aware of the goals achieved and of the knowledge forged. This will allow faster progress toward developing new structures of knowledge and toward organized social action.

One very useful way to explain, promote and achieve important goals in educational institutions, is to base our efforts on the institutional core theme of disaster risk management, represented by an equilateral triangle which clearly shows the commitment the education sector must assume to: the safety of educational facilities, the training of students and the community on disaster risk management, which should be reflected in the teachers' syllabi, research and expansion of knowledge.

The systematized experiences we share with you in this book are of particular importance because they are the work of groups and institutions that independently and by making a tenacious effort, were able to analyze situations, make decisions to improve them, execute the plan and check, for assessment purposes, the value of the processes and tools used, then correct them and keep moving forward.

They are also important, because, on the whole, this work of systematization covers what might be called key points for the integral development of risk management, because these points are presented in a comprehensive manner and in such a way that the reader does not require more information to get a very good idea of what was discussed, planned and achieved in each case.

All human work is improvable - this book certainly is so - however, we are sure that the book will help readers understand the subject, pass classes, complete projects or begin an educational process in disaster risk management. Those interested will find in the document ideas, information or the motivation that will strengthen their individual commitment to their own safety, to other people at risk, to life as well as to quality of life: the *raison d'être* of education and of the Human Project.

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