

2021

REGIONAL REVIEW ON SCHOOL SAFETY
IN THE CONTEXT OF SYSTEMIC RISK:

THE VIRTUAL CARIBBEAN SAFE SCHOOL
INITIATIVE PRE-MINISTERIAL FORUM

VIRTUAL EVENT CONCEPT

15 - 26 March 2021

SAFE SCHOOL WORKING GROUP OF THE
EDUCATION SECTOR SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE CDM
COORDINATION AND HARMONIZATION COUNCIL

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The COVID-19 pandemic has made evident the systemic nature of risk, and highlighted the exposure of different systems to multiple hazards, as its unprecedented cascading effects have impacted all sectors and levels of our economies and societies. The Global Assessment Report 2019 (GAR) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction reflect the certainty that in an ever more populous, networked, and globalizing

society, the very nature and scale of risk have changed, to such a degree that it surpasses established risk management institutions and approaches.

In the Caribbean, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a direct impact on the education systems of all countries in the region. Education systems in the region have been responding to the effects

of the COVID-19 pandemic, but they are also implementing actions to mitigate the potential consequences of the hurricane season, which is more active than usual, and other latent hazards, such as geological ones (earthquakes and tsunamis) and social ones (migration). The region is experiencing the effects of systemic risk as we witness the interplay and amplification of the varied effects of multiple events. As recovery plans and other instruments are being designed by national and regional entities, they present an opportunity to: 1) reiterate the value of education in building resilient societies, and 2) the need for multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, and regional coordination. In this order of ideas, the Caribbean Safe School Initiative (CSSI), which aims to advance school safety in the Caribbean, is the regional mechanism to rehearse this link between education and resilience, and secure coordination.

It is in this context that development actors have organized several virtual fora with the intention of generating meaningful dialogue around this pertinent matter. CDEMA, with the support of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, on behalf of the Safe School Working Group organized the webinar: COVID-19, “Systemic Risk and Education Sector Resilience in the Caribbean Region” on May 28, 2020, with a number of aims, including to allow for the sharing of country experiences on how the education sector is facing the pandemic as well as lessons learned and recommendations for sector response and recovery as it relates to a global pandemic. Several key recommendations emerged from the online seminar, including those intended to influence and shape:

1. The pertinence of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework, upon which the CSSI has been structured;
2. School-related public health measures that keep students and educators safe from death, injury, and harm in schools;
3. Securing the continuity of education through all expected hazards and threats management;
4. The nature of support from regional partners to advance the CSSI;
5. School preparedness, mitigation, recovery, and response for education resilience.

SOME SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS THAT EMERGED THAT WOULD BE RELEVANT TO FUTURE DIALOGUE AT THE REGION LEVEL INCLUDE:

- Support partners, as they must recognize their role in mobilizing resources to ensure effective advancement of the Caribbean Safe School Initiative and promote synergies as a commitment to energize efforts in advocating for political support.
- Fast-track the development of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Framework for School Safety.
- Strengthening the relationship between regional and national governance mechanisms allowing the sharing of good practices.
- Strengthening emphasis on biological, anthropogenic, and other threats in assessments, policy, and contingency planning for the education sector, where needed.
- Ensuring that local information is accessible and reliable, and understand the COVID-19 contagion trends in specific areas.
- Develop a decision model for closing and reopening schools as needed due to the resurgence of community transmission.
- Coordinate with National Teachers Unions and PTAs re contingency measures for outbreaks of illness in staff or students.
- Implement strategies aiming to close the digital gap and provide students with resources to manage learning gaps.
- Review of online teaching and exam options. Continue blended learning, by trying to adopt emerging technologies and other modalities that facilitate learning, especially in times of crisis.
- Adapt and revamp current curriculum to integrate all-hazards, and be ready to develop a minimum curriculum adapted for emergency situations.
- Understand how current and emergent practices in ensuring education continuity for the most vulnerable might be recorded, assessed, adapted, replicated, and integrated into existing policies and strategies
- Provide Financial and dietary support to marginalized students.
- Update policy and plans to consider biological hazards with a multi-hazard approach based on risk information and knowledge.
- When reopening it is important to consider: wellbeing, protection, policy frameworks, financing opportunities, safe operations, reaching the most vulnerable, and learning.

The Caribbean Safe School Ministerial Forum is the flagship biennial meeting attended by Ministers of Education from the whole region, disaster risk reduction practitioner, and international and regional stakeholders, to explore and identify policy opportunities and gaps for Education Sector Resilience, as well as their regional coordination. This, in the context of systemic risk, and with a multiple hazards approach, including biological hazards, such as COVID-19. It is the Forum for attaining and/or affirming the support of the region's Ministries of Education of the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety in the Caribbean, as well as to the agreed Road Map for its implementation. The Declaration embraces the Comprehensive School Safety Framework as its internationally recognized approach to reducing risk to various hazards in the education sector. At the First and Second Forum, eighteen countries and territories

have already signed the Declaration, and it is expected that in future Forums other Caribbean states will join the Initiative.

The Third Ministerial Forum will be hosted by the Ministry of Education in Sint Maarten, and was originally scheduled for May 2021. To promote full participation at the Forum and considering the uncertainties affecting the various states' ability to ensure their respective participation in the near future, it is being proposed that the forum be deferred to early 2022. Considering this shift, there remains the opportunity for a timely event that captures and synthesizes the plethora of dialogues on Education Sector Response to the COVID 19 pandemic that have already taken place through multiple partners, and the range of responses that the Ministries of Education and other partners would have implemented by the end of the 2020 Hurricane Season.

THE VIRTUAL CARIBBEAN SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE PRE-MINISTERIAL FORUM: 2021 REGIONAL REVIEW ON SYSTEMIC RISK

A virtual event preceding the Ministerial Forum is now being planned to take place in the first quarter of 2021 (exact dates to be confirmed). It would be timed to allow for the reviewing of the experiences of the Education Sector's COVID-19 response and recovery prior to and during the 2020 Hurricane Season, and will discuss about

the need for coordinating policies and actions for prevention and mitigation aiming to build education sector resilience. The proposed event, titled 2021 Regional Review on School Safety in the context of Systemic Risk: The Virtual Caribbean Safe School Initiative Pre-Ministerial Forum" would serve to:

1. Maintain momentum around the regional dialogue around safe schools despite the challenges presented to host an in-person meeting in 2021.

2. Capture the good practices and lessons learnt from the COVID-19 experience, how preparation activities for the Hurricane season were impacted by the pandemic, and other interacting factors that emerge within a multi-hazard context.
3. Define the topics to be discussed at the next III CSSI Ministerial forum, and that will aim to build education sector resilience in the Caribbean region.

The titling of the virtual event considers the plethora of dialogues on Education Sector Response to the COVID 19 pandemic that have already taken place through multiple partners, and the range of responses that the Ministries of Education and other partners have implemented. Similarly, it will provide recommendations on regional coordinated policies and actions to be implemented to secure education sector resilience.

VIRTUAL PRE-FORUM OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the event would be:

1. To promote the sharing of lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic in a multi-hazard context towards increasing school safety across the Caribbean
2. To derive inputs for the improvement of existing policies and tools
3. To promote the expansion of countries committing to the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration across the Caribbean
4. To set the agenda for the Third CSSI Ministerial Forum to be held in Sint Maarten in 2022

2021 VIRTUAL PRE-FORUM EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1. Consensus on the way forward for technical partners to support the advancement of the CSSI
2. Recommendations for shaping the CSSI and its Road Map to be tabled at the Third Ministerial Forum on Safe Schools
3. Recommendations for setting the agenda for the Third Ministerial Forum on Safe Schools
4. Guarantee the link with the next regional and global Platforms for DRR, as well as in the CDEMA-CDM Conference, by identifying key CSSI messages to be brought forward.
5. Documenting and sharing the lessons and experiences beyond the Ministerial Forum

2021 VIRTUAL MINISTERIAL PRE-FORUM FORMAT

The Virtual Ministerial Pre-forum would take the form of a series of 60-90-minute virtual sessions to take place over a period of two weeks, prefaced by – and concluding with – a high-level session involving Ministers of Education in the entire Caribbean region. The forum aims to support the action of School Safety focal points at Ministries of Education, whom will be following the whole forum, while they will report the outcomes of each session to their Permanent Secretaries and Ministers of Education. The sessions would aim to strengthen and establish partnerships with other sectors, as well as, with other stakeholders and practitioners, to better understand the systemic nature of risk, and the ways to manage it.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME:

1	1 – Monday	1. OPENING SESSION BY THE MINISTERS OF EDUCATION Chaired by the incoming chair of the Caribbean Safe School Initiative, i.e., the Ministry of Education of Sint Maarten, the sessions will seek to link the 2019 forum and the 2022 forum by providing an update on what has taken place especially as it relates to preparation and response to the COVID-19 and hurricane season. The session will set up the challenges and opportunities for planning in the context of systemic risk and to set the agenda, the outcomes, and objectives of the forum.
1	1 – Monday	2. PERMANENT SECRETARIES Immediately following the Ministerial Session, Permanent Secretaries and the Ministries of Education will be engaged to set the agenda and agree on objectives and expected outcomes from an implementation standpoint.
1	2 – Tuesday	3. SCHOOL SAFETY FOCAL POINTS DISCUSSION School safety focal points in the Ministries of Education across the region who are carrying out the work on school safety, will be engaged to garner their positive and challenging experiences, lessons learnt, plans, strategies, implement methodologies and reports of good partnerships.
1	3 - Wednesday	4. NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT OFFICES' DIRECTORS The session would aim to capture the good practices and lessons learnt from the COVID-19 experience, including how preparation activities for the hurricane season were impacted by the pandemic, and other interacting factors that have emerged within a multi-hazard context. It would provide a good forum for displaying good practices and opportunities for further coordination between Ministries of Education and National Disaster Management Offices.

1	4 - Friday	<p>5. INTER-SECTORAL PARTNERS</p> <p>The session would promote an open discussion between the Safe School focal points at the Ministries of Education, and active or potential partners from the areas of water and sanitation, health, infrastructure, and telecommunications, etcetera. Experiences of positive relations, strengthened relations and potential partnerships that were evidenced as part of the COVID-19 pandemic and hurricane season response would be highlighted, as a collaborative example aiming to build education sector resilience in the context of systemic risk.</p>
2	5 - Monday	<p>6. PRACTITIONERS (EDUCATORS, TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, COMMUNITIES)</p> <p>School safety focal points will be exposed to targeting practitioners, including teachers, principals, and other members of the school community, that have implemented good practices over the last year in response to the education disruption that took place due to COVID-19. This space will allow to discover practices developed by practitioners throughout the region and that could be adopted and adapted regionally, and that might require support for their establishment as a long-term prevention and mitigation actions.</p>
2	5 – Monday	<p>7. YOUTH FORUM</p> <p>The session would build on the outcomes of the Youth Forum organized in the framework of the 2nd Ministerial Forum, and would focus on the partnership and support that youth could provide to School Safety focal points on the implementation of the CSSI Road Map.</p>
2	6 - Tuesday	<p>8. SCHOOL SAFETY INVESTMENTS AS A KEY ELEMENT OF THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY</p> <p>The session would aim to establish a meaningful dialogue between representatives from Ministries of Finance and the school safety focal point at the Ministries of Education to highlight the fact that ensuring school safety is the starting point for reactivating the economy while discussing the fiscal limitations that might impact the region due the economic crisis resulting from the COVID19 disaster.</p>
2	7 – Wednesday	<p>9. PERMANENT SECRETARIES</p> <p>PS of Ministries of Education will be briefed on the proceedings and key findings from previous sessions to allow for the understanding of the range of issues and take-aways.</p>

2	4 – Thursday	<p>WORKING DAY (NO SESSIONS)</p> <p>It is expected that during this no-session-day Permanent Secretaries and School Safety Focal Points will brief their respective Ministers of Education aiming to decide on the key elements (3) to be proposed by the individual country during the closing session. It is expected that these elements would include topics to be discussed during the Third Ministerial Forum, such as improvements to the regional roadmap, and requests for technical support that will be required in the coming months.</p>
2	5 - Friday	<p>10. CLOSING SESSION TARGETING MINISTERS OF EDUCATION</p> <p>Ministers will present the elements for discussion at the Third Ministerial Forum as a means of setting up the agenda, and will inform regional and international partners about their technical support needs for the coming months. It would also be the occasion to officially launch the 3rd Ministerial Forum by the Government of Sint Maarten.</p>

