



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Caribbean Safe School Initiative

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Maarten, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Turks & Caicos Islands,

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

CHAIR - Minister of Education St. Maarten (2022-2025). Lead Organizations: CDEMA, UNDRR, UNICEF, UNESCO, GADRRES

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Safe Schools, Disaster Risk Reduction, Caribbean School Safety Roadmap, School Safety Policy, Caribbean Ministries of Education, Monitoring & Evaluation, Youth Engagement, National Disaster management, Infrastructure maintenance, building codes, schools as shelters, Risk assessment, school safety focal points, contingency planning, training, psychosocial support, knowledge management

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The collaborative nature of the Caribbean Safe School Initiative (intergovernmental approach to school safety), the political commitment through the Sint Maarten Declaration on School Safety 2022, the roadmap containing actions at the local and regional level to guide the implementation of commitments made towards school safety. Also the agencies supporting the CSSI and the collaborative approach.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Caribbean developing countries are exposed to a variety of similar natural hazards, namely hurricanes, floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, droughts, fires as well as technological and biological hazards. These hazards have compromised countries' poverty reduction strategies, hindered development gains, and endangered educational systems. Their impacts are likely to be magnified by the expected effects of changes in global climate and potentially more frequent and severe extreme weather events. Low-lying states in the Caribbean are especially vulnerable to these effects which pose significant risks to public safety, infrastructure, and natural resources. In 2004, Hurricane Ivan caused widespread destruction in Grenada damaging 73 of 75 public schools. In 2010, in Haiti, a massive earthquake killed 38,000 students and 1,300 teachers and education personnel. It destroyed 4,000 schools, as well as the headquarters of the Ministry of Education. The 2017 hurricane season affected 1,700 school buildings in Cuba. Dominica had 18,500 school-aged children out of school, and 57 Government primary and secondary schools were damaged or destroyed. Children from Barbuda and Dominica had to be temporarily relocated to Antigua to attend classes. Disasters, such as those caused by COVID-19 or the 2021 eruption of the La Soufrière volcano in St Vincent and the Grenadines, have a major impact on children, youth, and education systems.

Despite scarce resources, major strategies have been implemented individually in different countries to improve school preparedness, resilience, response and recovery. The initiative is the Caribbean contribution to the Worldwide-Initiative on Safe Schools (WISS) and promotes the partnership for advancing safe school implementation. Ministries of Education lead the implementation and get technical support by international, regional and national partners. Since its launch, the CSSI has been an inclusive effort, promoting the participation of all islands in the Caribbean, including CDEMA Participating States and overseas territories, as well as bridging language barriers across English, French and Spanish-speaking communities.

To ensure political commitment at the regional and national level, the First Caribbean Ministerial Safe School Forum was organized in April 2017 in Antigua and Barbuda, during which the Caribbean Safe School Initiative (CSSI) was launched, being the suggested framework to advance school safety in the Caribbean. The same event yielded a Regional Road Map on School Safety, and the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety, which guide the CSSI.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? *

1. Ministerial Forum in 2017; Ministerial Forum and Youth Forum in 2019; Pre-Ministerial Virtual Forum in 2021; Ministerial Forum, Youth Forum & School Safety Focal Point session in 2022.
2. Regional Roadmap on School Safety approved in April 2017. Still ongoing with roadmap being updated in June 2022. Activities being carried out by CSSI member countries.
3. Ministries of Education from 19 countries, schools in the 19 countries, CDEMA, UNDRR, UNESCO, UNICEF, national disaster offices in the 19 countries and other partners identified by each country on a national level.
4. Financing for implementation is an ongoing challenge that countries are trying to address. Gradually there is more interest to address budgets for school safety as opposed to when the CSSI started.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

To date 19 countries and territories are part of the initiative. This initiative is guided by the Regional Road Map on School Safety, and the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety. Trust has been built among its members as the leader initiative on school safety across the Caribbean. Since its adoption the CSSI has boosted the majority of Ministries of Education in the Caribbean have safe school focal points that advance resilience at schools' level. Caribbean countries have advanced to incorporate disaster risk reduction and resilience in education in the curriculum at all levels. Risk Governance has improved with the development of national school safety policies, standard operational procedures and school emergency plans and contingency plans. The development of appropriate teaching skills and materials; and the identification of goals and specific objectives for reducing disaster risks in schools. A paradigm shift has happened in the Caribbean regarding the use of schools as temporary shelters, due to the impact this has on the continuity of educational programs. School infrastructure has improved to resist multiple hazards. A strong network of partners is involved, and the initiative is part of the Caribbean Disaster Management sub working group of education with the leadership of CDEMA. Since the launch of the CSSI, hurricanes, floods, a volcanic eruption, diseases and the COVID-19 pandemic have hit the Caribbean region. Thanks to the actions taken by governments to advance the CSSI and implement its Road Map, students and staff have been safer and education sector investments better protected. The III Ministerial Forum in June 2022 reasserted the region's commitment to advance school safety in the region and make the education sector more resilient.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

1. The channeling of the Worldwide Initiative for School Safety through regional disaster risk management agencies such as CDEMA. There was funding from regional agencies to finance the process. The use of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework was important to create a common vision and language on school safety among which countries can hold a dialogue. Also the vulnerability of the Caribbean and exposure to hazards.

2. Rotating leadership resting with ministries of education creating ownership; establishment of school safety focal points in ministries of education; support from regional organization. This was facilitated by the commitment of the countries and supporting agencies to the declaration signed (2017 Antigua & Barbuda Declaration and 2022 Sint Maarten Declaration).

3. To improve follow-up of Roadmap commitments between forums and budgetary commitments for schools safety at the national level remains a challenge.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”.

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

The CSSI can be considered a best practice because there is a recognition by Caribbean education authorities that we co-exist in a region with similar hazards and a joint approach to school safety will be more effective as opposed to each country working on their own and in this way resources and knowledge can be pulled together more efficiently. The CSSI also recognizes that school safety requires a multi-sectoral approach and it combines political commitment to school safety with the technical expertise to implement concrete actions. Through the CSSI approach and its implantation, countries are now directly contributing to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We recommend that countries are grouped together that have a shared or similar hazard profile. This can be done by bringing together education authorities, national disaster offices and regional financial institutions.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

<https://www.undrr.org/caribbean-safe-school-initiative-cssi#intro>