



When a disaster occurs, children in schools and patients in hospitals are two of the most vulnerable groups. They run greater risks of losing their lives when these installations are not safe. In addition, an educational center that remains undamaged can serve as a shelter and/or a gathering place, while another installation can be identified to resume classes.

Within the Risk Reduction Commission¹ created in Guatemala in 2009 as part of the National Program for Disaster Prevention and Reduction, the idea arose of adapting the Hospital Safety Index (established by PAHO/WHO in 2008) to create an instrument for educational centers, thus responding to the need for having a diagnosis of the safety level of the country's educational system in case of disasters.

In May 2010, the preliminary version of the Educational Center Safety Index was launched, after several workshops on validation of the instrument and its testing in several educational centers to ensure its functionality.

Since then, more than 300 evaluators have been trained, including teachers, architects, and architecture students, and 10% of the official educational centers of the country have been evaluated. In addition, the application of the instrument is planned for the 2,500 educational centers on the list for use as shelters, for those in high-risk areas, and for those for which the educational community has requested an evaluation from the Ministry of Education.

Future plans call for continuing with the preparation of a Safety Index for Smaller Educational Centers similar to the Hospital Safety Index - Guide for the Evaluation of Small and Medium Health Facilities and for continuing to evaluate educational centers in Guatemala. In addition, the tool will be shared at Latin American level so that other countries can adapt it to their own needs.

The Hospital Safety Index, together with the experience of safe hospitals evaluators, made it possible to develop the Educational Center Safety Index, putting in place another of the priorities for achieving resilient communities and cities.

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1 This commission is coordinated by the Vice-Presidency of the Republic of Guatemala and includes CONRED (Executive Secretariat of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction), the Ministry of Public Health, and the Ministry of Education, among others. It has support from PAHO /WHO, the World Bank, UNDP, and CEPREDENAC (Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America).