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Community-based Disaster Preparedness Worldwide

Community-based and non-governmental organizations, teaching and learning institutions, along with local and national governments around the world, are collaborating to reach the public in order to build a culture of safety starting at the individual and community levels and working upwards. Maintaining emergency supplies, including bags or kits to be taken in case of evacuation (“go bags”), and practicing safety drills are two important ways to prepare.

Collecting examples of this material from around the world contributes towards education-related initiatives in disaster risk reduction including the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction’s Knowledge and Education Cluster. Taking such programs into the classroom also helps to promote school safety, such as the work of the Coalition for Global School Safety, while encouraging the pupils to take the ideas back to their family and neighbors.

This poster provides a sample of some initiatives and ideas from around the world regarding emergency supplies, go bags, and disaster-related drills. More examples would be welcome. Emphasis is that most vulnerabilities and many hazards are locally contextual meaning that these activities often require adjustment for the local context rather than being immediately transferable. One possible pitfall to try to avoid is preparing for only the most common hazards because that could lead to difficulty if a rarer event strikes. Taking a vulnerability perspective for supplies, bags, and drills can help in minimizing this concern; however, a hazard-specific approach should not be completely neglected, such as considering lifejackets for floods and face masks for volcanic ash.

The material presented has also led to two “activity sheets” detailing how to encourage students and their families to think about and produce their own go bag. The first activity encourages people to think about their go bag in a personal, rather than a prescriptive, way. The second activity provides children and families with the opportunity to think about their own disaster preparedness and to practice selecting and assembling emergency supplies in a go bag. These activity sheets are available as handouts in front of the poster and as downloads on the Risk RED website <http://www.riskred.org>