The Caribbean Safe School Initiative (CSSI) is the main framework to advance school safety in the Caribbean; it is the Caribbean contribution to the ‘Worldwide-Initiative on Safe Schools (WISS)’ and a partnership framework for advancing safe school implementation at the national level among Caribbean countries.

Complementary to the corresponding regional and international strategies, CSSI was launched in April 2017 during the First Caribbean Ministerial Forum on School Safety. The CSSI, originally supported by the ‘Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety’ and the related Road Map on School Safety, is currently endorsed by 19 Caribbean countries that joined the initiative during the First, Second and Third Caribbean Ministerial Forums on School Safety (2017, 2019 and 2022 respectively). In 2022 the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration was replaced by the Saint Maarten Declaration in the Third Caribbean Ministerial Forum on School Safety. It now has a stronger emphasis on pandemics, the systemic nature of risk, increasing climate concerns, the specific situation of the small island developing states, as well as on multi-stakeholder participation and the role of the youth. The CSSI Roadmap guides the efforts by enabling systems to support safe schools, and focuses on three priority areas of: 1) safe learning environment; 2) school disaster management, and; 3) disaster risk reduction (DRR) in education curricula.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a direct impact on the education systems of all countries in the region. Governments in the region faced challenges with limited capacity to respond. The lack of specific preparedness measures to face pandemics during the hurricane season led to improvisation and real-time testing of policies and measures that they had available, but also to some good practices and a range of valid recommendations around the CSSI and the Sendai Framework priorities for action.

The 2022 CSSI monitoring was aligned to the MTR SF methodology and provided valuable information on the progress of the CSSI in past, current and future aspects, concluding that:

- **In enabling systems and policies** the highest level of achievement relates to the alignment of school safety plans with national disaster risk management (DRM) plans. All 2022 CSSI monitoring respondents have either aligned the plans or have identified critical linkages with national DRM plans, which has been done in coordination with the national DRM office/structure. Significant progress has been reported with Ministries of Education (MOEs) either working to include a school safety line into annual budgets or identifying existing
budget lines that could be used as funding sources. However, this is likely the result of yearly ad-hoc budget allocations and not necessarily supported by specific policy requirements, for which allocating resources may be sporadic. Further work on policy development would positively influence this priority.

- **For safe learning environment**, half of the respondents stated that their country had adopted a standardized school safety assessment tool and a quarter of respondents indicated that national authorities had adopted a safe school standard. However, there is insufficient knowledge of potential assessment tools available. With little investment in capacity building to implement the selected tool, the consistency and quality of these assessments is suggested to be evaluated to identify areas of improvement and support.

- **For school disaster management**, most efforts have been invested in supporting schools to develop school-level safety plans. Several countries indicate having a mechanism in place to help schools with safety. However, sector-wide school safety priorities and emergency plans do not appear to receive the same level of attention. The relevant stakeholders involved in school safety appear to be well-identified at the national level, but limited engagement or coordination mechanisms exist to agree on specific roles and responsibilities.

- **For risk reduction and resilience in education**, short of half of the schools are indicating significant progress or achievement in the inclusion of DRM subjects into a formal curriculum, and other countries report some to no progress. This appears to be a result of individual or one-off country efforts rather than a coordinated initiative. There is frequent mention of community training being carried out, but this has been implemented by the DRM authorities rather than by the education side. Overall, there is more potential of the education sector to be used as a platform to strengthen DRR awareness-raising.

- The summary results of **context changes and prospective views** are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive changes</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater awareness of the school safety needs;</td>
<td>Limited capacity/expertise at the Ministry level;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater collaboration among the Ministries of Education (MOE:s) with</td>
<td>Staff availability to monitor CSSI progress;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Emergency Management Offices (NEMO:s) and the Ministries of Health</td>
<td>The delivery of education in a pandemic;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MOH:s); Drills and extensive trainings have been conducted; School</td>
<td>Urgency due to climate change effects;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emergency operation plans (SEOP:s) have been developed; School building</td>
<td>A greater buy-in into the entire CSSI movement;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>codes have been improved.</td>
<td>Aging infrastructure to cope with changing climate and other risks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Prospective on achieving CSSI – to 2030 and beyond                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Anticipated challenges**                                                      | **Anticipated opportunities**                                                                | **Priorities for action**                                                                       |
| Financial limitations; Limited strategic planning; Lack of willingness to        | Partnerships; Public-private partnerships; Local and regional exchange of ideas and         | Human and financial resources need to be assigned for CSSI; High-level commitment needed;       |
| embrace change; Challenges in the operationalizing support structure.           | human resources; Green approaches (e.g. environmentally friendly and nature-based         | Legal frameworks need to be developed and applied; Timelines and measuring CSSI to be applied    |
|                                                                                | solutions) and coherence with climate change related actions.                              | as a regular practice.                                                                          |
1. Desk review

Global and Regional Frameworks contributing to the Caribbean Safe School Initiative (CSSI)

Agenda 2030 and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030: Education plays a crucial role in reducing vulnerability and building community resilience to disaster risks, as well as in empowering people and reducing poverty. Recognizing that a quality education is the foundation for improving people’s lives and for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the 193 countries represented by the United Nations General Assembly, reflects the commitment to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” as Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. Damage to schools by disasters can lead not only to the loss of children’s and teachers’ lives but also to a loss of public investment in social infrastructure and interruptions to education, which in turn can have lifelong implications.

To advance this goal, the Sendai Framework recognizes that schools should incorporate disaster-resistant structures according to local risks, while at the same time calling for knowledge and awareness of hazards and risk to be part of the school curriculum in order to bring about behavioural changes that support disaster risk reduction (DRR) and greater resilience. The framework also states that policies and practices for disaster risk management should be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment. It also calls for the strengthening of disaster resilient public and private investments, particularly through structural, non-structural and functional disaster risk prevention and reduction measures in critical infrastructure, in particular health and educational facilities and other critical infrastructure.

The VII Regional Platform for DRR in the Americas and the Caribbean further supports the implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR, where the CSSI was represented by the 2021 Chair, Hon. Curtis King, Minister of Education of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Furthermore, the “Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030 in the Americas and The Caribbean (Updated November 2021)” specifically mentions the need to work towards a stronger integration of knowledge on hazards and the use of disaster risk information in the education sector.

Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy: In the Caribbean, the Regional CDM Strategy 2014-2024 is the strategic road map for disaster risk management (DRM). The Strategy was developed through a broad-based, participatory and consultative process that was led by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and involved regional disaster risk management stakeholders including CDEMA Participating States, representative of key sectors, regional and international development partners and donors. The Strategy aims to integrate CDM more firmly into development planning and to provide broad strategic direction for addressing the challenges of disaster risk management in the Caribbean during its ten-year lifespan. Education is given significant consideration within this regional Strategy.

Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS): WISS was developed in collaboration with partners from the Global Alliance on DRR Education and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES), building on guidance from the 2009 and 2011 Global Platforms for DRR. It sought to undertake risk assessments on existing education and health facilities and to support the 2013 Global Platform for DRR’s High-level Communiqué “(t)o start a global safe schools and safe health structures campaign
in disaster-prone areas with voluntary funding and commitments to be announced at the World Conference on DRR in 2015”. WISS is a government-led global partnership for advancing safe school implementation at the national level. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was the first Caribbean country to sign up to WISS. Through the commitment to the CSSI, the current 19 CSSI signatories directly contribute to the WISS.

The WISS seeks to motivate and support Governments to develop national strategies and implement school safety, building upon the Comprehensive School Safety Framework and its three core pillars that should be addressed through education policies and plans and aligned with disaster management at national, regional, district, and local school site levels. A safe school in this way reflects the following:

- Safe Learning Facilities (disaster-resilient infrastructure)
- School Disaster Management
- DRR and Resilience Education

Furthermore, the WISS also strives to promote the sharing of good practices and achievements in safe school implementation, as well as to help identify challenges and offer technical assistance and particular expertise with regards to the three pillars.

**CSSI overview and development**

CSSI was launch in April 2017 during the ‘First Caribbean Ministerial Forum on School Safety’ held in Antigua and Barbuda. The CSSI is the suggested framework to advance school safety in the Caribbean. The initiative is the Caribbean contribution to the WISS through partnership for advancing safe school implementation at the national level among Caribbean countries. Ministries of Education lead CSSI implementation with the support of international, regional and national partners.

Through the ‘Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety’, the CSSI is currently endorsed by 19 Caribbean countries and overseas territories (see table here below). Initially, 12 Ministries of Education signed on during the First Caribbean Ministerial Forum on School Safety where the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety in the Caribbean was first adopted. Six additional countries and overseas territories signed on during the Second Ministerial Forum on School Safety hosted by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 2019, and one more during the Third Forum held in 2022 in Sint Maarten.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating countries &amp; overseas territories – CSSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>From 2017</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key commitments contained in the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration are:

- Engage in the multi-stakeholder WISS, by supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) Framework and the Model Safe School Programme in the Caribbean for public and private facilities at all levels;
- Build resilience in the education sector;
- Source financial and other resources from the national, regional, and the international community, from public and private sectors, to be channeled towards strengthening efforts in DRR linked to the education sector;
- Coordinate with national and regional disaster management bodies to integrate the tenets of the CDM Strategy into education policies and plans and to ensure alignment with existing national and regional DRR and climate change resilience building strategies;
- Strengthen the coordination and cooperation mechanisms among stakeholders at the community, national, regional and international levels;
- Build stronger collaboration among the Ministries of Education (MOE:s) in the Caribbean with relevant private sector entities, non-governmental organisations as well as other regional and international entities;
- Define and put in place a framework to track and measure progress on the implementation of the actions identified in the Road Map on School Safety to be authorized by the Minister of Education.

During the ‘Third Caribbean Ministerial Forum on School Safety’ held in Sint Maarten in June 2022, the Ministers of Education signed the Sint Maarten Declaration on School Safety, thus replacing its predecessors, the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety. They key changes are as follows:

- Further recognition of the threats that climate change and climate variability, biodiversity disruption and the declining health of the ocean pose to the countries in the Caribbean, and which will increase in intensity and frequency with devastating impact on peoples, the environmental cover, the built environment, and the education system in particular;
- Recognition of biological hazards and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted at Conference of Parties (COP) 15 in 2022;
- Recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic, as a manifestation of the systemic nature of risk, further emphasizes the urgency to address disaster risk and build resilience;
- Noting with concern that the human and financial cost of disasters is rapidly rising, trapping countries in a continuous cycle of emergency response, curtailing governments in their capacity to grow and develop, and impacting the right and access to education for all;
- Further recognition of the specific challenges facing small island developing states (SIDS), as well as social hazards such as migration and forced displacement, requiring a concerted integration of DRR into multisectoral recovery plans and development planning of the education sector, requiring concerted action at the school level to address disaster displacement risks and impacts, including recognition of additional pressures on host countries and communities;
- Acknowledging the need to enhance risk governance through a truly multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement at regional, national and local / municipal, community and school levels; and
Recognizing particularly that the youth forum is an integral part of the CSSI, the important role of youth as agents of change, as well as the contribution of future generations in the face of current challenges including reducing disaster risk, ensuring climate action, and promoting resilience.

School safety actions enshrined in the declaration are guided by the ‘Caribbean Roadmap for School Safety’ which formed part of the outcomes of the ‘First Caribbean Ministerial Forum on School Safety’ in 2017 and was subsequently updated in 2019 during the ‘Second Caribbean Ministerial Forum on School Safety’. With the aim to create synergies and demonstrate technical support that can be provided, partners of the CSSI support the implementation of school safety around the Roadmap objectives through the following resources and services:

Building an enabling environment:

➢ Comprehensive School Safety Targets and Indicators;
➢ Online Lesson: Introduction to Comprehensive School Safety;
➢ Training Programme on CSS and Education Sector Policies and Plans - Education Sector Snapshot for CSS and Education in Emergencies (EiE);
➢ Integrating Safety, Resilience and Social Cohesion in Education Sector Planning: Guide for Education Sector Planners and Online Course;
➢ Rights, Respect, Responsibility (RR&R) Policy, and;
➢ Child-Cantered Multi-Hazard Assessment.

Pillar 1 – Safe school Facilities:

➢ Towards Safer School Construction, and;
➢ Guidance Notes on Safer School Construction.

Pillar 2 – School Disaster Management:

➢ Participatory School Disaster Management Resources, and;
➢ Online Lesson: Introduction to Participatory School Disaster Management.

Pillar 3 – Risk Reduction and Resilience Education:

➢ Mainstreaming DRR in the School Curricula;
➢ Public Awareness & Public Education – Key Messages;
➢ Education For Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives;
➢ Scope & Sequence for RR&R Curriculum Integration, and;
➢ Lesson Plans and Informal Activities.

Supporting regional actors

The CSSI is supported mainly by CDEMA, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The organization of the CSSI Forums is possible thanks to the financial support by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).
CSSI and the COVID-19 pandemic

A ‘Regional Review on School Safety in the context of Systemic Risk: The Virtual Caribbean Safe School Initiative Pre-Ministerial Forum’ was held in March 2021, carried out virtually due to travel and mobility restrictions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a direct impact on the education systems of all countries in the region. Education systems have been responding to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, while also preparing and implementing actions to mitigate the potential consequences of the hurricane seasons and other potential hazards during the pandemic. Governments in the region have been facing challenges with limited capacity to respond and they have been using the instruments that are available to secure school safety. The lack of specific preparedness measures to face pandemics during the hurricane season led to improvisation and real-time testing of policies and measures.

With this in mind, several recommendations were put forward in the Caribbean.

Recommendations around the School-Related Public Health Measures in the context of COVID-19 to keep students and educators safe from death, injury, and harm in schools by:

Ensuring that local information is accessible and reliable, and understanding the COVID-19 contagion trends in specific areas, including:

- Strengthening the school’s capacity to maintain appropriate collaboration and coordination with local public health authorities;
- Identifying and mapping children with underlying conditions or special needs, as well as educational staff at risk for severe disease;
- Securing special transportation arrangements to reduce exposure;
- Ensuring that daily mechanisms are in place for monitoring staff and children who may become ill and ensure that staff and children are equipped with hand sanitizers and masks;
- Ensuring that deep cleaning and sanitization is done prior to reopening schools; and installing additional stations of running water for regular hand washing;
- Being prepared to adjust the school schedule to accommodate new mitigating measures;
- Exploring formalized after-school programs with trusted providers;
- Putting in place social distancing measures such as the arrangement of desks at least 6 feet apart; Avoiding any non-essential assemblies and ensuring that during persons lunch eat in the classroom instead of the cafeteria;
- Doubling or tripling the stated measures for special education situations;
- Ensuring that all measures are communicated clearly to parents/guardians considering the expectations of parents, students, and schools; and ensuring that parents receive instructions regarding reporting illness and travel history to school;
- Developing a decision model for closing and reopening schools as needed due to the resurgence of community transmission, and;
- Coordinating with National Teachers Unions and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) for contingency measures for outbreaks of illness in staff or students.

Enabling continuity of education through all expected hazards and threats, including:

- Ensuring that virtual platform resources for learning are available to staff and students and that all students have access to education (leave no one behind);
- Reviewing online teaching and exam options;
• Continuing blended learning, by trying to adopt emerging technologies and other modalities that facilitate learning, especially in times of crisis;
• Using new approaches to teaching by boosting creativeness;
• Managing school-based and national assessment methods;
• Adapting and revamping current curriculum in order to integrate all-hazards, and be ready to develop a minimum curriculum adapted for emergency situations;
• Exploring opportunities for strengthening education continuity with consideration for pandemic and biological hazards integration;
• Understanding 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, and;
• Determining critical levels of staff required to keep the schools open.

Receiving support from regional partners, including:

• Support to partners, as they must recognize their role in mobilizing resources to ensure effective advancement of the CSSI and promote synergies as a commitment to energize efforts in advocating for political support;
• Fast-tracking 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, and;
• Strengthening emphasis on biological, anthropogenic and other threats in assessments, policy, and contingency planning for the education sector, where needed.

Strengthening school preparedness and education resilience, including:

• Recognizing that the COVID-19 experience gives rise to some considerations for the partners throughout the region; plan for business continuity and distance learning protocols to access virtual platforms and implement strategies aiming to close the digital gap and provide students with resources to manage learning gaps;
• Provide clear risk communication and information to influence the preventive behaviors of school communities;
• Provide financial and dietary support to marginalized students;
• Secure psychosocial support for students, teachers and administrative personnel at schools;
• Provide continuous teacher orientation and professional development support;
• For institutions with residential facilities/health stations, ensure there are guidelines for managing illness, quarantine, reporting illness to the Ministry of Health for staff and students;
• Be informed about measures being implemented in other countries, and promote regional protocols;
• Secure coordination and consultations with Teachers Unions;
• Strengthen governance mechanisms of intersectoral coordination at all levels, and;
• Update policies and plans to consider biological hazards with a multi-hazards approach based on risk information and knowledge.

Recognizing that back to normal is not good enough, recover and build back better, including:

• Consider wellbeing when reopening, as well as protection, policy frameworks, financing opportunities, safe operations, reaching the most vulnerable, and learning;
• Consider safety protocols for teachers and students;
• Prepare for the double impact of climate-related and/or geological events;
• Guarantee education sector investments are safeguarded;
• Create more inclusive education systems moving from crisis to opportunity;
• Prevent student drop-off and student loss especially of poor households, and;
• Prevent education service reduction of demand and supply.

Recommendations from the CSS Framework for COVID-19:

• Policy and Enabling Environment: Ensure that the CSS Framework is clear on indicating an all-hazards approach with multi-hazard risk assessments to inform education sector policies and plans, and which consider biological and anthropogenic metabolism hazards;
• Pillar 1 – Safer School Facilities: Ensure limited use of schools as temporary shelters or as collection, isolation, testing, and voting centers while maintaining educational continuity plans. If school facilities are used, they must be cleaned up and decontaminated prior to being utilized for education purposes; Water, sanitation and hygiene facilities must be improved as a key life-saving measure; An appropriate school budget for maintenance must be available;
• Pillar 2 – School Safety Management: Prepare for an efficient response and recovery which cover many elements to be ready in order to manage a critical hazardous situation; Take care of teacher’s wellbeing with clear information, protection, and support for mental health in the light of COVID-19, and;
• Pillar 3 – Risk Reduction and Resilience Education: Develop a minimum curriculum to be followed under particular conditions; Support children and family activities with games, wellness exercises, acts of kindness, and disaster preparedness games.
The Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Case Study

The Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation, and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines shared its national response to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. Its response was mainly guided by its national school safety policy and related plans.

In order to secure education continuity and aiming to secure sustained engagement of students, a wide range of virtual platforms were tested by selected schools. After a consultation process a common online platform was adopted. Training on the different modalities for online teaching, including the efficient use of the platform, was provided to school staff, and an eLearning help desk to address queries was established. In addition, live classes were broadcasted on television and radio stations, as well as through social media sites, such as Facebook. When online learning was not possible, due to lack of Information Technology (IT) devices, access to internet, weak electricity connection, or other unexpected issues, the “School in a Bag” initiative was implemented with materials printed, packed, and made available to the students. Outreach to students who were still not engaged by principals, teachers, and other education officers was also carried out. In parallel with efforts to ensure education continuity, psychosocial support was organized through counselors for individual students and staff. The Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry also provided support and guidance to students through WhatsApp groups, online parenting sessions, and helpline appointments.

After the start of the pandemic, schools reopened on 25 May 2020. This was possible due to the application of the protocols established by the National COVID-19 Task Force. In addition to this, a detailed assessment of school facilities was performed, and specific interventions were made prior to the reopening of schools. Interventions included various actions such as hygiene practices, the requirement of student attendance on alternate days and the establishment of food arrangements for feeding programs. Among the lessons learned in this process, the key highlights included:

1) the importance of improving mechanisms for blended learning (physical and virtual);
2) the need to incorporate electronic and online media, and face-to-face teaching/learning more effectively in the education sector strategies; and
3) the importance of developing online teaching/learning protocols, reliable internet, and IT devices to support blended learning.

The crisis highlighted the importance of engagement at all levels of school safety with increased investment in human and financial resources, as well as the imperative required to ensure that all education institutions develop, update, disseminate and test disaster management, school safety and contingency plans.

Managing information flows and conducting regular meetings with key stakeholders have also proved to be key elements in emergency situations. Similarly, detailed assessments, and the storage and management of survey data is critical, not only for operations in normal times, but also to inform in a quick and efficient manner decision-making processes in times of emergencies.
2. Survey analysis

Caribbean Roadmap on School Safety
2022 Monitoring
Combined with the MTR SF methodology
June 2022

Background
The present document contains the initial findings of the monitoring conducted on the implementation of the 2019 Caribbean Roadmap for School Safety. An online survey informs the monitoring and covers the 25 national-level activities under the roadmap’s six priorities. Twelve countries conducted the self-assessment, 10 of which are signatories to the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety.

Enabling systems and policies

The highest level of achievement relates to the alignment of school safety plans with national disaster risk management (DRM) plans. All respondents have either aligned the plans or have identified critical linkages with national DRM plans. To an extent, it has been mentioned to be done in coordination with the national DRM office/structure. There has also been significant progress in developing broader education-sector DRM plans. However, in most cases, the inclusion in annual work plans, budgets and monitoring of MOEs has not yet been achieved. Notwithstanding, countries report some progress in the monitoring or school safety policies or agendas, but to what extent this is part of an M&E system or an ad-hoc approach cannot be established. Most respondents do not report any progress related to the review of legal and policy legislation to ensure the inclusion of school safety.

Analysis: Most countries have invested significant effort to ensure coherence between school safety plans and national DRM plans while working with existing policy frameworks. Incipient initiatives exist to include school safety into MOE budgets, but this is likely the result of yearly ad-hoc allocations and not necessarily supported by specific policy requirements.
Establishing capacity for school safety within MOEs presents a mixed picture. About half of the respondents indicated that either a structure for school safety had been established or specific school safety activities had taken place. The other half indicated that ToR for school safety staff had been drafted or an outline of capacity strengthening activities developed but not yet implemented. From a financial perspective, almost half of the respondents have not developed a proposal for school safety funding. However, primarily significant progress has been reported with MOEs either working to include a school safety line into annual budgets or identifying existing budget lines that could be used as funding sources. In a few cases, specific budget allocation for school safety has been reported. Nonetheless, about a third reported no progress on the availability of financial resources.

**Analysis:** With school safety not sufficiently supported by policy requirements, allocating human and financial resources, including capacity building, is sporadic and likely driven by the interests of “school safety champions” in crucial MOE positions. Further work policy development will probably positively influence this priority.

**Pillar 1: Safe Learning Environment**

Half of the respondents stated their country had adopted a standardised school safety assessment tool. At the same time, a quarter analysed existing tools, but no decision has been taken on the most suitable one, and the remaining few reported no progress. This contrasts with most countries either reporting no progress or only some progress on the training of trainers and capacity development to implement the assessment tool. At the same time, about a quarter of respondents indicate an assessment tool used in pilot schools. The calibration of the tools, based on pilots, has been predominately reported as no progress or, in a few cases, some progress or achievement. The scaling up of the tools to the national level and the monitoring and evaluating of these exercises has seen little to no progress.

**Analysis:** There is mixed feedback on selecting an assessment tool, indicative of either indecision or insufficient knowledge of potential assessment tools available. With little investment in capacity building to implement the selected tool and several countries reporting the assessment being implemented in pilot schools, the consistency and quality of these assessments should be evaluated to identify areas of improvement and support.
The agreement on a safe school standard at the national level has seen little progress. Only one country reported having adopted a safe school standard, with the remaining reporting no progress or technical staff working on its development or concluding its development. However, a quarter of respondents indicated that national authorities had adopted a safe school standard, while half reported no progress on an official endorsement.

**Analysis:** Adopting a safe school standard is closely linked with regional stakeholders supporting this initiative. This could have contributed to the low implementation level of this priority.

**Pillar 2: School Disaster Management**

Most efforts have been invested in supporting schools to develop school-level safety plans. Several countries indicate a mechanism in place to help schools with safety, while almost none consistently offer this support to all schools. A few cases of no progress have been reported. The development of a sector-wide Education in Emergencies (EiE) plan has seen only incipient work, and only one country reports having approved an EiE plan.

**Analysis:** The approach to school safety appears to be targeted at the school level, while sector-wide school safety priorities and emergency/contingency plans, more complex, do not appear to receive the same level of attention.

Most countries report some to no progress in identifying stakeholders and assigning roles and responsibilities for school safety. In most cases, lists of stakeholders have been put together or lessons learned on coordination collected. However, only in a few instances, this has translated into roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and coordination mechanisms being drafted or agreed upon.

**Analysis:** The relevant stakeholders related to school safety appear to be well-identified at the national level. Still, limited engagement or coordination mechanisms exist around which to discuss and agree on roles and responsibilities. This might also contribute to the little advancement of education sector DRM plans, part of the previous priority.
Pillar 3: Risk Reduction and Resilience Education

Diverse progress levels have been reported on the inclusion of DRM subjects into a formal curriculum, with short of half indicating significant progress or achievement. In contrast, other countries report some to no progress. Community-level training is mostly not reported, and where they are, it was mentioned that these take place under the national DRM structure.

Analysis: Inclusion of DRM into formal curricula continues to be uneven across the Caribbean. To date seem to be more the result of country efforts and less of a coordinated initiative across the Caribbean, structured around shared hazards and context. Relevant is the frequent mention among respondents that community training is carried out, but in the scope of the work by DRM authorities and not education. There seems to be underutilization of the education sector as a platform to strengthen DRR knowledge transfer and awareness-raising at the country level.

In coherence with the previous priority, pre-service and in-service teacher training is uneven across the Caribbean and mostly coincides with countries also incorporating DRM into their school curricula. Similarly, some countries carry out DRR training and awareness-raising with civil society organisations, but little more than half report some or no progress.

Analysis: This priority is closely tied with the other priority under this pillar, with results indicative of limited coordination among stakeholders to transfer knowledge on DRR systematically.

School Safety Topics Prioritised by Respondents

The following graphs represent respondents’ selection of priority subjects within each of the pillars, plus enabling systems and policies. Respondents could choose up to 4 options within each of the lists for enabling systems and policies, pillar 1: safe learning facilities and pillar 2: school safety and education continuity management. For pillar 3: risk reduction and resilience education responses were limited to 3 options, given the fewer choices under this section.

These selections will inform the template to be used during the Ministerial Forum to update the regional roadmap on school safety.
Achievements and challenges
Among the most significant positive changes, that led to schools, students, teachers, and staff being safer and better prepared, was described to be the greater awareness to the problem; the experiences over the last few years of multiple natural hazards and human related incidents in schools have highlighted the need to have mechanisms in place to deal with eventualities. Because of this awareness, school have started to reach out to ask for additional support.

On the practical actions, the regular practice of drills and National Days established to conduct drills was described to be a key practice by many of the respondents. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought this to a halt in some schools and they have not been resumed. Extensive training for both teachers and students was also described to be a good practice, as teachers and students became knowledgeable on how they respond during emergencies; inclusion of students in the process was considered important, as well as overall awareness programmes.

On institutional side, the provision of school emergency operation plans (SEOP) was considered essential, as well as construction of new schools taking on board building codes considering safety and health. Establishment of Safety & Emergency Teams in schools and NEMO's partnership with MOE was also described as of great support.

In relation to the most significant challenges (internal or external) to schools, students, teachers, and staff being safer and better prepared, a greater buy in into the entire movement at the school level was described to be a challenge; if the CSSI is to be successful, students and teachers need to be constantly trained in DRM concepts (while also recognized as a positive change above). More regular drills could be effective in transforming the policy from a written document into an active document. Overall, it was considered needed to find additional time to integrate DRR and safety mechanism into the daily operation of the schools.

A significant challenge was also described to be the capacity at the Ministry level, in terms of personnel and budget, as well as having dedicated staff to monitor and evaluate SSI. Staff already have multiple responsibilities and competing priorities and not everyone has the same level of interest and engagement. The other challenge is the parents’ willingness to have their children involved in activities that involve DRM. The responses also showed that not all the countries had moved to implementation yet.

One of the key solutions described was to make school safety part of the annual school development plan and to integrated it across subjects in primary and post primary institutions, as well as to get the unions on board at the beginning in order for it to be successful. Recognized volunteer groups within the school, such red cross, may assist on the awareness and engagement.

The major changes to the contexts within which the governments have been implementing the CSSI and the Roadmap since the launch of the CSSI were described to be on partnerships. There is greater collaboration with DRR and the Ministry of Health, which has fostered significant changes in how these challenges are addressed. School retrofitting and construction involving greater community consultation and discussion were also mentioned.

The governments were also described to better understands the significance of school safety. This has been highlighted by the use of schools as emergency shelters and the related challenges posed in relation to continuity of education and the damage to schools while being used of shelters. There is also better financial support and change int eh role of several intersectoral partners on the National Safe Schools Committee.

Disasters and pandemic also affected the prioritization; the COVID-19 pandemic brought issues forward and highlighted the lack of proper preparedness. It also altered the modality of teaching, and on the return to face-to-face instruction resulted in new safety measure in schools (e.g. hand hygiene). COCID-19 also slowed down the SSI process, due to the focal point being occupied with response work and the pandemic related budgetary cuts.
Upcoming regional roadmap review

The major changes / emerging issues / topics of concern in the period to 2030 and beyond, to be considered in prioritizing, accelerating and amplifying action within the CSSI and the Roadmap, were described to be related to the pandemic, as it has amplified the need for refocus on the training of teachers and education workers in the delivery of education in a pandemic. Addressing issues of climate change is considered urgent, as well as issues of overall resilience, sustainable development and post disaster recovery, particularly given our geographic concerns of the region. School shooting and bullying (of physical and cyber nature) and aging infrastructure in the light of the hazards were also considered increasing threats. Therefore, actions towards implementing school safety are considered needing to be fast-tracked in light of these many challenges.

Establishing the legal framework and further budgeting are anticipated and needed. Financing School Safety would have to be given greater priority by government and partners to support effective implementation. Relevant policy documents and plans and updating protocols for emergency management were considered needed in the future contexts. Project proposals, financial, evaluation, monitoring and developing workplans were also topics of interest, as well as the overall positioning of school safety in MOEs, with an important role of School Safety Focal Points. Integration of technology and associated infrastructure were considered needed also considering the future scenarios of migration/displacement associated with disasters or otherwise.

In relation to the prospects for achieving CSSI goals and the implementation of the Roadmap, the goals are generally considered attainable and the CSSI is gaining momentum, but restrictions are also observed particularly in the changing context of disasters. At times the process is advanced with local voluntary efforts. Therefore, it is considered that sufficient human and financial resources are needed to enable success. Commitment from management (ministerial and political level) is considered needed to enable this and other success factors, as well as timelines to properly measure progress. Overall awareness to keep focus and integrate CSSI as part of the normal practice, greater concentration on concepts and greater thrust to ensure future success were also mentioned.

The anticipated opportunities in looking forward were focusing particularly on partnerships. The public-private partnership is critical as the CSSI is moving forward. Partnering with local and regional entities to access resources was also considered a good opportunity, as well as greater regional collaboration especially between countries with similar challenges or with good practices, exchange of ideas and human resource where possible. Overall, developing partnerships through stakeholder engagements on all aspects of SSI was considered a good opportunity for the future. The eagerness of schools to with CDM was considered a good opportunity to get the work roll out easier as there is buy in. Some schools and countries are also looking forward to integrating green approaches, climate change and sustainable development into the programme.

Anticipated challenges in looking forward were focusing particularly on financial prospects and limitations. The lack of sufficient strategic planning and timelines for achieving each element was also considered a challenge to enable SSI completion. Embracing change, greater buy in and to facilitate entrenchment of concepts into the school system nationally, as well as understanding how to operationalize the school recognition program and possible models on developing a support structure for school safety at the national level were also considered in the challenge side of the forward-looking aspects.

The most relevant sectors MOE should coordinate with were NEMO/DRR and local disaster management offices (9 mentions), ministries/departments of health (9), physical planning and public works (6), environment and climate change (6), development (3), social services and inclusion (3), youth affairs, planning, finance, infrastructure, as well as emergency services (3, including fire, police, health), cabinet, communication and legal department, and a general mention of cooperation with all government ministries.

Other entities to coordinate with that were mentioned were the Red Cross and the civil society, national PTA, the local college, student bodies, teachers’ union, principals’ association, child protection, parents’ groups, employers’ federation, citizens, persons living with disabilities, religious entities, business/corporate sector (including utility or energy and construction Industry), trade unions and tourism industry.
3. Sources

The CSSI Thematic Case View of the MTR SF is based on the following sources:

**Literature review:**

- **CSSI (2017).** *Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety.* Retrieved from: Declaration_CSS_Ministerial_Forum_ENG.pdf (undrr.org)
- **CSSI (2022a).** *Caribbean Roadmap on School Safety Monitoring (2022).* Constructed in collaboration with the MTR SF Caribbean methodology. Available in documentation.
- **CSSI (2022b).** *Caribbean Safe School Initiative.* Retrieved from: Caribbean Safe School Initiative (CSSI) (undrr.org)
- **CSSI (2022d).** *Saint Maarten Declaration on School Safety (2022).* Available in documentation.
- **WISS (2022).** *Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS).* Retrieved from: Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS)

**Consultations:**

*Caribbean Roadmap on School Safety 2022 Monitoring, combined with the MTR SF methodology.* June 2022. Participation from:

- Arthur Selwood, Safe Schools Focal Point (SSFP), Education, British Virgin Islands.
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• Idelia Ferdinand, Senior Education Officer, Ministry of Education, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
• Ansil Frederick, School Safety Officer, Ministry of Education, Saint Lucia.
• Petrina Clarke, Health, Safety and Environment Coordinator, Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago.
• Joy Adamson, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Focal Point Barbados, Ministry of Education Technological and Vocational Training, Barbados.
• Olga Mussington-Service, Manager Student Support Services Division and SSFP, Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Sint Maarten.
• Daisry Higgs, Sr. Administrator, Ministry of Education, Bahamas.
• M. Julius, Director of Education, Ministry of Education, Montserrat.
• Tricia Esdaille, Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Education, St. Kitts and Nevis.
• Sandra Fahie, Education Officer, Curriculum (CSSI focal point), Department of Education, Anguilla.

**CSSI Third Ministerial Meeting.** June 2022. Validation of the Monitor results.