# Children's Participatory Assessment Toolkit
## for Transitional Learning Spaces in Emergency Contexts

### School Assessment Committee Guidebook



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children

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Dedicated to the students, teachers and community of L'École Guy J. Bonnet, Haiti


February 2012

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**The Participatory Assessment Process**

# What are Transitional Learning Spaces?



Example of a TLS in Haiti made out of concrete blocks and metal sheets



Example of a TLS in Haiti made out wood by an International Humanitarian Organization

Transitional Learning Spaces (TLS) are temporary schools designed to last for a short period of time after a natural disaster until more permanent schools can be constructed.

TLS are common in countries that have experienced an extreme natural disaster (such as an earthquake) or cyclical natural disasters (such as typhoons), as well as in countries that are transitioning from human conflict.

TLS can be built by the community using tents or other local materials, and are also constructed by international humanitarian aid agencies such as NGOs and UNICEF using plywood, cement, and metal sheets.

TLS are built quickly and often trade-offs are made on design standards to help the largest number of children return to school as quickly as possible. Sometimes this means that children attend TLS that have poor conditions for learning.

Because of the cyclical nature of disasters, as well as the local challenges of the education sector to quickly rebuild schools, TLS often become *de facto* permanent schools.

Therefore, the quality of TLS in emergency contexts is crucial to both the short- and long-term education attainment of children.

# What is unique about this toolkit?



Example of an assessment session with parents in the Philippines



Example of an assessment session in Haiti with children aged 8-9

This assessment toolkit enables children to evaluate transitional learning spaces according to their views about the quality of education in emergency contexts.

It is also the first assessment toolkit that empowers children to be facilitators of a school-wide evaluation with their peers.

The assessment process involves the participation of children, adolescents, caregivers and teachers, as well as the support of school directors, local authorities and community members.

This toolkit supports communities to discuss and analyze the quality of education in their school according to their own perspectives and ideas for change.

The purpose of the assessment is to improve the school by creating an intergenerational evaluation and school improvement planning process that includes children, teachers, administrators and caregivers working together.

The goal is to develop culturally appropriate, sustainable, and local systems of monitoring and evaluation that take into consideration children's viewpoints and capabilities to improve transitional learning spaces.

The toolkit has the potential to assist schools in developing strategic plans, a school vision, or a plan of action to move from a transitional learning space to a more permanent school. In this way, a bottom up system of local accountability for the quality of education in emergency contexts can be realized over time.

# What does the toolkit assess?



Example of an assessment session in Haiti with caregivers of children aged 0-7



Example of an assessment chart used to help participants analyze the results of the evaluation in a child friendly format

The toolkit contains two options for the indicators evaluated in the assessment: 1) a **core set of indicators**, and 2) a **comprehensive set of indicators**.

The core set of indicators focus primarily on the physical environment and its impact on school climate and learning.  We suggest the core indicators are most appropriate when the immediate emergency response period is completed after a natural disaster.

The comprehensive set of indicators cover a wide range of topics, such as children's health in schools, school-community relationships, and teacher support.  The comprehensive indicators and are most appropriate for the long-term planning and recovery of the education sector, or with schools during "normal" periods.

The assessment is not designed to impact student grades or teacher employment.

There are no right or wrong answers, as the assessment is based on the subjective viewpoints of children, caregivers and teachers.

Participation in the assessment is voluntary and anonymous.  All views are valued and given equal consideration in the assessment process, and suggestions are provided for how to obtain the unique viewpoints of girls and boys.

The assessment is primarily visual, and includes child friendly ways to represent data, images and other tools to communicate ideas to very small children and with those who cannot read

# What can be done with the results?



A school-wide community event in Haiti to share the assessment results and celebrate the school's assets



The assessment toolkit can help identify children's priorities for school change, such as access to water for drinking

The assessment includes an action component to create a **School Improvement Plan** based on the evaluation results.

While the school may require outside resources to improve certain elements of the learning environment, the goal is to enable students and teachers to develop their own solutions to problems they can fix together.

This may include improving the level of children's participation in school decisions, a pledge to reduce teasing and bullying among students, and programs to address the unique needs of boys and girls.

The school can also use the information from the evaluation for advocacy and fundraising purposes to obtain needs that require assistance or networks outside of the school.

With the school's participation and input, an assessment can help school directors, students, educators, emergency service and school support providers, and caregivers:

1. **Modify existing schools**
   Example: build ramps for disabled children

2. **Improve the quality of educational services**
   Example: programs for girls and boys

3. **Advocate for school needs**
   Example: funding for teacher salaries

4. **Plan new schools**
   Example: permanent schools

# What is the best way to use the toolkit?

**Representative Evaluation Process**

1 — Form a School Assessment Committee (SAC)
2 — Modify the Toolkit for the Local Context
3 — Conduct Assessment Session with the SAC
4 — Develop a School Improvement Plan
5 — Improve the School
6 — Evaluate School Improvements

**School-Wide Evaluation Process**

1 — Form a School Assessment Committee (SAC)
2 — Modify the Toolkit for the Local Context
3 — Train the School Assessment Committee as Facilitators
4 — Conduct Assessment Sessions with School Groups
5 — Develop a School Improvement Plan
6 — Improve the School
7 — Evaluate School Improvements

Based on local interests, there are two options for conducting the assessment: 1) a **representative evaluation process**, and 2) a **school-wide evaluation process**. The representative process relies upon the opinions of a "representative" group of stakeholders from the school, called a School Assessment Committee. This committee should include more children than adults (such as teachers or caregivers) to ensure young people's voices are central to the process.

The school-wide evaluation process requires more time and resources, but it empowers members of the School Assessment Committee (including children) to facilitate the evaluation with the entire school.

# Establish a School Assessment Committee
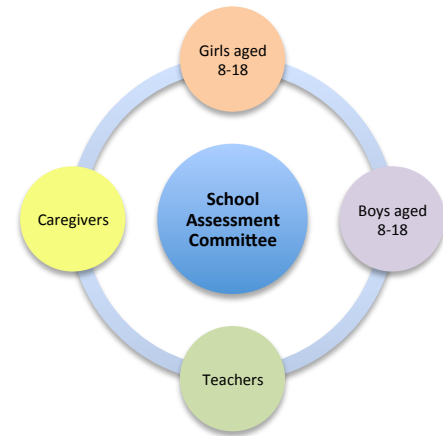
The School Assessment Committee of L'École Guy J. Bonnet in Haiti being honored for their work as facilitators of the school-wide evaluation process

Forming a School Assessment Committee (SAC) is key to the participatory use of the toolkit. The SAC consists of a representative group of the school's stakeholders, such as students, caregivers, teachers and school support staff.  It may also include people who make decisions about the school, such as school directors and local authorities.  However, children must always be given greater representation than adults on the committee to ensure their voices are heard.

The SAC is responsible for evaluating their school, developing and implementing a School Improvement Plan based on the evaluation results, and sharing the results with the larger school and community to support school improvements.  In the school-wide evaluation process, the SAC is also responsible for facilitating the assessment sessions with school groups.

Ideally, the SAC should consist of at least 25 members and be representative of the school's stakeholders.

### Potential SAC Members

❑ Male students (ages 8-18)
❑ Female students (ages 8-18)
❑ Early Childhood Educators
❑ Primary School Educators
❑ Secondary School Educators
❑ Emergency Service Providers
❑ School Support Staff
❑ Parents/Caregivers
❑ School Directors
❑ Children not in school
❑ Disabled children
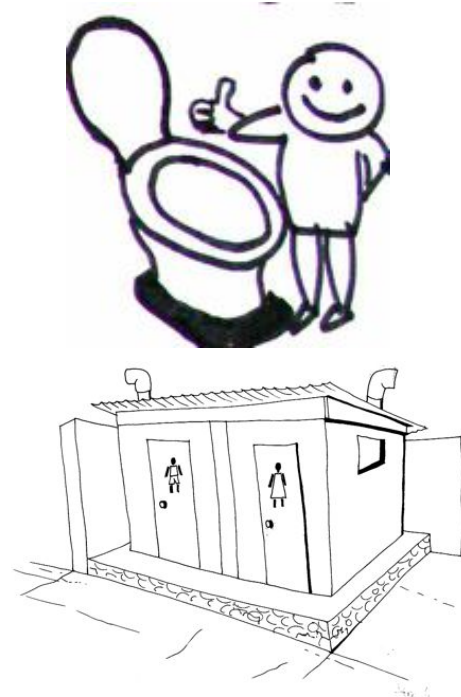❑ Community leaders
❑ Local authorities

# Modify the Toolkit for the Local Context



Example of an assessment booklet for children with a new item to evaluate added by the SAC. This item asks children if "the school starts on time," using an image of a clock.



Example child friendly images for "access to toilets" that can be used or adapted further for the local context.

The evaluation items contained in this toolkit should be carefully examined and adapted to the local context, language and cultural norms. We suggest the toolkit be modified with the participation of the School Assessment Committee through hands-on activities.

Modifications to the toolkit might include adding new items to be evaluated, and removing others that are not relevant. However, we recommend no more than 36 items be evaluated at one time. New ways of facilitating the assessment sessions can also be created by the SAC to meet local interests.

**Suggested Activities to Modify the Toolkit**

School Tours – Have SAC members share their opinions about the school on their own self-guided tours to help identify new items for the evaluation.

Drama/Theater/Games – Have SAC members create skits of "what makes a good/bad school" and use this as a way to identify new items for the evaluation.

Interviews with School Directors – Directors can help determine the appropriateness of the evaluation items, and the level of support from the Ministry of Education for school improvements.

# Conduct Assessment Sessions

The toolkit contains assessment booklets for:

❑ Children aged 8-12
❑ Adolescents aged 13-18
❑ Caregivers of children aged 0-7
❑ Educators
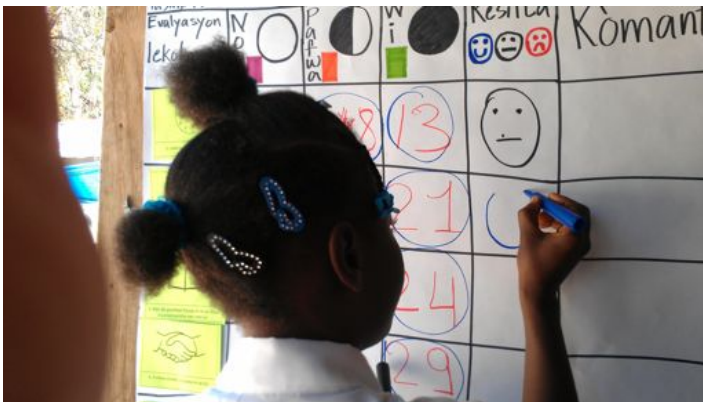


A female student facilitator running an assessment session in Haiti

These assessment sessions take about 3-4 hours to complete, either with the School Assessment Committee in the representative process, or through a school-wide evaluation process with different groups.

In the representative evaluation process, the assessment is conducted with the School Assessment Committee.  In the school-wide evaluation process, the School Assessment Committee facilitates sessions with each stakeholder group of the school.

Ideally, assessment sessions with children and adolescents take place during school, to emphasize the evaluation as a learning process.

**Steps in the Assessment Process**

1. Individual Voting with Assessment Booklets

2. Conduct a Group Vote of the Results

3. Collectively Analyze and Discuss the Results

4. Conduct a Final Vote on Priorities for School Improvement

5. Share and Display the Results



Example of a completed group voting and analysis chart with flash cards in green
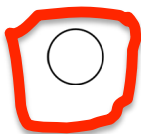
# Step 1 - Individual Voting with Assessment Booklets
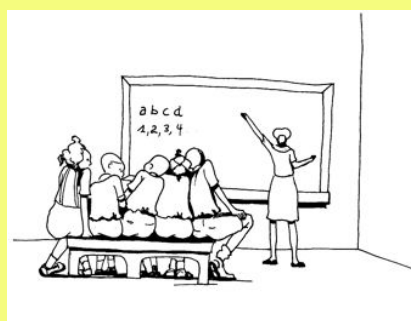
**Example Page from the Assessment Booklet**
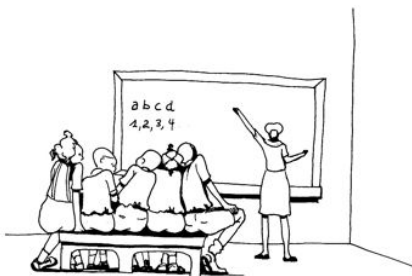


2. There is enough space for me to do my school work

| NO | SOMETIMES | YES |
|----|-----------|-----|



**Example Flashcard**



2. There is enough space for me to do my school work

Examples of an assessment booklet and corresponding flashcard. Participants mark their individual vote by circling the image that means, "no," "sometimes," or "yes." In this example, a child voted "no" to the statement, "there is enough space for me to do my school work." Flashcards show a child friendly image for each evaluation item, along with the evaluation statement.

The first step in the assessment process requires each child/teacher/caregiver to vote their own opinion about each evaluation item using assessment booklets. Each assessment item is represented as an image and has the statement to be evaluated listed below this image. Participants can select, "no," "sometimes," and "yes," as their response. Only one vote is required for each evaluation item.

The flashcards contained in this toolkit are used to help participants follow along and score each evaluation item one-by-one. We recommend each participant be given a flashcard that they are responsible for reading out loud to the group. If participants cannot read, facilitators can help them. We suggest this structured approach to allow participants to ask questions about items that are confusing. It is important to stress that no names are on the assessment booklets. Participants should mark their own personal votes without influence from peers.

After each item is scored individually, facilitators can place the flashcards in order on the group analysis charts for the next step in the evaluation process. Once all items have been evaluated, collect all the assessment books, shuffle them, and pass them back to participants for the group voting process.

# Step 2 - Conduct a Group Vote of the Results



**NO**  **SOMETIMES**  **YES**

Examples of the group voting process at L'École Guy J. Bonnet in Haiti. Green index cards represent "yes," or evaluation items that are rated favorably. Pink index cards mean "no," or evaluation items that are rated poorly. Facilitators count the total votes for each item and log them on large charts.

The second step in the assessment process consists of a group vote of the results. Ensure that everyone has an assessment booklet that was scored by someone else to protect the anonymity in the group voting process. The group vote is completed using different colored note cards or other local materials to indicate, "no," "sometimes," or "yes." If no materials are available, participants can raise their hands.

For each evaluation item, participants raise the color index card that corresponds to the individual vote in the assessment booklet. For example, everyone that sees a "yes," vote for item #3 then raises a green card for everyone to see. This process allows all participants to immediately see the evaluation results in a visual way.

Facilitators take turns counting and logging the total number of votes for "yes," "no" and "sometimes," on a group analysis chart. It may be easier to count votes for each category one at a time. For each evaluation item, facilitators must cross-check the total votes to determine if its equals the total number of participants. If someone forgets to vote, place this information in the "no vote" column on the group analysis chart. Complete the group voting process for each evaluation item until all of the results are logged for everyone to see and discuss.

➔    Take breaks during the assessment process to maintain focus, such as playing group games.

# Step 3 - Collectively Analyze and Discuss the Results

Facilitators recreate the example chart below using large paper and markers. This chart is used to log the group votes for each evaluation item, to summarize the results in a child friendly format, to comment on the results, and to conduct a final vote on priorities for school improvement.

Put the total votes for no, yes, sometimes in these columns, along with any missing votes

Summarize the results and discussion comments here

| My School Evaluation | No ○ | Sometimes ◑ | Yes ● | Missing Votes ! | Results ☺☺☹ | Comments *This is an issue because...* | Final Vote |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [flashcard: There are separate toilets for girls and boys] 1.There are separate toilets for girls and boys | ⑩ | 0 | ⑧ | | 😐 | There are separate toilets for boys and girls but the toilets are locked. Sometimes girls and boys have to share. | • •• |
| 2. | | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | | | |

Place flashcards here in order

Place votes here for school improvements

# Step 3 - Collectively Analyze and Discuss the Results

## Determine Trends in the Data
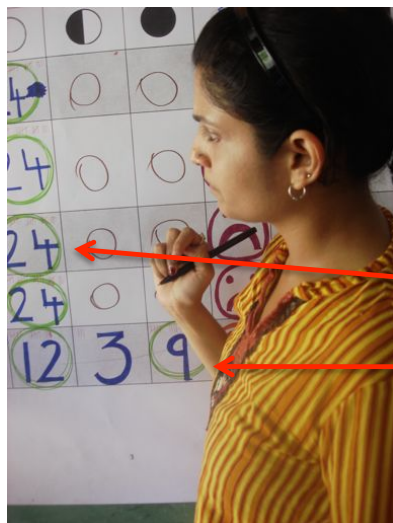
In order to analyze and discuss the results, children and adults must first determine trends in the data. This involves identifying and circling which responses received the highest number of votes.

Circle the number with the highest votes for each item

If 2 or 3 items are close in number, circle them all

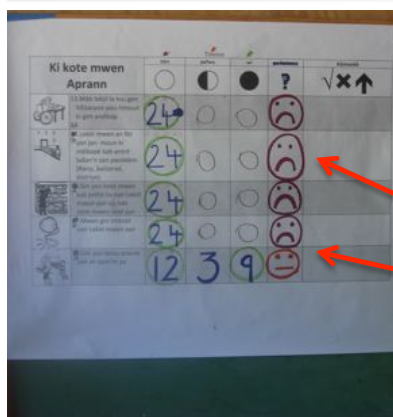The goal is to collectively determine if most of the participants voted yes, sometimes or no, or if there are mixed opinions.

## Summarize the Results in a Child Friendly Format

Using faces or other symbols, use this key to summarize the results in a way that children can understand

☹ = Most people say <u>NO</u>

😐 = Split opinions

☺ = Most people say <u>YES</u>

## Discuss the Results

Which items is the school doing well on? WHY?
Which items need improving? WHY?
Write what people say in the "Comment" box

NOTE: There may not enough time to talk about all of the items unless the assessment sessions can take place during school over a number of days.

Select a couple of items that are rated good, fair, and poor to discuss in greater depth. Encourage participants to also discuss solutions to the issues they identify.

# Step 4 - Conduct a Final Vote on Priorities for School Improvement



Give each participant 3 stickers (or other local materials) to vote for their priorities for school improvement. Ask participants to place their stickers next to the evaluation items they want to change the most in the "final vote" column on the chart.
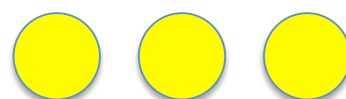


LEFT: Participants in Haiti making their final votes. BELOW: The top priorities for school improvement by grade at L'École Guy J. Bonnet in Haiti

Asking participants to rank their priorities for school change is very important.

These votes will help the School Assessment Committee determine priorities for action in their School Improvement Plan, and the relative importance of each item.

While some evaluation items may receive poor scores, it does not necessarily mean that these items are a priority for children to improve the school. However, the SAC should be encouraged to consider all low scoring items from the evaluation for the SIP.

It may also be useful to group the results and total the votes by category (such all the play items, or all of the disability items) to understand the overall importance of evaluation topics.

| | 2nd Grade | 3rd-4th Grade | 5th-6th Grade | 7th Grade | 8th Grade | 9th Grade | Caregivers (0-7) | Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Most Common Concerns for School Improvement | | | | | | | | |
| Internet | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x |
| Electricity | | x | x | | x | | x | x |
| Other Top Concerns for School Improvement by Age Group | | | | | | | | |
| Safe and clean floor | x | | | | | | | |
| Free time to play | x | | | | | | | |
| Spaces to play and practice sports | | x | | | | | | |
| Safe drinking water | | | x | | | | x | |
| Toys and recreation materials to play with | | | | x | x | | | |
| Adequate place to sit and write | | | | | | x | | |
| School supplies for learning | | | | | | x | x | |
| School funding | | | | | | | | x |

# Step 5 - Share and Display the Results



The results from the evaluation should be shared with the school community as a basis for further discussion and the school improvement planning process.  We recommend the results be displayed in a child friendly format, as shown in this example in Haiti at a school-wide meeting.  If desired, the School Assessment Committee can also generate average ratings for each item using simple statistics.  The average rating is helpful for understanding the relative scores among evaluation items, to create lists of the "top 10 school assets", as well as the "top 10 school needs." In the school-wide evaluation process, the average rating is also helpful to see different results by grade or group.

| Good Score | | Mixed Opinions | | Poor Score | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average Rating | Child Friendly Image of Rating | Average Rating | Child Friendly Image of Rating | Average Rating | Child Friendly Image of Rating |
| 2.0 | ☺ | 1.3 | 😐 | 0.6 | ☹ |
| 1.9 | ☺ | 1.2 | 😐 | 0.5 | ☹ |
| 1.8 | ☺ | 1.1 | 😐 | 0.4 | ☹ |
| 1.7 | ☺ | 1.0 | 😐 | 0.3 | ☹ |
| 1.6 | ☺ | 0.9 | 😐 | 0.2 | ☹ |
| 1.5 | ☺ | 0.8 | 😐 | 0.1 | ☹ |
| 1.4 | ☺ | 0.7 | 😐 | 0.0 | ☹ |

If no=0; sometimes=1; and yes=2, then:

Average Rating = (# of no votes × 0) + (# of sometimes votes × 1) + (# of yes votes × 2)
÷ total number of participants

# Develop a School Improvement Plan

| School Priorities | Proposed Solution | (+) Benefits (-) Challenges | Who Benefits?<br>☒ Students<br>☒ Teachers<br>☒ Caregivers<br>☒ School Environment<br>☒ Community | Short-term OR Long-term Goal? | How much money will it cost? | Who needs to be involved? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The school has access to electricity | Purchase a generator | (+) It will make our work easier to do and facilitate<br>(+)The Generator would be useful to help the school<br>(+) It will help the school during our cultural activities<br>(-)We will need the necessary things to make the Generator work<br>(-) In case there are damages, what do we do to repair and maintain it? | School Community Everyone | Short-term | $600-$800 USD | Everyone |
| 2. There are toys and recreation materials for students to play with | NGO donation of recreation equipment | (+) Immediate action on the evaluation results<br>(-) Not adequate for the unique needs of girls and boys, younger and older children | Students Community | Short-term | Donation | NGO School Assessment Committee |

Example portion of a School Improvement Plan for L'Ecole Guy J. Bonnet in Haiti. The School Assessment Committee determined it would be ideal to purchase a generator to help them raise money for the school, learn using audio visuals, plan community cultural events, and help the school to eventually obtain access to the Internet

Challenges

Benefits
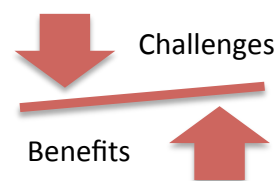
The School Improvement Plan (SIP) consists of written and/or visual documentation of how the School Assessment Committee will act on the evaluation results. Using the chart above as a guide, the committee discusses proposed solutions to the needs identified through the evaluation.

We suggest the committee split into small groups with more children than adults in each group. Assign each group 2 or 3 school priorities and ask them to brainstorm a solution to the issue, who will benefit, the potential resources needed to implement the plan, and who should be involved.

The SIP should be displayed in the school, shared with the community, and be regularly evaluated and updated by the SAC.

**Suggested Activities to Develop the SIP**

❑ Compare the assessment results for the different school groups (e.g., students vs. teachers, boys vs. girls)

❑ Rank common school assets and priorities for school improvement

❑ Use the "School Improvement Plan" chart from the toolkit as a guide for discussing and developing the plan

❑ Facilitate awareness raising activities that help plan actions for the school (e.g., workshops on school inclusion)

❑ Develop systems of accountability for implementing and monitoring the plan

# Improve the School and Evaluate Changes

Improve play spaces for the school. Increase the amount of free-time to play during school.

Improve school entrances to enable children with disabilities to attend school.

Organize a clean-up campaign to removal rubble from the school property.

Work with local authorities to improve access to clean water for drinking and washing.

Change the layout of the classrooms to help promote group learning.

Share the assessment results with the local media to advocate for school needs.

Once a School Improvement Plan is created, actions are taken by the School Assessment Committee to implement the plan. This might include obtaining outside support from organizations like the Ministry of Education or an international aid agency. However, emphasis should be placed on taking action on ideas the school can change itself without relying upon external support. The School Assessment Committee is encouraged to meet on a regular basis to review, evaluate and update the School Improvement Plan.

# Educational Activities to Support the Toolkit



A variety of educational activities can be developed to enhance and support the items evaluated in the assessment toolkit.

For example, present the SAC with aerial photographs from Google Earth of their school property pre- and post- disaster. Upon analyzing the photographs, discussed how the natural environment changed after the disaster and why. Discuss potential solutions to damaged school ecology, such as planting trees or vegetation.
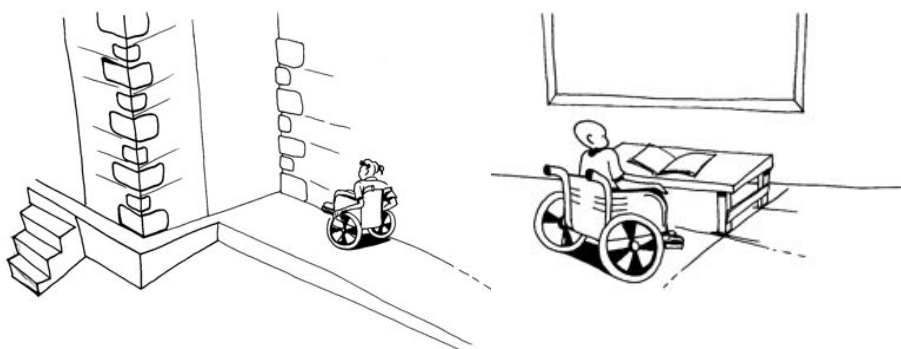


Present the SAC with statistics on the number of disabled children enrolled in school and asked them to discuss the causes of this issue and potential solutions. The school can host workshops for students on how to welcome students with disabilities.



Using blocks such as Legos or other local materials, conduct a school design activity with children. After building a base model of the classroom, ask children to redesign their classroom in a way they would prefer. This activity can also be used to consider new indicators for the toolkit.

Another idea to raise awareness may include the use of water testing kits and a school research project to monitor the water supply.