

CHAPTER

9

**THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR
ACTION PLAN FOR NATURAL DISASTERS
IN MEXICO**

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Abstract: This paper describes the objectives and methodologies of two disaster relief mechanisms developed by federal agencies in Mexico. The Natural Disaster Fund provides emergency financial support to non-insured public infrastructure. The Natural Disaster Preventive Fund supports preventative approaches for buildings located in high-risk zones that have been damaged or repaired as a result of a natural disaster. These funds represent a new integrated approach to disaster management in educational policy in Mexico.

Introduction

Mexico is often threatened by natural phenomena such as earthquakes, flooding, volcanic activity, hurricanes and tropical storms. In Mexico, federal agencies such as the Secretariat of the Interior, Secretariat of Public Education, the Civil Protection Agency and the National Disaster Prevention Centre have developed a number disaster relief mechanisms for federal and state governments, involving the mapping of risk zones for geological, hydro-meteorological and chemical hazards. This paper will focus on two of these mechanisms: the Natural Disaster Fund and the Natural Disaster Preventive Fund. The ministry delegated responsibility for implementing the two programmes to the Undersecretary of Planning and Co-ordination, and technical consultation of the Natural Disaster Fund to the Administrative Committee of the Federal Programme for School Construction (CAPFCE).

Natural Disaster Fund

Objective

The principle objective of the Natural Disaster Fund (FONDEN) is to provide emergency financial support to non-protected public infrastructure – including primary and secondary schools, technical and tertiary institutions, National Institutes of Anthropology and History, and the Institute of Fine Arts – in rural and urban areas that have been affected by natural disasters. The fund provides a temporary resource until the insurance premium is collected, ensuring that damaged property is quickly restored and preventative measures implemented where possible, with minimal disruption to public life.

How FONDEN works

As presented in Table 9.1, in the event of a natural disaster, the Secretariat of the Interior immediately declares a State of Emergency, and the Educational Sector Damage Subcommittee is called to evaluate the most damaged areas. The Ministry of State then issues a Statement of Disaster, which activates FONDEN and the Province or State Evaluation of Damages Committee. At this point, agencies in the education sector in each province or state complete a property damage assessment. According to the 2003 FONDEN Rule Book, when this report is finalised, which takes up to ten working days, the state representative sends a request for budget clearance to FONDEN's General Planning and Budget Area, where school codes and federal and state property status are verified to avoid future administrative problems; this process takes 15 days. The General Planning and Budget Area then transfers the final request to the Ministry of Finance, which responds in five days.

Table 9.1. Timeframe for FONDEN's actions

FONDEN schedule	Number of working days
Declaration of State of Emergency and activation of the Educational Sector Damage Subcommittee	Variable
Statement of Disaster (Article 40)	1
Activation of the Province or State Evaluation of Damages Committee (Article 43-I)	1
Preparation of final damage report (Article 43-II y 45)	10
Verification of final damage report by FONDEN's General Planning and Budget Area (Article 49-II)	15
Budget clearance by the Ministry of Finance (Policy and Spending Unit) (Article 47)	5
Observations from FONDEN's General Direction Office (Article 54)	2
Operation and exercise of resources (Article 59)	Variable

After budget clearance, FONDEN's General Direction assembles all agencies to review existing documentation for final approval. This process can take between 30 and 40 working days, although in critical cases, it can be completed in 15 days. If granted, funds are issued directly to a state-authorized contractor by the Federal Bank for Public Development (BANOBRA). State and federal bank accounts are only used in the case of collaboration with the local government. Table 9.2 presents the breakdown of state, federal and municipal participation in FONDEN.

Table 9.2. Proportion of federal, state and municipal agency participation in FONDEN

	Federal participation	State and municipal participation
Buildings (schools and universities)		
Federal	100	0
State	50	50
Municipal	30	70
Furniture and equipment (desks and laboratory material)		
Federal	100	0
State	30	70
Municipal	20	80
Federal District (Mexico City)	20	80

Source: FONDEN Rule Book Article 3.0 on Educational Infrastructure.

When the fund's cycle has ended, a report is prepared for the Educational Sector Damage Subcommittee, which cross-references the initial request with the final damage report and the current status of the project. If federal funds are involved, the report will be distributed to the Interior Ministry's Comptroller's Office. The Educational Sector Damage Subcommittee meets regularly to review the progress of projects. Funding can also be cancelled without penalty if the resources are no longer required. However, once the resources have been used, insurance is required to ensure eligibility for future funding.

Natural Disaster Preventive Fund

Objective

The main goal of the Natural Disaster Preventive Fund (FOPREDEN) is to support preventative approaches – including identifying possible risk situations and developing training and awareness material – for buildings that are located in high-risk zones or that have been damaged or repaired as a result of a natural disaster.

How FOPREDEN works

Application for this fund can be made to the FOPREDEN General Office between January and March every year. All proposals must contain a geographical map, explanations of proposed actions including a technical overview, an annual budget plan and a signed commitment of co-participation from the state governor or federal district mayor. In the case of application by federal agencies or ministries, the signature of the minister or general director is required.

A committee of federal authorities, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry for Social Development, Ministry of State, National Prevention Centre and National Water Commission, assesses the viability of the project. Two key factors that determine the viability of proposed projects are community interest and commitment and economic cost-benefit. The committee reviews all information by the end of April each year. The application is then sent to the Evaluation Commission, a body consisting of members of the Civil Protection Co-ordination, National Disaster Centre, Civil Protection Head Office, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, National Water Commission, Ministry of Finance (Policy and Spending Unit), Federal Comptroller's Office, Ministry of State (Comptrollers and Legal Units) and other interested parties. The commission allocates and reviews spending of funds every three months. Once the project has been approved, the Ministry of Finance evaluates the level of funding required.

Conclusion

Programmes such as FONDEN and FOPREDEN represent a new integrated approach to disaster management and policy in Mexico's educational sector. They address infrastructure

of schools, universities, historical landmarks, artistic buildings and archaeological sites; foster co-operation between federal, state and municipal agencies; use site selection, mappings and other assessment tools to monitor their implementation; and promote community awareness and education of natural disaster issues. Implementing and continually refining these new mechanisms for disaster relief will ensure an increasingly efficient response and recovery of public infrastructure in Mexico in the event of a natural disaster.