ISLAMABAD: Roll the dice and learn a lesson, is the main idea behind a new board game developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to entertain and inform children of disaster-prone areas.

The game, “Disaster Master” was originally designed for Indonesian children after a tsunami struck the country in 2004. However, with the magnitude and impact of disasters in Pakistan, the UN office in Bangkok in collaboration with UNESCO decided to launch the game in Pakistan as well.

It took the agencies four months to redesign the game adjusting it for common disasters in the country. It has currently been distributed in 120 schools in Khyber-Pakthunkhwa and 137 in Balochistan.

Disaster Master features a dice that feature different disasters such as floods, cyclones, droughts, earthquakes and landslides. Another dice features a set of questions on how disasters occur, the actions to perform before and after, how they are recognised. A move is made on the board and a flash card matching the disasters on the dice with the dice question is picked followed by asking the question on the card while providing options including the correct answers.

The original game did not include droughts, a disaster added especially for Pakistan. Other changes include characters wearing shalwar kameez for visuals children could more easily relate to. Though the game is not too difficult to play, training sessions were conducted for teachers in Balochistan on how to play it with their students.

Currently, the project is in the pilot stage.

UNESCO Project Officer Bilal Ghauri told The Express Tribune that they are using positive and negative feedback gleaned from the game’s players to incorporate in subsequent versions of the game. He said some people have asked to make the board and dice bigger. The agency has placed an order for 10,000 games to be subsequently distributed to the country’s disaster-affected regions.

The game is in both Urdu and English. There are no immediate plans of translating it into regional languages, according to Ghauri, who added that “Sindh and Punjab are not targeted”.

However, if the game is distributed through the National Disaster Management Authority, then it may be translated, he said.

UNESCO Deputy Director and Programme Specialist Roshan Chitrakar said that 500 games have been given to the Capital Administration and Development Division (CAAD), Islamabad for distribution to schools in the city. He added that there are structural challenges that need to be resolved including better construction and planning of school buildings and non-structural ones such as the implementation of good policies in school curriculums at the provincial level.

A school safety plan, part of the disaster risk reduction specifically tailored to different provinces keeping their challenges and needs in mind, has been introduced in Balochistan and would be deployed to the remaining provinces by the end of the year.

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More in Pakistan

Dismissal of two ETO inspectors, all jump in to protest

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