

STRENGTHENING SCHOOL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT: SAFEGUARDING STUDENTS AND PROMOTING RESILIENCE

by:

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In recent years, the occurrence of natural disasters and other emergencies has highlighted the need for comprehensive and effective disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) in educational institutions. Schools play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of students during disasters and emergencies. The following are some of the focuses on the importance of school DRRM, its key components, and practical steps that educational institutions can take to strengthen their preparedness and response.

Risk Assessment and Planning- The foundation of school DRRM lies in conducting thorough risk assessments. Schools should identify and assess potential hazards such as earthquakes, floods, storms, fires, and other emergencies specific to their geographical location. Based on the identified risks, an all-hazard emergency plan should be developed. This plan should include clear protocols for evacuation, sheltering, communication, medical response, and reunification of students with their families.

Building Infrastructure and Safety Measures- Creating a safe learning environment involves ensuring that school infrastructure is resilient to withstand disasters. Regular maintenance, inspection, and retrofitting of buildings are crucial to minimize damage and protect lives. Additionally, implementing safety measures such as fire alarms, emergency exits, first aid kits, and fire extinguishers is essential. Conducting drills and exercises to familiarize students and staff with evacuation procedures enhances preparedness.

Education and Awareness- An important aspect of school DRRM is educating students, teachers, and staff about potential hazards, risk reduction strategies, and response procedures. Integrating DRRM into the curriculum through lessons, workshops, and interactive activities raises awareness and builds a culture of preparedness. Students should be equipped with basic first aid skills, knowledge of emergency numbers, and understanding of the importance of early warning systems.

Partnerships and Collaborations- Schools should establish partnerships with local government agencies, community organizations, and emergency responders. Collaborating with these stakeholders enhances coordination and access to resources during emergencies. Engaging parents and guardians in DRRM efforts through regular communication, workshops, and involvement in emergency drills creates a holistic approach to student safety.

Continuous Evaluation and Improvement- DRRM is an ongoing process that requires regular evaluation and improvement. Schools should conduct post-incident reviews and debriefings to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Feedback from stakeholders should be sought and incorporated into the DRRM plan. Regular training sessions and simulations should be conducted to update skills and ensure readiness.

Psychological and Emotional Support- Disasters and emergencies can have a profound impact on the emotional well-being of students. Schools should provide psychological support services to help students cope with the aftermath of such events. Training teachers and staff to recognize signs of distress, fostering a supportive environment, and facilitating counseling services contribute to the overall resilience of students.

Schools play a vital role in disaster risk reduction and management by safeguarding the lives and well-being of students. By conducting risk assessments, implementing safety measures, raising awareness, fostering partnerships, and continuously improving their preparedness and response, educational institutions can

create resilient environments that protect students during emergencies. Prioritizing school DRRM not only ensures the physical safety of students but also empowers them with life-saving knowledge and skills, enabling them to become active participants in creating safer communities.

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