MOVING TOWARD SCHOOL SAFETY AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

by:

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Our country is prone to natural and human-induce hazards like flood, fire tropical cyclone, storm surge and earthquake. Thus, depriving the right of the children to a continuous quality basic education in a safe environment. However, many risks associated with hazards can be reduced and avoided by the actions we take. That is why; DepEd has established the office of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Systems for ensuring that schools have a fundamental disaster management plan.

As such, the need for establishing the School Planning Team and School Disaster Risk Reduction Management Committee is necessary to implement DRRM policies and programs. Together, they will formulate the school disaster risk management plan, in order to do that the following must be undertaken:

**Hazard Assessment.** Identify the hazards in and around the school and find ways to manage these hazards.

Have general information about the school profile and map like prone risk areas, potential hazards that frequently occur in the area, safe areas, and evacuation routes.

**Safety Assessment.** Structural safety inspection of infrastructures based on the existing national building codes.

**Equipment and resources inventory.** Checking of available DRRM equipment and resources such as early warning systems (whistle, electric alarm bell, siren and megaphone, bulletin board for weather advisories and emergency hotlines).

Survival materials (rubber boat, wheelchair, foldaway stretcher, thick ropes, ladders, fire extinguishers, bed with beddings, pillows, raincoats, boots, life jacket and flashlight).
Communication systems (radio, telephone and cellphone)

Health hygiene kit, learners’ kit, and teachers’ kit.

**Capacitate the teaching, non-teaching personnel and other stakeholders.** Identify training and capacity building needs for effective prevention, mitigation and response for disasters. Also, maintain close coordination with the Local DRRM Council for support.

**Plan and implement risk reduction activities in the school.** Conduct regular emergency drills like fire drill, earthquake drill and storm surge drill to teach pupils the proper way to respond before, during and after the disaster. Ideally, drills should be conducted quarterly.

**Undertake information dissemination of the plan.** It is important that after the creation of the DRRM plan, it must be disseminated not only to those people inside the school but also among the community members to create awareness. Moreover, post safety and preparedness measures, evacuation plans and updated emergency hotlines for general public reference.

**Evaluate and update the plan.** The School DRRM needs to be periodically evaluated and updated in order to know how well the emergency plan works.

Generally, these school-based disaster preparedness approaches can reduce the vulnerability and risk in schools. Strengthening the DRRM plan and implementation can contribute to resilience building.

**References:**

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