Emergency Medicine Investigations

Short Commentary

Children Safety: School Emergency Preparedness must always be a Priority

Ali Saad R Alsubaie MSc, Ph.D.

Department of Public Health, University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia

***Corresponding author:** Ali Saad R Alsubaie, Department of Public Health, University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia, Tel: +966544445693; Fax No: +966-133330225; Email: asralsubaie@uod.edu.sa

Commentary

In our modern society, education and schooling are human right, inalienable and universal. Nowadays, school as an education institution is essential in enabling people to learn, get their academic certificates and start their career and reach their full potential. It is important to note at the present time, children experience a key part of their daily time and childhood in schools. Because of their age, curiosity and inexperience, children's are in particular vulnerability to environmental threats and hazards.The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion stated that "health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and live" [1].Certainly, school should support and provide appropriate social and physical environment that facilitate children learning and enhance their future life experience. Ensuring school safety by preventing hazards and emergency preparedness are essential human right in any modern community and can eventually lead and support sustainable development. In this regard, many countries especially developed countries have made tremendous progress in the field of school health and school safety. On the other hand,many developing countriesstill face critical challenges with regard to ensuring proper school environment, maintaining school safety and school disaster emergency preparedness plans and management program.

Schools are common and central educational and societal institutions and the expectations for schools to be role models in safety and disaster prevention is great [2]. Yet, it is significant to note that emergency and disaster events can happen anywhere, anytime and due many reasons. Sometimes, in case of emergencies or disaster events education might be interrupted resulting negative economic, psychological and social impacts for students, families, and communities. However, with environmental protection; assessment and planning, preparedness and proper response these events can be less harmful.Emergency and disasters may have a major impact on children; therefore, preventing accidents events and disasters in school is critical. So, ensuring school safety is the job of the entire school community and community members. To ensure school safety the effort requires leadership and coordination by school administration, and participation by all school community [2]. Although; some disaster events can be predicted, others can happen unexpectedly that suddenly put schools and their staff and students in danger. School safety requires a dynamic, continuous process initiated by management and involving stockholders [2]. Therefore, it is important to identify community needs and establish and facilitate partnerships that empower communities and individuals.

Disasters may have a major impact on children, families, communities and education systems. Therefore, disaster risk management and reduction is considered everyone's job. Disaster risk reduction comprises disciplines such asdisaster preparedness, disaster managementand disaster mitigation [3]. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) encompasses every part of society, every of the professionals and government. School disaster management involves the familiar cycle of steps found in all project management such as: hazards assessment, capacities and resources, maintenance of safe facilities, plan and implement for standard operating procedures and preparedness plans for disaster response and mitigation [2]. School Disaster Management has been defined as "the process of assessment and planning, physical protection and response capacity development designed to protect students and the staff from physical harm; minimize disruption and ensure the continuity of education for all children; develop and maintain a culture of safety" [2].However, disaster mitigation is one of the ultimate goal of safety and emergency preparedness. Lack of well-trained teachers, low safety awareness and busy schedules sometimes make it difficult to implement DRR capacity building and awareness raisingactivities. Ensuring that DRR activities and related issues at the school level arepart of school safety assessment, and well-designed curriculum can help to solve this issue.

Ensuring comprehensive school safety should be a must, and should be addressed by education policy at multi-level (i.e. nation-

al, regional, district, and local school levels) [4].The foundation of planning for comprehensive school safety is multi-hazard risk assessment, and based on three pillars [4]:

- Safe Learning Facilities
- School Disaster Management
- Risk Reduction and Resilience Education

The main goals of comprehensive school safety are to protect students and educators from death, injury, and harm in schools, to plan for continuity of education [4]. WHO defines a health-promoting school as "one that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting forliving, learning and working, whish imply the protection of students and staff against accidents, injury, disease and any health hazards" [5].Comprehensive school safetyimplying emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction is also part of sustainable development. In order for development activities to be sustainable they must also reduce disaster risk. On the other hand, unsound development policies will increase disaster risk - and disaster losses [3]. Therefore, a comprehensive school safety framework needs to bedeveloped and implemented for all schools.

School should be prepared for emergencies in a number of ways, from making sure the building's infrastructure is up to safety standards, conducting regular emergency-specific drills to school staff and students training and skills development. Efforts should be made to increase the awareness of the community and promote the education and training of school personnel in the assessment and management of safety and life-threatening emergencies [5]. Thus, preparing teachers, school staff and schoolchildren against disasters and other risks should be made compulsory in all schools. It might be helpful if safety preparedness activities become part of the formal curriculum and students activities. Safety awareness raising and advocating disaster preparedness should be amongst the priority of education system, authorities and schools.When emergencies and disasters events take place, teachers, staff and schoolchildren need to be well prepared and know what to do and how to respond appropriately and as quickly as possible.

Conclusion

Schools as a social and physical environment should be safe and secure to protect school staff and students' lives, foster healthful behaviors and enhance better academic achievement [6]. Emergencies and other disasters can happen at any time, and when they happen at school, everyone should be prepared to handle them safely and effectively. The issue of school safety must be a major concern at all levels of community and government [6].Effective efforts in promoting school safety, emergency preparedness and the integration of disaster risk reduction into school curricula should be considered as priority by education authorities, schools and community members. There is a need in creating a "culture of safety" and realize that injuries prevention and safety promotion are everybody's business [6]. Educational administrators, school teachers, school staff, students and their parents can work together to promote and maintain school-wide safety and minimize the effects of dangerous situations and other emergency events. Ensuring school safety and keeping our children safe is not just the responsibility of the school or education authorities, it's a shared responsibility for us all.

References

1. WHO (1987) The Ottawa Charter for health promotion. Health Promotion International.

2. International Finance Corporation (IFC) (2010) World Bank Group. Disaster and Emergency Preparedness: Guidance for Schools

3. UNISDR. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. What is Disaster Risk Reduction?.

4. UNISDR (2017) The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Comprehensive School Safety. A global framework in support of The Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector and The Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools.

5. WHO (2017) School and youth health. What is a health promoting-school?.

6. Alsubaie ASR (2017) School safety and emergency preparedness in-Saudi Arabia: a call for effective action. Int J Res Med Sci 5:1176-1179.